

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 CXIX.

VERS. 1-8. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.—*Moral law*:—I. THERE IS A DIVINE MORAL LAW FOR THE REGULATION OF MORAL LIFE. The Creator has given a law to every creature He has made, and to every creature its own law. This law Christ reduced to two primary obligations—right affection for God, right affection for man. II. GENUINE OBEDIENCE TO THIS LAW ENSURES HUMAN HAPPINESS. "Blessed," etc. 1. The nature of true obedience. (1) Sincere. (2) Cordial. (3) Assiduous. (4) Divinely inspired. (5) Spiritual rather than literal, constant rather than occasional. 2. The happiness consequent upon true obedience. (1) Freedom from shame. This implies consciousness of virtue. Sin is the shameful thing. (2) Heartiness in worship. The highest happiness of man consists in worshipping with the whole heart. (*Homilist*.) *Well-doing*:—I. HUMAN HAPPINESS CONSISTS IN WELL-DOING. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." It is not in theories, professions, ceremonies, but in right-doing. There is true blessedness for man only in his deed, not in his mere thoughts or emotions, but in his actions. Inaction is torpor, wrong action is misery, right action is bliss. II. WELL-DOING HAS RESPECT TO THE DIVINE. "Who walk in the law of the Lord." If there really be an atheistic world, that world knows nothing of well-doing. Well-doing can only grow out of a practical regard for the Supreme Existence. III. THE RESPECT FOR THE DIVINE MUST BE THOROUGH. "With the whole heart." God must become the Moral Monarch of the soul, inspiring and controlling the whole. (*Homilist*.) *God's beatitudes and the world's*:—The world has its own idea of blessedness. Blessed is the man who is always right. Blessed is the man who is satisfied with himself. Blessed is the man who is strong. Blessed is the man who rules. Blessed is the man who is rich. Blessed is the man who is popular. Blessed is the man who enjoys life. These are the beatitudes of sight and this present world. It comes with a shock and opens a new realm of thought that not one of these men entered Jesus' mind when He treated of blessedness. (*John Watson, D.D.*) *The truly happy man*:—The happiest life is that of the man who accepts Christ as his friend and model. Good Matthew Henry says, "You have heard the dying words of many—these are mine: 'I have found a life of communion with Christ the happiest life in the world.'" This is the testimony of all who have tried it. Hear what Coleridge says: "The Bible, and only the Bible, shows clearly and certainly what happiness is, and the way to its attainment." Philosophy may culture the mind and uplift the emotions, but it cannot heal a sore heart. Socialism may improve a man's environment, but it cannot give him happiness. True, deep rest of heart can only come as the result of knowing, loving and following Christ. (*The Young Man*.)

Ver. 2. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.—*The best pursuit*:—I. THE PURSUIT SPECIFIED. 1. The object proposed. They "seek" God—His enlightening truth—His pardoning mercy—His sanctifying grace—His indwelling presence—His communicable fulness—and

His eternal fruition beyond the grave (Ps. xvii. 16; Rom. ii. 7). 2. The conduct described. "With the whole heart"—not hypocritically and lukewarmly; but with all the powers and energies of the soul, the understanding, the will, the conscience, and the affections; supremely, above every other object; diligently, in all the means of salvation; immediately, without delay, or procrastination; earnestly, with zealous and undivided hearts; continually, being faithful unto death, etc. (Ps. xxvii. 4; Isa. lv. 6, 7; Jer. xxix. 18, etc.). II. THE OBEDIENCE REQUIRED. 1. It must be regulated by His Word, the only perfect and infallible standard of Christian faith and practice. 2. It must be conformable to His will. The Divine testimonies must be kept in our memories—in our affections—and in our practices. We must keep them sincerely, not in name and profession only; believingly, in the exercise of a lively and vigorous faith; affectionately, from a principle of love filling and ruling the heart; universally, having impartial respect unto all His commandments; faithfully, through all opposition, and indefatigable perseverance in well-doing (1 Cor. xv. 58). III. THE HAPPINESS ENJOYED. 1. They have blessed enjoyments. They are blessed with inconceivable peace—unspeakable joy—the testimony of a good conscience, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. 2. They have blessed anticipations. The present holiness is an earnest of their future blessedness. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Right use of the Bible*:—A workman has the plan of the house he is to build; but he must use plumb-line and spirit-level and foot-rule if he is to build securely. The engineer has his beautiful engine, his marvellously constructed piece of mechanism; but it is useless to him unless it is joined up with the lathe it is to turn or the loom it is to work. Your electric generating station is a place of wonder and mystery, a marvel of skill and knowledge; but it is useless if it is only kept to look at and wonder about; it only becomes effective as the electricity generated there is carried to your electric motors for power, to your filaments of carbon for light. And what we so often forget is that, in the same way, the Gospel of Jesus is of no practical use to us while we keep it isolated from our daily life; it is no use in a book, or in theological syllogisms; it only becomes of use as it becomes the power of God in our daily lives. We must take it as the guide of our daily conduct, as the inspiration of thought and emotion, as the determining factor in our daily actions, as the light to lead us along life's dark and difficult ways. As the food upon which the soul is nourished it must affect all our thought and feeling, speech and action; it must penetrate to the remotest corners of our life and give form and colour and character to every experience. (B. A. Millard.)

Ver. 8. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways.—*Negative and positive goodness*:—I. **NEGATIVE goodness**. "They do no iniquity." In their external conduct, and to the eye of society, they appear faultless. 1. It is socially valuable. He who in society practically respects the social rights of others, who is free from falsehood, chicanery, and debauchery is certainly a more valuable man than he who is guilty of all these enormities. 2. It is morally worthless. There is no virtue in the not doing of wrong, but there is sin in not doing the right. II. **POSITIVE goodness**. "They walk in His ways." To walk in His ways implies three things—1. **Spiritual life**. A dead man cannot walk. There is no walking in the Divine way unless the soul is quickened into spiritual life—a life of supreme sympathy with God. 2. **Spiritual vigour**. A man may live and yet be too weak in the frame to raise himself from his couch or take one step. The man who walks in the right way has moral vigour—a vigour that grows with every effort. 3. **Spiritual progress**. A constant advance from one point to another. Every holy volition and aspiration are steps onward. (David Thomas, D.D.)

Ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently.—*Reasons for diligence in obeying God*:—In worldly affairs no weighty thing can be done without diligence; far less in spiritual. For three causes should we keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence: first, because our adversary, that seeks to snare us by the transgression of them, is diligent in tempting; next, because we ourselves are weak and infirm; by the greater diligence have we need to take heed to ourselves; thirdly, because of the great loss we sustain by every advantage Satan gets over us. For we find by experience that as a wound is sooner made than it is healed, so guiltiness of conscience is easily contracted, but not so easily done away. (Bishop Cowper.)

Ver. 5. **O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!**—*Virtuous solicitude*:—A solicitude to perform our duty, to practise holiness at all times, and to make a constant progress in it, is an essential ingredient in a virtuous temper, a necessary qualification of our obedience, and a powerful means of our becoming active and steadfast in it. It implies—1. A lively sense of the supreme importance of holiness. 2. A settled love of goodness, and hatred of iniquity. 3. A vigorous, constant, and prevailing desire to keep God's statutes. 4. A firm resolution to keep them. 5. A prevailing bias of the whole soul towards virtuous practice. 6. Fervent desire of God's assistance in the practice of holiness. (*A. Gerard, D.D.*) *The temporal lot of a good man subservient to the advancement of his personal religion*:—I. A TRULY GOOD MAN WILL BE CONCERNED TO KEEP THE STATUTES OF GOD. He is as much concerned to avoid secret as open sins; he seeks intently a temper devout and spiritual; he finds an unutterable pleasure in striving, and watching, and praying that not a single particular in the Christian temper or conduct may be found absent from him. II. A GOOD MAN WILL AT SOME PERIODS BE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED TO KEEP THE STATUTES OF GOD. 1. Perhaps an extensive and an affecting sight of the Divine holiness is instrumental in producing this improvement. 2. A fixed and an admiring contemplation of the grace of the Gospel is sometimes productive of a similar effect. 3. Affliction is sometimes the forerunner of this enlarged concern. III. WHEN A GOOD MAN IS THUS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED TO KEEP THE STATUTES OF GOD, HIS TEMPORAL LOT WILL BE RENDERED SUBSERVIENT TO THE PROMOTION OF HIS PERSONAL RELIGION. "O that my ways," my general circumstances, and the daily and hourly incidents which occur, "were directed to keep Thy statutes," to advance my personal religion. IV. IN ORDER TO THE TEMPORAL LOT OF A GOOD MAN BECOMING THUS SUBSERVIENT TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF HIS PERSONAL RELIGION, HE MUST BE AIDED BY A DIVINE INTERPOSITION. 1. In the form of a wise and benevolent appointment. 2. In the form of a gracious influence. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Longings*:—A longing after the good, after anything higher and better than the sinner has, what is it but the beginning of the new life, its first pulsation, its first and feeblest cry? It is the confession of sin and want. This need may give expression to itself in the quiet, trustful prayer of childhood, saying to God, "My Father, wilt Thou not from henceforth be the guide of my youth?" This need may be spoken with a heavy heart and a downcast face by the young prodigal, as he stands in presence of the shame and poverty which his own sin has created. This need may be spoken by the philosopher who, having sought for rest for heart and intellect in every theory of the universe and in every method of life but the Divine, and sought in vain, turns at last to the Fountain of living waters. It is a longing which may be quickened by very diverse things, or it may move of itself, as we think; yet in all is there the presence and power of the Spirit of God. Nor when the soul has come to the knowledge of God, when its first longing has been spoken and has been met by the bestowal of a heavenly gift, is there an end of longing and desiring. In fact, it may be said that longings do but then begin. By giving pardon and cleansing, God does but open the door to the demand for a perfect righteousness. The soul sees above it an ever higher ideal than it has yet attained to, and, therefore, longs and prays for it. Our longings are like the wings of the soul upon which it is borne, if only for a moment, into a purer and heavenlier clime. They set us in motion Godward. Call not the wishes of the heart vain and useless; for they are the spirit of our prayers, they turn our wills and fix our resolutions; they are the beginnings of the kingdom of heaven. Impalpable, and coming even upon him who has them as the breeze comes upon the still lake and stirs it with life and motion, these yearnings and longings anticipate and determine a man's destiny. When a man says, "I wish to pray; I wish to know God; I wish to be a new man," he speaks weightier words than when kings or statesmen issue manifestoes and proclamations. That is the opening up of his case with his Father and Saviour. "Sir, we would see Jesus," said some Greeks to Philip, who had come up to the feast to worship, and that wish of theirs caused a response on the part of Jesus, the effect of which is felt in the words of Jesus in multitudes of souls to-day, and shall be for ever and ever. (*J. P. Gladstone.*)

Ver. 6. **Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.**—*A clear conscience*:—We are not under the law, but under grace, yet are we not lawless, since we have become servants of God. Nay, but we are

under another law, which works upon us after another fashion. The child may be quite clear of the police court, but there is a rod at home. There is a father's smile; there is a father's frown. I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF BELIEVING OBEDIENCE. The esteem in which we hold, and the tribute we pay to, all God's commandments is spoken of. Not picking and choosing—paying attention to this, because it pleases me, and omitting that, because it is not equally pleasurable. What do we mean by having respect to all God's commandments? I reply that, whatever there is that the Lord has spoken in any part of His Word we desire to hold in devout esteem, and to have respect to every utterance of His will. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments"—to the foundation commandments, striving to dig deep; to the high soaring commandments, seeking to rise into the utmost fellowship with God; to those commandments that need stern labour, like the rugged walls upon which much toil must be spent, and upon those which are a delight and a beauty, like the golden aureole windows that require fine taste and delicate skill. Oh that we were enamoured of this perfection, and were seeking after it! II. THE EXCELLENCE OF ITS RESULT. "Then shall I not be ashamed." That means, first, that as sin is removed, shame is removed. Sin and shame came into this world together. Unless sin gets to a high head, which it will not do in the believer, shame is sure always to go with sin. Excessive sin or habitual transgression at last kills shame, so that the hardened culprit knows not how to blush. It is an awful thing when a man is no longer conscious of shame, but a more awful thing still when he comes to glory in his shame; for then his damnation is not far off. But as sin is cast out of the believer, shame is cast out of him in proportion, and it thence comes to pass that courage rises with a consciousness of rectitude. The man that has respect unto God's commands is no longer ashamed of men. He is not abashed by their scorn, or disconcerted by their ridicule. There is nothing to be ashamed of in keeping God's commands. Then, again, before men we shall not be ashamed of our profession. "I am a Christian. Look me up and down and examine my conduct. I do not boast of it, but I know that I have sought honestly and sincerely to walk before God in righteousness." Or, when an accusation is brought against you falsely, meet it in the same spirit. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Unlimited obedience to the Divine commands:—I. THE PSALMIST MADE LITTLE ACCOUNT OF THE WORLD'S OPINION. II. HIS PROFOUND OBEDIENCE TO GOD. III. THE CONCERN HE WAS UNDER AT FAILING IN SOME PARTICULARS. IV. HIS EARNEST DESIRE TO OBEY ALL THE DIVINE COMMANDS. V. THAT PEACE WHICH WOULD FOLLOW UPON HIS KEEPING ALL THE COMMANDMENTS. 1. A peace that is built upon the most solid foundation—the promises of God. 2. A peace that is most pure and genuine, having no mixture of baseness and alloy. 3. A peace that secures the mind from all the accusations of Satan, who would willingly disturb us; and that prepares us for setting light by the molestations which others may endeavour to give us. Conclusion—1. In what light do you view the world's opinion? Are you not too much biased by it? 2. Inquire into your obedience, and ask if it does not differ from that of the psalmist, who objected not to any of God's commandments, but had respect unto all. 3. Have you not had respect to every commandment? You cannot surely look back upon the fact with indifference, or unaffectedness, etc. 4. What must be said of those who instead of being grieved that they keep not all the commandments of the Lord, keep none; but wilfully break them all, and glory in doing so, etc. (J. Dorrington.)

The effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever:—Consider the advantages that we shall receive, from a regular, uniform obedience to God's commandments. I. AS IT GIVES US PEACE OF MIND. The man that makes this his care is approved by his bosom-witness, and satisfied from himself. God has wisely ordered it, that as soon as we have done well, we should be encouraged to continue in well-doing, by the approbation of right reason; and whensoever we sin against Him, we should also offend ourselves, and be condemned by our own impartial sentence. II. AS IT ENCOURAGES US TO LOOK CHEERFULLY UPON THE WORLD. Having no design but to satisfy his conscience, to do justice to his brother, and to please his God, he wishes that his actions were as clear as the light, and his dealings as the noonday: for he wants no pretences, no private reserves. And he takes the easiest, the safest, and the most satisfactory course of life. His way is plain before him, and he needs not trouble himself with any inquiry but this, Whether the action that he is going to commit is consistent with his duty to God. And if the tongue of censure should endeavour to fix its calumnies upon him, and shoot forth its poisonous

arrows, even bitter words, they cannot disturb the harmony of his thoughts, or make any impression upon him. He is safe in his integrity, and beats off their furious onsets with a fixed and unmovable resolution. III. AS IT GIVES US A LIVELY HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD. Blessed is the man that has thus made God his friend, and by the actions of an unblameable life has presented himself, his soul and body, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to God. Being entirely devoted to Him, he can resort to Him in every danger and difficulty, and truly ask for His counsel to direct, and His assistance to deliver him. (T. Newlin, M.A.)

Ver. 7. **I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart.**—*The duty of thankfulness*:—Thankfulness is a duty wherein we are all obliged to the Lord. It is good in regard of the equity of it. Since the Lord gives us good things, shall not we give Him praises again? especially seeing the Lord is content so to part all His works between His majesty and us, that the good of them be ours, the glory of them be His own. It is good to praise the Lord in regard of Himself, who is the object of our praises. Since He is the treasure of all good, the Author of all blessings, it cannot be but a good thing to bless Him. 3. It is good in respect of our associates and companions in this exercise: the angels, cherubim and seraphim delight continually in His praises. Our elder brethren, that glorious congregation of the first-born, are described unto us falling down on their faces, casting their crowns at the feet of the Lord, to give Him the glory of their redemption. Now, seeing we pray that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven, why do we not delight in these exercises of praising God, by which we have fellowship with them who are glorified in Him? 4. It is good in respect of the great benefits we receive by it; nothing thereby accrues to the Lord, all the advantage is our own. (Bp. Cowper.)

Ver. 8. **I will keep Thy statutes.**—*Good resolutions*:—It is a great help to godliness to resolve that we will live godly; for that which is not concluded, how shall it be performed? Or what hope is there we should attain to the end—that is, to the perfection of piety—when we are careless of the beginnings thereof, which are purposes, intentions, and resolutions that we will be godly? Where, when of weakness we fail in following forth our resolution, it shall be well done again to renew it; for, by often renewing of our resolution to do any good, we become the stronger to accomplish it. (Bp. Cowper.)

Ver. 9. **Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.**—*How a young man may cleanse his way*:—I. THIS IS THE GREAT PRACTICAL PROBLEM FOR LIFE. It is more especially the question for young people. 1. You are under special temptations not to ask it. There are so many other points in your future unresolved that you are only too apt to put aside the consideration of this one in favour of those which seem to be of more immediate importance. And you have the other temptation, common to us all, of living without any plan of life at all. At your age, judgment and experience are not so strong as inclination and passion; and everything has got the fresh gloss of novelty upon it, and it seems to be sometimes sufficient delight to live and get hold of the new joys that are flooding in upon you. 2. It is worth while for you to ask it. For you have got the prerogative that some of us have lost, of determining the shape that your life's course is to take. 3. You have special temptations to make your ways unclean. II. WE CAN ONLY MAKE OUR WAY CLEAN ON CONDITION OF CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS. "Take heed to thyself" is the only condition of a pure and noble life. That such a condition is necessary will appear very plain from two considerations. First, it is clear that there must be constant watchfulness, if we consider what sort of a world this is that we have got into. And it is also plain if we consider what sort of creatures we are that have got into it. We are creatures evidently made for self-government. Our whole nature is like a monarchy. There are things in each of us that are never meant to rule, but to be kept well down under control, such as strong passions, desires rooted in the flesh which are not meant to get the mastery of a man. And there are parts of our nature which are as obviously intended to be supreme and sovereign; the reason, the conscience, the will. III. THIS CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS, TO BE OF ANY USE, MUST BE REGULATED BY GOD'S WORD. The guard on the frontier who is to keep the path must have instructions from head-quarters, and not choose and decide according to his own phantasy, but according to the

King's orders. Or, to use another metaphor, it is no use having a guard unless the guard has a lantern. In the Word of God, in its whole sweep, and eminently and especially in Christ, who is the Incarnate Word, we have an all-sufficient Guide. A guide of conduct must be plain—and whatever doubts and difficulties there may be about the doctrines of Christianity, there are none about its morality. A guide of conduct must be decisive—and there is no faltering in the utterance of the Book as to right and wrong. A guide of conduct must be capable of application to the wide diversities of character, age, circumstance—and the morality of the New Testament especially, and of the Old in a measure, secures that, because it does not trouble itself about minute details, but deals with large principles. A guide for morals must be far in advance of the followers, and it has taken generations and centuries to work into men's consciences, and to work out in men's practice, a portion of the morality of that Book. If the world kept the commandments of the New Testament, the world would be in the millennium; and all the sin and crime, and ninety-nine hundredths of all the sorrow of earth would have vanished like an ugly dream. Here is the guide for you, and if you take it you will not err. **IV. ALL THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE EFFECTUALLY IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN.** My psalm goes as far as the measure of revelation granted to its author admitted; but if a person had no more to say than that, it would be a weary business. It is no use to tell a man, "Guard yourself; guard yourself." Nor even to tell him, "Guard yourself according to God's Word," if God's Word is only a law. The fatal defect of all attempts at keeping my heart by my own watchfulness is that keeper and kept are one and the same. And so there may be mutiny in the garrison, and the very forces that ought to subdue the rebellion may have gone over to the rebels. You want a power outside of you to steady you. The only way to haul a boat up the rapids is to have some fixed point on the shore to which a man may fasten a rope and pull at that. You get that eternal guard and fixed point on which to hold in Jesus Christ, the dear Son of His love, who has died for you. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *On cleansing our ways:*—The picture in his mind was of this sort. There stood before him a young man who had not long set out on the journey of life; and who yet, to his own deep surprise and disgust, found many stains of travel already upon him. He had not meant to go wrong; as yet, perhaps, he was not gone very far wrong. And yet where did all this filth come from? And how is it to be got rid of? How is he to make his way clean, and keep it clean? **I. IF WE ARE TO MAKE OUR LIFE PURE, NOBLE, SATISFYING, WE ARE TO TAKE HEED TO IT:** we are to think about it, and to force ourselves to walk according to our best thoughts and aims. Carlyle sums up the whole teaching of Goethe in the brief citation, "Think of living." Many never look forward and think of their life as a whole, and of how they may make the best of it. God has put this great and solemn gift of life into their hands: yet they never really think of it as His gift, nor ask themselves what they mean to do with it, what they have done with it, or how they may so use it as to show that they are not unworthy to be trusted with it. Nay, more; many of them do not even think of it bit by bit, day by day, step by step. So far from considering what they can make of their life as a whole, how they may make it pure and fair and bright; they do not so much as ask, "What shall I do with my life to-day, so as to make it as clean, as fair, as useful as I can?" Is it any wonder that they often wander round and round without making any real advance; and sink, again and again, into the very sloughs from which, again and again, they have been drawn out; or fall, again and again, into the very traps from which they have been set free? But to think is not enough. We want a high and true standard to which to refer, by which we may measure and direct our thoughts. **II. And this standard the psalmist gives us when he tells us to TAKE HEED TO OUR WAYS ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD.** It bids you remember that you have a soul as well as a body; that moral virtues and graces are still more valuable than mental gains and shining parts; that there is a world above and beyond this present world, a life above and beyond this mortal life; and it warns you to provide for that as well as for this. It asks you to believe that God is more than man, the soul more than the body, virtue better than pleasure, goodness better than gain, and the life to come more and better than the life which now is. It demands that when the claims of God clash with those of man, as they sometimes will, or the claims of the soul clash with those of the body, or the claims of virtue and goodness with those of gain and pleasure, or the claims of eternity with those of time, that you sacrifice the lower claims to the higher,

that you sacrifice passing and inferior interests to interests which are noble and enduring. (*S. Ooz, D.D.*) *Moral culture of young men*:—I. YOUNG MEN REQUIRE CLEANSING. Somehow or other, from the very commencement of moral agency, impure thoughts enter the mind, and impure emotions are awakened. So that cleansing is required almost at the beginning, because spiritual uncleanness is—(1) Inimical to peace of conscience. (2) A hindrance to true soul growth. (3) An obstruction to Divine fellowship. II. MORAL CLEANSING REQUIRES CIRCUMSPECTION IN LIFE. "By taking heed thereto." If you tread the path of vanity, avarice, sensuality, selfishness, you will go down deeper and deeper in moral filth. If you tread the path of virtue as trod by Jesus of Nazareth, you must take heed that you tread that path constantly and not turn to the right hand or to the left. "Take heed." There are many on all hands who will try to turn you from the path. III. CIRCUMSPECTION OF LIFE SHOULD BE GUIDED BY THE DIVINE WORD. "Thy Word," that contains the map; Thy Word, there burns the lamp; Thy Word, there dwells the inspiration. (*Homilist.*) *Young manhood: its peril and its rescue*:—I. ITS PERIL. One thing that makes it hard for a young man to succeed in his manhood is the prevalence among us of influences that work distractingly and scattering. It takes time and a certain amount of leisure if a man is going to be at his best. We are torn hither and thither by multiplicity of interest. 2. Another disadvantage under which our young men are suffering is that they have so largely slipped their old anchorages. They have cut adrift from the past. Hereditary tastes, ideas and methods are ignored. The age to which a custom or doctrine has attained is taken as measure of its inherent absurdity. To be old-fashioned is, with them, to be silly. 3. Another tooth in the jaw of the Babylonian lion is the rum-shop and the wine-cup. 4. Still another incisor that pricks into and tears the life of our young manhood is the prevalence among us of so much that works personal impurity, in the shape of coarse literature, dirty pictures and houses of ill-repute. 5. Another obstacle that obstructs the efforts of our young men to maintain their manliness is the engrossing love of money. II. THE SERVICE OF SUCCOUR THAT WE CAN RENDER. 1. Prayer. Christ teaches us that He not only regards the prayer of faith when offered by those who need help, but that He regards the prayer of faith when offered in behalf of those who need help. Prayer generates work, and so makes us co-operate with God in bringing the answer to our own prayer. 2. Another thing we can do is to contribute in a material way to the work of the Young Men's Christian Association that has the interests of our un-homed young men in particular charge. 3. But we must not relegate to organization the work and responsibility that devolves upon us in our character of individual Christians. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *The young man's conduct*:—I. It requires MORAL CLEANSING. 1. There are several elements more or less impure in a young man's life that must be cleansed:—(1) Animalism. The senses are likely to control him. (2) Illusion. His imagination creates fictitious joys and dignities. (3) Vanity. The tendency of the young to overrate themselves is all but universal. 2. From these elements of impurity he must be cleansed. The animal must give way to the spiritual, the fictitious to the real, the vain to the sober and the humble. II. Its moral cleansing REQUIRES PERSONAL CIRCUMSPECTION. "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." "Sanctify them through Thy truth: for Thy Word is truth," said Christ. "Now ye are clean through the Word I spoke unto you." By personal circumspection the Word must be applied—(1) For correction; (2) for guidance. (*Homilist.*) *A young man's way*:—I. THE BIBLE MAKES A GREAT DEAL IN ITS TEACHING ABOUT THE WAYS OF MEN. 1. There is the way of the transgressor, which is hard; and the way of the fool, which is right in his own eyes; and the way of the slothful, which is a hedge of thorns; and the way of the wicked, which is as darkness. And there is the way of the righteous, which is plain, and which the Lord knows; and the way of the saint, which is preserved; and the way which is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 2. There is variety in the ways of individual men at different periods of their life. There is the peculiar bent and passion of the old man, the characteristic of the man in middle life, and, differing from these, the way of a young man. II. WHAT IS MEANT BY "CLEANSING THE WAY." It is something very deep and pure which is intended, or Job would never have said, "What is man that he should be clean?" It is something very practical and searching, or Isaiah would not have begun his prophecies with the call, "Wash you, make you clean," etc. It is something intended to cover the whole area

of life, or it never would have been made an ordinance in the old dispensation to have the vessels and persons clean that came into the presence of God; nor would Jesus in the new, in so solemn a way have washed the feet of His disciples to make them "every whit clean." It is the cleanness which is part of God's life which is intended. God is of purer eyes than to look upon sin. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. It is the cleanness which is also the holiness of God—cleanness from sin, from evil, from guile, from insincerity; the very quality praised by the adoring angels when they cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy," in the presence of God. The question, therefore, means, "Wherewithal shall a young man lead a holy life like the life of the Holy God? Wherewithal shall he make his way the way of a saint?"

III. THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS—
 "By taking heed thereto according to God's Word." By taking God's Word as the light, the guide, and the director of the way; by considering your steps in the light of that Word; by taking that Word as the chart, the pilot, and the propeller of your way. For the young soul who receives this Word and makes it his bosom companion, who accepts its light as the guide of his way, who follows the Lord whom it commends—life from that hour is changed. His heart is fixed on the strength of God. His career is along the lines of the life of God. He will be no more a straw tossed in the wind, a dead log swung hither and thither by the swirl in the river, a wave driven this way and that by the wind; but a life—a stream from the life of God—a life made wise by the indwelling of God's truth in the mind, and by the constraint of His love in the heart. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*)

To young men:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WAY SPOKEN OF. 1. Its moral aspect. The law cannot relax its claims; it is inexorable, and cries, "Pay me that thou owest." It smiles on the obedient, and frowns on the disobedient. Hence, your every word, thought and deed should be subject to its authority. 2. Its social aspect. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" is a truth which receives daily corroboration. Hence, how important that young men should be very particular in forming connections, and that great care should also be observed in making companionships (Prov. i. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 14, 17). Divine grace does not destroy our social nature; it sanctifies it, and directs our social instincts in a pure channel; so that whilst sinners are joining "hand in hand," Christians may enjoy the "communion of saints." 3. Its intellectual aspect. Mental culture is an important part of your duty. When Virgil was asked by a friend why he studied so much accuracy in the plan of his poems, the propriety of his characters, and the purity of his diction, he answered, "I write for eternity." Let it be, my young friends, the daily language of your hearts and life, "I am living for eternity."

4. Its spiritual aspect. Your soul in its origin, capacities, immortality, and the price paid for its redemption, has a claim on your attention and efforts to save it.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE PHRASE, "CLEANSE HIS WAY"? 1. That the young man must ponder his steps. Want of reflection and forethought is characteristic of youth. 2. That he must resist temptation. Wealth, pleasure, fashion, company, amusements, pernicious books, and sensual enjoyments surround you, and you are in danger of being unduly influenced by them. 3. That he improve by the use of his privileges. 4. That he prepare for eternity. III. How is THIS TO BE DONE? All your proceedings are to be regulated by God's Word. Its cautions and threatenings must serve to preserve you from sin and danger. Its precepts and doctrines must guide you in your journey through life: and its precious promises and bright examples must allure you to scenes of felicity and glory beyond the grave.

IV. LESSONS. A young man's "way" is—1. Highly critical. Beset with snares, dangers, and enemies. Demanding constant watchfulness and prayer. 2. Deeply solemn. Leading to heaven or hell, eternal happiness or endless woe. 3. Personally responsible. The means of salvation within reach. (*James White.*)

To young men:—I. THE DANGER TO WHICH YOUNG MEN ARE EXPOSED. 1. The depraved nature common to them as well as others. 2. The strength of their passions. 3. Their inexperience. 4. The incitements of wicked men. 5. The evil example of others. 6. Want of solid religious principles.

II. THE DIVINELY-PROVIDED REMEDY, OR PREVENTIVE TO POLLUTION. 1. We must begin by seeking regenerating grace. 2. We must keep constant watch over our own hearts, or they will ensnare us. 3. We must pay strict attention to every part of our conduct. 4. We must seek assistance from the proper quarter. (*W. Peddie, D.D.*)

A young man cleansing his way:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE QUESTION. That for a young man to cleanse his way is—1. A necessary thing. 2. A difficult thing. 3. A noble thing (ver. 1). Such

are beautiful in youth, and strong in their radiant manhood. They are the flower of the race. They are the hope of the Church. And the Lord Jesus, "beholding them, loves them." II. WHAT IS TAUGHT IN THE ANSWER. 1. He must have a fixed purpose to "cleanse his way." Determination is everything in religion, as in other matters. The young man who is firmly resolved to live a holy life will succeed in doing so, provided he lays hold of the grace of God, and uses the appointed means of sanctification. 2. He must take Holy Scripture as his guide. The Bible is the cleanest book in the world. Its ideals are the noblest. It is the purity of the Divine Word that has invested it with indestructible vitality. The morality of Scripture satisfies our moral being as the very perfection of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good; and Scripture shows us that fair ideal of purity embodied in an actual human life—the life of the Son of God in our nature. (C. Jerdan, LL.B.) *Religion the only safeguard of youth*:—The infidel, Thomas Paine, was one night haranguing a promiscuous company, gathered in the common room of the New York tavern where he had his lodgings, on the great harm done to the world by the Bible and the Christian religion. When he paused for breath, he was much astonished at the remark of a stranger, who said, "Mr. Paine, you have been in Scotland. You know there is not a more rigid set of people in the world than they are in their attachment to the Bible. When a young man leaves his father's house, his mother in packing his chest always puts a Bible on the top of his clothes." The infidel nodded acquiescence. "You have also been in Spain," continued the stranger. "The people have no Bibles, and in that country you can hire a man for a dollar to murder his neighbour, who never gave him any offence." Mr. Paine answered that this was so. "Then, see how the argument stands," said the advocate for Christianity. "If the Bible were so bad a book as you represent it to be, those who use it would be the worst members of society; but the contrary is the fact. Our prisons, almshouses, and penitentiaries are filled with men and women whose ignorance or unbelief prevents them from reading the Bible." I. THE YOUNG MAN WHO RULES HIMSELF AFTER GOD'S WORD WILL WALK IN THE WAYS OF HONESTY. Make it a rule, young men, never to sacrifice integrity for bread. II. THE YOUNG MAN WHO RULES HIMSELF AFTER GOD'S WORD WILL CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF REVERENCE. The young man who rules himself after God's Word will utter no profane oath; and when he comes into God's holy temple, it will always be with uncovered head, as becomes the presence-chamber of the King of kings. III. Another thing which will distinguish those who walk in obedience to God's laws is that THEY WILL BE FOUND IN THE WAYS OF SOBRIETY. By one of the laws of ancient Greece, every offence committed by a drunken person received double punishment. Christian nations would do well to adopt it. IV. THE YOUNG MAN WHO RULES HIMSELF AFTER GOD'S WORD WILL BE FOUND IN THE WAYS OF PURITY. "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. v. 22). V. THE YOUNG MAN WHO RULES HIMSELF AFTER GOD'S WORD WILL BE RELIGIOUS. Youth is the stormy cape, within sight of which many a frail bark is lost; and God's Word is the only chart which can guide one safely on his voyage. (J. N. Norton.) *The cleansing Word*:—I. THE QUESTION. 1. Man's ways need cleansing. 2. Youth is the most important time for this. (1) The youngest person has contracted defilement and sin. (2) The young may die. (3) Youth is a time of the greatest danger. (4) The young are forming those associations and habits which go on increasing in strength, and give colour to all the actions of their future lives. (5) In youth the hopes of your parents, and friends, and masters, look for some reward for the pains they took with you in early infancy. II. THE ANSWER. 1. How does the Word of God provide for this cleansing of the way? (1) By pointing out to the young man the evil of his way. The Bible tells him what God is, and what he is, and what evil is in him and in his way. (2) By discovering an infallible remedy for the disorders of his nature. And that remedy is the salvation that is by Jesus Christ. (3) By becoming a directory in all the paths of duty to which they may be called. 2. You must take heed to it. This implies—(1) Care and thoughtfulness. (2) Prayer. (D. Wilson, M.A.) *Take heed to thy way*:—I. THE SENSES IN WHICH THE WORD OF GOD IS A CLEANSER OF THE WAY OF LIFE. 1. It purifies as a rule. 2. God's Word is an instrument by which He cleanses the heart. So Jesus prayed—"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." The Word that said, "Let there be light," and in a moment changed the darkness and confusion of the aboriginal elements into the light, order, and beauty of creation, is the same Word which breathes the breath of spiritual life into the new creature in Christ Jesus. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WORD OF

GOD IS TO BE APPLIED TO CLEANSE THE YOUNG MAN'S WAY. "By taking heed thereto." 1. This implies an earnest study of the Word; frequent and unintermitted contemplation. 2. It also implies a care and watchfulness over our own hearts and ways. III. THE REASONS WHICH SHOULD APPEAL TO YOUTH TO TAKE HEED TO THEIR WAY. 1. How reasonable it is in itself. Ought not God to have our first and best, who loved us first and gave us His best? 2. Temptation is never so strong and fiery as in the tropical clime of youth. 3. The fearful hindrances to the work of grace which increase and aggravate upon the postponement of repentance. (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) *Clean ways*:—A way has a direction, and leads somewhither. A way is continuous, and if we are in it, we are advancing in it. A way differs in its direction from other ways, and diverges more and more from them the farther one travels upon it. There is hardly any error so perilous as that of imagining that there can be isolated acts or states of mind. Every present has its closely affiliated future. Every deed, every reverie, every thought, is a cause. We are moving on in character, as in years. Let me beg you, then, to see whither you are going, whither your way leads. Start not in a direction which you are not willing to follow to the end. Take not your first step on any evil way, unless you are ready to encounter the dishonour, degradation, misery, and ruin which have visibly overtaken the advanced travellers on that way. Remember, our ways lead on through the death-shadow; and I know that there is but one way on which you are willing that death should overtake you,—but one way whose steps brighten under the shadow, and in which you can hope to walk with those whom you would crave as your companions in the life everlasting. "Wherewithal shall a young man 'cleanse' his way," or, more literally, make his way clean? This is a metaphor which appeals vividly to our experience. What is there so disheartening as the necessity of treading muddy streets? We sedulously seek, if they are to be had, clean paths for our feet, and bewail ourselves when we cannot find them. We are ashamed, even though no other eye be upon us, if we are forced to prolong travel-stain or any squalid condition of person or attire. Can it be that there is one so imbruted that he feels not the travel-stain of sinful ways,—that there is not a close-clinging sense of impurity when the soul has debased itself by foul deeds, indulgences, or associations? Must there not be a self-loathing, a self-contempt, in those who are making themselves vile? "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." What is the Word of God? An unerring and undying conscience, a sense of right and wrong, native in the soul of man, is God's Word to you and me. There is never a question of duty, in which you do not know what you ought to do. There is never a sinful compliance to which you are tempted or urged, of whose moral character you have the slightest doubt. So long as you obey your conscience, you are taking heed to your way according to the Word of God. But this phrase has for us another meaning—another, yet the same. The Word of God—the very same word which speaks to us in conscience—has lived incarnate in the one sinless Son of Man, or rather, not has lived, but ever lives, in the heaven whither He has gone before us, and where His welcome awaits our following Him, in His Gospel, fresh as when the words of grace and truth fell from His lips, in the pure spirits trained in His nurture, in the examples of excellence that have transmitted His holiness in a line of living light all down the Christian ages, and in whom the Christ within has shone forth in radiant beauty. (*A. P. Peabody, D.D.*) *Taking heed to God's Word*:—You are to "take heed." Look at the pilot at the helm, when he is steering the vessel, in the storm, amidst the rocks: what is he doing? "Taking heed." He is all eye, all sensibility, all intelligence, as to the position in which he stands. That is "taking heed." Look at the sentinel, walking his weary round, when he knows that the enemy is at hand. Harken to his footsteps; why, they seem to be but the echo of the man's sensibility of alarm and of danger. He is "taking heed." And you are to "take heed to your way." What did God give you faculties for, but to be employed? You have the faculty for observation: employ it. You have the faculty for examination: employ it. You have the faculty for reflection: employ it. You have the power of "taking heed": employ it. And recollect that no man can do this for you. It is to be done individually, vigilantly; you, as a man alive to your danger, are to enact the part of the pilot amidst the rocks. And doing this "according to God's Word," you shall not "labour in vain, nor spend your strength for nought." You can discern between good and evil, you know what is offensive, and you know what is pleasing to

God; you know what you must do to be saved; you know that yonder is a scene of profligacy and vice, and that here is an opportunity for serving and worshipping God; you know that there is a literature which is saturated with all manner of ungodliness, and that here lies a Book which will lead you to "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life." "Take heed," then; and "take heed," "according to God's Word." When your vigilance is once excited, and your mind is all in action, and you leave your house of business, and are plied with all manner of fascinations, "take heed" what you are about; but be sure to "take heed" according to the requirements, the directions, the exhortations, the promises of God's Word. To "take heed" according to the maxims of the world, or the suggestions of fashion, would only be to mock your misery, and accelerate your downfall; but "taking heed according to God's Word," that Word being hid away in your hearts, for constant and appropriate use, you will be able to say with a voice which he will be forced to listen to, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ shall make you free." But this requires attention, diligence, and personal effort. How will God's Word enable you to take heed? You must get it into your memories, it must be associated with your recollections, it must be ready whenever you want it, your hearing of it having been mixed with faith; and when it has thus been lodged and assimilated there, it will be "the sword of the Spirit," "the Word of God." (*W. Brock.*) *A clean life*.—Some years ago, in most of the large railway stations of England, there was a picture which greatly amused me. It represented a little boy who had been washed, and stood half white and half black beside a bath. A certain kind of soap had been used in the boy's ablutions, and the result was that, although he had not become white, he was half white and half black. "Like some people of my acquaintance," I thought many a time; "not so dirty as they once were, but they are far from clean yet." We ought to be clean every whit—that is, clean in all our thoughts, words, and especially in our conduct. Let us all aim at having a clean life. Almost the first thing that we discover when we begin to think about ourselves and the world in which we live is this need of cleansing. Sin has defiled everything, and its marks are upon our hearts. How can we remedy this? what can be done for us to remove the stain which seems fixed so fast in the fibres of our lives? What would you think of a negro who washed his face, and scrubbed it with all his might, in order to make it white? He could not make his skin fair like ours, even if he used all the soap in England, and all the washing powders, too; because the black lies underneath the skin, and it cannot be got at by rubbing. Once a year farmers wash their sheep so as to cleanse the wool, but then all the dirt is on the outside. That which defiles us, however, is inside us, and so it cannot be so easily got rid of. We must become clean within, and to do this for us is God's good work. Mr. Moody tells us that one day he promised to take his little boy out for a drive. But the child played about in the dirt, and made himself quite unfit to be seen. "Let me come with you, father," he pleaded. "No, Willie, you are not ready. I must take you in and wash you." "Oh, papa! I'se ready." "No, you are all over dirt." "Mamma washed me; I'se clean." Finding that he could not convince the child that he had contracted dirt since he had been washed, Mr. Moody lifted Willie up in his arms and showed him his face in a looking-glass. Says Mr. Moody, "The looking-glass stopped his mouth, but I did not wash his face with it!" Now, the Bible is a looking-glass, and intended to show us our need of cleansing; and if you will but prayerfully study it you will see your need of cleansing. George Herbert, while catechizing asked, after other questions about man's misery, "Since man is so miserable, what is to be done?" and the answerer could not tell. He asked him again what he would do if he were in a ditch? This familiar illustration made the answer so plain, that he was even ashamed of his ignorance; for he could not but say he would haste out of it as fast as he could. Then the minister asked whether he needed a helper, and who was that helper? And then we must be kept clean, and that every day. For one thing, we must avoid that which would defile us, and that we can do if we are careful. A gentleman, when he brought his son to London in order that he might apprentice him to an engineer, made up his mind to give him a few words of kindly counsel. He turned over in his mind how best to say what ought to be said, without getting any nearer the solution. But as they walked along the street, they observed that the roadway was very muddy. The youth was about to cross in the mud, but his father stopped him. "Wait," he

said, "we will seek a clean crossing. Always seek a clean crossing in life." After he had been left alone in town, the youth pondered these words, and dimly began to see their meaning. Seek a clean crossing in life; mind where you go, and keep out of the mud. There are some places that are known by almost every one to be evil—keep away from them; seek a clean crossing. There is another thing said in the text about the cleansing Word of God, and that is, we must frequently consult it. On board ship the captain consults his chart, and shapes his course by it. The Bible is our chart, a map of the roads through life along which we must tread in order to reach heaven. A chart kept wrapped up would be useless; look at it, study it, and then follow its guidance. At times we are perplexed as to what is the right and wise course for us to adopt. We are perplexed, and do not know whom to consult. Open your Bible, and you will probably find there some one in precisely the same circumstances. You will certainly find some text suitable for you, and will thus learn what to do. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light," says a psalm, and many people can testify that this witness is quite true. (*N. Wiseman.*) *Go by the directions:*—Go by the directions. I saw a picture once which has stuck to my memory for years and years. It was a picture of a dark, wild, stormy night, and a traveller was standing up in the stirrups of his horse at a parting of the way, trying to read the directions on the finger-post. How eagerly he was looking! I can see him yet holding the lighted match carefully in his hand lest the wind should blow it out before he had read the directions! It was a good thing for him that there were directions, and it is a good thing we have them, too. Where are our directions? They are—the Bible. That is God's Word to us, telling us which road to take when we come to the parting of the way. Go by the directions. Do what God says, and you will never go wrong. (*J. R. Howatt.*)

Ver. 10. With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments.—*Man's distinguishing capacity and fearful liability:*—**I. MAN'S DISTINGUISHING CAPACITY.** What is that? Power to wander from the Divine law. He can bound from his orbit, he has done so, is doing so. Sublimely awful power this, the power that makes us men and links us to moral government. **II. MAN'S FEARFUL LIABILITY.** The possession of this power is a dignity of our natures, the wrong use of this power is our crime and our ruin, and to the wrong use, alas, we are all fearfully liable. If I wander from God's commandment I wander from the right into the wrong, from light into darkness, from liberty to thralldom, from happiness to misery. (*Homilist.*) *The grandest pursuit and the greatest peril:*—**I. THE GRANDEST PURSUIT of man.** 1. The object of pursuit—God. Not merely His works, but Himself. Not a mere knowledge of Him, but the possession of Him. To obtain God as the Father of the soul is the grandest end of being. 2. The mode of pursuit. Unless it is done with the whole heart, the concentration of the soul, it is never done. **II. THE GREATEST PERIL of man.** To wander from God's commandments is to wander from light into darkness, from order into confusion, from plenty into pauperism, from happiness into misery, from life into death. (*Ibid.*) *Keeping to the path:*—Old Humphrey has a good paper against wandering from the path of duty, suggested by a notice at the entrance of a park:—"Take notice. In walking through these grounds, you are requested to keep the foot-path." Bunyan has supplied the same theme for solemn warning, in the pilgrim straying into By-path meadow. (*Bowes.*)

Ver. 11. Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.—*God's Word in the heart:*—Such was David's wise precaution against temptation, but we have a far higher example of the use of such precaution in the history of the temptation of our Lord. The holy Redeemer made his appeal to the Word of God, and in so doing He teaches us where to find succour and strength against temptation. The text shows us—**I. A VIEW OF THE INTERNAL PRINCIPLE WHICH ACTUATES A GOOD MAN.** It is a heart inspired with love to God. **II. ONE OF THE EFFORTS OF THAT PRINCIPLE**—he hides God's Word in his heart. Not merely in his memory, not in the intellectual powers of the mind, but in the city and citadel, where the affections dwell, where reason governs, the home of motive, of principle, and feeling. The memory should be the storehouse of the Divine truth; it is often the very quiver of God, from which He draws His arrows of conviction, and the storehouse where He draws comfort and peace for His

people. I believe the human mind never forgets; what it seizes, it never lets go. The mind acquires, retains, hides up, and in a moment brings back past thoughts. This is a power of vast importance in a moral point of view. How well, then, that our minds should be stored with Divine truth. The Holy Ghost brings thence those things concerning God and so teaches us. Children should learn the very words of Scripture, even when they cannot fully understand them. But they will have their use some future day. But not in the memory alone did David hide God's Word, but in his heart. Love needed to understand God's Word. Suitable dispositions are like proper lights to a painting—it cannot else be rightly seen. Now with the Word of God hid in our hearts, lovingly treasured up, we shall find a preservative against temptation, as did our Lord. What raises such a barrier against sin of all kinds as the Word of God lovingly remembered? You know how a pebble from a poor shepherd boy slew, in days of old, a most powerful and defiant giant; but then the pebble was taken from the brook in the spirit of confidence in God. And so we must take forth the teachings of God's Word in a spirit of confidence that God will give us His promised strength. Then hide up God's Word in your heart, and pray the Holy Spirit to visit you as the remembrancer in your moments of need. (*C. J. Phipps Eyre, M.A.*)

The Word of God in the heart:—I. THE GREAT DESIRE AND AIM OF A GOOD MAN. Not to sin against God. 1. His views of God give this desire and aim. 2. His love of God. 3. His views of sin in its nature and its consequences. II. THE MEANS WHICH A GOOD MAN ADOPTS TO REALIZE THIS DESIRE. The Word must be in the heart as power and life; controlling the thoughts—the motives—the principles. In the heart. Hid in the heart. Laid up there; made secure there against the robbery of sin, Satan, scepticism, etc. The Word of God, in its doctrines, precepts, promises, threatenings, examples, is a power in man which no other word can be. It teaches; it restrains; it warns; it guides; it saves. Things which we value; which are essential for certain ends, we preserve in the most secure places; as deeds, jewels, wills, etc. So a good man hides the Word of God in his heart; so that in times of danger it is safe. A Roman priest once took a Bible from a boy, and burnt it. The boy said to him, "You cannot burn the Word which I have in my heart." It was the Word of God hid in the heart that made the apostles so courageous in work and sufferings; that made martyrs so true and faithful; that now makes Christians so unyielding to the world's jeers, persecution, and atheism. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but God's Word, hid in the heart, endureth for ever. (*Anon.*) *Treasure safely kept:*—I. "Thy"—Implying Jehovah's presence. Omniscience. This eye ever looks you through! In His dread presence you this moment are. II. "Thy Word." "Better than thousands of," etc. "Sweeter than honey," etc. A light, guide, chart. "The power of God unto salvation." Christ is its fulness and glory. III. "Thy Word HAVE." Not will, intend, purpose. An act already done. Let us change our intentions into deeds, our purposes into facts. IV. "Thy Word have I." The individual stands out. We are individuals, not congregations, before God. V. "Thy Word have I HID." Not as the miser. As leaven. As seed. For personal use. For wide and extended use. VI. "Thy Word have I hid IN." If all of God's Word that is not in us was taken from us, how much should we have left? The Pharisees wore it outside. It must be in us a living power. In us a spring of action. VII. "Thy Word have I hid in MY." Parents, you wish to hide it in your children. How about yourselves? Sunday-school teachers, etc.? All of you wish it to be hid in those who sit next to you, etc. VIII. "Thy Word have I hid in my HEART." Must be in the heart. With the heart we feel, believe, love. (*R. Berry.*) *A sure preventive of sin:*—I. The Word of God is in its very nature expulsive of sin and cleansing therefrom (*John xv. 3.*) II. Hid like a sword in its sheath to be drawn out at a moment's notice. Christ's answer to Satan: "It is written." Hid like a guard in a house, a sentinel in a fort, to watch diligently against the approach of temptation. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Three great things in human life:*—I. A great REVELATION. "Thy Word." A word is a revelation of intelligent moral mind. The value of a word depends up the intellectual and moral worth of the mind it expresses. The words of thoughtless men are wind and nothing more. The words of corrupt men are the channels of impurity. The words of the holy and the strong are amongst the most elevating forces in society. But what is a human word compared with the Word of God? The revelation of a mind infinitely wise, immaculately holy, boundlessly loving and almighty in strength. This Word we have here, and it is given us in order to

work our spiritual renovation, and to restore us to the moral image of its Author.

II. A great act. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart." 1. There are many wrong uses of this Word. (1) The infidel uses it in order to throw doubt upon its contents, invalidate its authority and caricature its discoveries. (2) The sectarian uses it in order to sustain his own crochets and justify his own exclusiveness. (3) The worldly-minded uses it in order by writing or preaching, or profession, to promote his secular gains and advance his social influence. 2. What is the right use of it? To hide it in the heart. Hide it as golden grain in the soil that it may germinate and grow, and produce abundant fruit. It is a wonderful thought that God has given man the capacity to take into his nature the Word, and profoundly solemn is the thought that it is only as he takes in this Word into the depths of his nature and hides it there that he can reach a happy destiny.

III. A great purpose. "That I might not sin against Thee." 1. Sin is a terrible evil. It is worse than hell, for it is the cause and spirit of it. 2. There is a propensity in man to fall into this evil. This, alas, is true to all history universal. Experience and our own consciousness. 3. God's Word in the heart is the efficient counteractive. (*Homilist.*) *The best thing in the best place.*—I. **THE WORD OF GOD IS THE BEST THING.** 1. Because it is Divine. 2. It is good throughout. 3. It is the root of all good. 4. It is most prized at last.

II. PUT IT IN THE BEST PLACE. It is of no good to any of us until it is there,—that is, in the heart. **III. Here is THE BEST PURPOSE,** "That I might not sin against Thee." Does some one fancy that there could be a higher reason, a nobler purpose, than that? If you will think it over you will come to the conclusion that the Christian has no nobler ambition than to live without sin. "That I might not sin against Thee!"—there is no higher ambition than to live on earth the life of heaven. But, how does hiding God's Word in the heart promote holiness, how does it prevent sin? 1. It discovers sin. If you know God's Word well, you are on the high road to the easy discovery of God's will, for it is the revelation of the Divine will. By these testimonies you will know what God approves and delights in. It will be equally plain what He abhors and detests. These are the balances of the sanctuary. 2. It announces sin. It tells you where the evil is, and when you may expect it. It is a sort of tocsin that warns you of impending danger; an alarm timed to startle you just when the danger is close, and there is yet time to escape. 3. It points out the way of escape, it reveals the secret door in the wall, when your only safety is in flight. It is the chart on which is marked every shoal, and every quicksand, and every rock; and the safe channels, too. 4. It arms us against the danger. If kept in the heart, it keeps the heart. 5. It strengthens and nerves the spirit. 6. It reveals to us the path of duty. (*T. Spurgeon.*) *God's Word hidden in the heart.*—I. **WHAT** the psalmist hid. "Thy Word"—the Word of God, the message He has sent to us for our instruction and guidance, for our encouragement and consolation and delight. It is a Word which has reached us through the ministry of men who were themselves enlightened and inspired by God, that they might teach us all that we most need to know. Do not, on any account, neglect the Bible. It contains all that is essential, and the man who knows it has the essence of all wisdom. It is, indeed, light to guide, a beacon to warn, a mine of gold, a well of ever-living water, and the bread of eternal life. For all our deepest needs there is, as Sir Walter Scott said on his death-bed, but **ONE** book, and that book is the Word of God.

II. WHERE he hid it—"in my heart"—in the very lowest depths, the most secure and secret places of his nature. No external possession or hiding of the Bible is of the slightest use here. It is not having, but using that tells. The Bible is ours only so far as we know and understand and love it. Pray that the Holy Spirit may open your heart that you may attend to the things written and spoken! **III. WHY** he hid it—"that I might not sin against Thee." That was, indeed, a good purpose. To sin is to do wrong, to go astray, to miss the true mark of our life—the mark at which we ought to aim. It weakens and degrades us, mars our nature, and destroys our happiness both for this world and the next. We are all in danger of falling into it. If left to ourselves, to our own ideas and inclinations and desires, we shall fall into it. We need to be ever on our guard, and to pray, "Hold Thou me up." If we remember and rightly love the Bible we shall not sin against God. It will make us wise unto salvation. (*James Stuart.*) *The bane and antidote of souls.*—I. **THE BANE** of souls. What is the bane? "*Sin.*" A little word, but a terrible thing. The Bible represents it as a slavery, a disease, a

pollution, a poison, etc. It is loathsome to the Creator, it is the curse of the creature. This is the bane. II. The ANTIDOTE of souls. God's "Word" contains the power, and the only power, to destroy sin. (*Homilist.*) *Hiding and not hiding* (with Ps. xl. 10):—These two texts seem to contradict, but really complete, each other. There is a "hiding," without which a Christian life is scarcely possible, and cannot be vigorous. There is a "not hiding," which is equally indispensable. The latter is the consequence of the former. Unless a man can say, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart," depend upon it, he will never say, "I have not hid Thy righteousness from the great congregation"; and, conversely, unless a man can declare that he has hid his deepest convictions, his deepest convictions will be very shallow. 1. THE DEEP, INWARD SECRET OF ALL NOBLE, AND ESPECIALLY OF ALL DEEP, REAL, CHRISTIAN LIFE. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart." This means, first, familiarity with your Bible. Do not let any notion that God speaks "at sundry times and in divers manners," not only in Scripture, but otherwise, in providences, and in the world, and in our own hearts, cause us to neglect, as this generation does neglect, the systematic, diligent, daily perusal of Holy Scripture. You cannot hide the Word of God in your heart if you neglect, as so many of us do, the most articulate utterance of that Word in that Book, which, whatever may be the theories about the way it came into being, is the Word of the living God. Then there is another way by which we hide the Word in our hearts. It is, to cultivate the habit of referring everything to God's will. There must also be loving submission to what we know to be God's will. Put the will of God into your heart, and it will be like a bit of camphor wrapped up in some fur garment; it will keep all the moths off. II. A NOT HIDING, WHICH INCREASES POSSESSION. "I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart," etc. That life of which I have been speaking, the deep, secret life of communion with the will of God, will be hidden, but it will not be hidden. No man can smother up and bury his deepest convictions. If there be a bulb in the ground, and there be life in the bulb, the flower will force its way up through the earth when the spring days come. And every one of us, although unconsciously, declares the secret of our hidden lives by our conduct in the world. But there is more than that. No Christian man that has in his heart the Word and will of God but will know the impulse to impart it, and that in proportion as his own possession of Jesus Christ, who, as the embodiment of the will, is the Word of God—is deep and vital. (*Mac-laren, D.D.*) *Word in the heart a defence*:—The early settlers in America had to keep their guns within reach while about their work on the farm, for the Indians might come upon them unawares. Our foe, the devil, is quite as likely to take us when off guard. We need to have our weapon at all times within reach. It is not probable that our Saviour had the Scriptures in His hands when Satan came to Him in the wilderness, but He had laid up the truth in His heart so that no surprise was possible.

Vers. 15, 16. *I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.*—A *threefold internal action of the soul about the Word*:—These two verses present to us a threefold internal action of David's soul towards the Word of God: first, meditation; secondly, consideration; thirdly, delectation; every one of these proceeds from the other and mutually strengthen one another. Meditation brings the Word to the mind; consideration views it, and looks at length into it; whereof is bred delectation. That which comes into the mind, were it never so good, if it be not considered, goes as it came; leaving neither instruction nor joy; but being once perfected by meditation, if it be pondered by consideration, then it breeds delectation; which is the perfection of godliness, in regard of the internal action. Thus we see that a godly man is ever fruitful in good: like that tree planted by the rivers of waters. For at the same time when his external good actions cannot be seen, he is not without internal good motions, breeding good in the root of his affection; which shortly brings out good fruit in his action, to the glory of God, and good of others. (*Bp. Cowper.*) *Reading profitless without meditation*:—St. Francis de Sales did not think well of those men who flit from book to book, taking up first one religious exercise and then another; he compared such persons to the drone bee, which makes no honey. "Always learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth; always gathering and acquiring, without retaining anything, because what they gather is put into a bottomless sack, a broken cistern. The longer a bee rests

upon the flower, the more honey it will gather," he used to say. (*Christian Weekly*.)

Ver. 17. Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy Word.—Human life:—Two facts suggested concerning human life: I. That its CONTINUANCE DEPENDS UPON DIVINE MERCY. No creature has a right to live. All finite life is a gift; especially is this the case with human life, that has outraged its constitution and rebelled against its Creator. We live by mercy. II. That its VALUE DEPENDS UPON TRUE OBEDIENCE. Life apart from obedience is a life without moral peace, without harmony, without spiritual usefulness, without God, without hope. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 18. Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.—Moral blindness:—Moral blindness is the worst kind of blindness. I. Physical blindness has its COMPENSATIONS. Other faculties and organs generally become so keen and active as to make up for the loss of the eye. The imagination also, as in the case of Milton, Homer, etc., gets power to create sunny worlds. II. Physical blindness is not CRIMINAL. It is a calamity. All blindness arises from one of three causes, the want of the visual faculty, the want of light, or the non-employment of the visual faculty. Man is morally blind not from the first cause, for he has conscience, that is, the eye of the soul; not from the second, for he has a moral revelation outside and inside of him. It is the last; he closes his eyes. III. Physical blindness CONCEALS THE HIDEOUS. To look upon the hideous is painful. The blind man sees them not. But the man who is morally blind has often terrible visions of the most horrible things, his conscience scares and scathes him. (*Homilist*.) **Spiritual illumination:**—I. MAN BY NATURE IS SPIRITUALLY BLIND. "Open thou mine eyes." 1. This spiritual blindness is the effect of sin. 2. It is universal. 3. It deprives man of his prerogatives. 4. It exposes man to danger. The refuge is before him, but he travels the path that leads to ruin. Who so blind as the sinner? II. THE REMOVAL OF THIS SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS WILL ENABLE MAN TO PERCEIVE THE TRUTH OF GOD'S LAW. He is brought into a new sphere and new world. 1. The Bible is replete with realities. 2. The realities of the Bible are wonderful. 3. They are inexhaustible. 4. Mankind stands in need of perceiving these wonderful realities. III. THE REMOVAL OF THIS SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS GOD'S WORK. 1. By the agency of His Word. 2. By the agency of His Holy Spirit, who applies the Word to the conscience. IV. APPLICATION. 1. The necessity of applying to God for the removal of this spiritual darkness. 2. The impossibility of being happy without Divine light and life. 3. The obligation of the Christian to God for being possessed with light to perceive the truths of the Bible. (*J. O. Griffiths*.) **God's Word suited to man's sense of wonder:**—I. THE SENSE OF WONDER IN MAN, AND WHAT GENERALLY EXCITES IT. It is a great thing not to lose the sense of wonder, and yet to keep it for right objects. 2. The feeling may be excited by different objects. (1) The new and unexpected. (2) Things beautiful and grand. (3) The mysterious. II. GOD HAS MADE PROVISION FOR THIS SENSE OF WONDER IN HIS REVEALED WORD. 1. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the new and unexpected to us. (1) As to its form, it has gone on from first to last to add something new and fresh to all it had said before, and, if its circle has now closed, it is because it is already wide enough never to become old. (2) As to the spirit of the Bible, we know how it exhorts us to search, to meditate, to "dig for wisdom as for hid treasures," which must mean that we should bring out the fresh and unexplored. 2. While the Bible makes provision for constantly new views of truth, it sets before us also things beautiful and grand, without which the new would be a matter of idle curiosity. 3. And then, if we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to awe, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this. Its aim is, all through, to lead us to such subjects as the soul, and God, and the eternal world, and sin, the great mystery and root of mysteries, and the marvellous remedy which has been provided for it in the descent of the Divine nature to the human, that great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh." III. THE MEANS WE ARE TO USE IN ORDER TO HAVE GOD'S WORD THUS UNFOLDED.—The prayer of the psalmist may be our guide—"Open Thou mine eyes that I may see." 1. He asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and He did it in His own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the pur-

poses of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. 2. He asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of His Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in man's soul. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *A necessary prayer*:—There are two classes of persons who may learn something from this prayer of the psalmist. 1. There are those—and many of them good Christians—who do not take so large a view of the Bible as they ought. They confine themselves to some doctrines and precepts, central and needful, and they read the Bible to find these in constantly recurring forms, just as some men look on flowers chiefly as verifying some botanical theory. This reduces the Book of God to a set of doctrinal moulds, and often makes what should be the most interesting of all books, one to which they have to urge themselves by a constraint of conscience, when they might be drawn to it by the attraction of constant freshness and growing beauty. For our own sakes, and for the sake of presenting it in its true light to the world, let us seek to study it in all the vividness of life and variety of colour with which God has set it forth. The special want of our time is to make the Bible more human without making it less Divine. 2. There is another class who may have given much thought to the Bible, and obtained from it fresh views of man and nature and God, but they have not yet lifted up the heart with this petition, "Open Thou mine eyes," etc. They have not felt their need of any such enlightenment, because they have not felt the presence of sin, nor realized the darkness that it pours over the spiritual vision. Let them ask of its Author the Divine eye-salve with which He anoints the eyes. Its first revelations may be unwelcome, and men may be startled to see how fancied wealth and fullness sink into spiritual poverty and misery. But continued vision will open up Divine remedies, gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, the value of which will only be enhanced by growing insight. (*Ibid.*) *The Bible as containing the wonderful*:—The Bible contains "Wondrous things." Wonderful in their nature, wonderful in their number, and wonderful in their influence. As containing the wonderful—I. IT AGREES WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN MIND. 1. Man has a craving for the wonderful. 2. Man has a need for the wonderful to excite his faculties, to stimulate his inquiries, to challenge his powers. II. IT ACCORDS WITH THE CHARACTER OF NATURE. All nature is crowded with the wonderful. We need not take the microscope to search the myriad worlds invisible to the naked eye, or the telescope innumerable worlds and systems rolling through infinite space to discover the wonderful. The wonderful comes under our eye, sounds in our ear, and beats in our pulse every moment. If the Bible did not contain the wonderful it would not be in harmony with nature, not in harmony with the works of God, either in this planet or in any parts of immensity. III. IT REPROVES THE DOGMATISM OF RELIGIONISTS. (*Homilist.*) *Spiritual discernment*:—Two forms of Divine teaching are implied in these words—revelation and spiritual apprehension to receive that which is revealed; truth in the written Word, and the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit; the one therefore universal, common to all men—the open Bible, the Gospel preached to every creature under heaven; the other personal, private, incommunicable by man to man; the one the noon-day sunshine flooding the whole world with light from the hills on the horizon to the grass and pebbles at your feet; the other the eye in which a clouded lens or a palsied nerve leaves you dark in the midst of the blaze of noon. 1. The distinction which is here implied is in perfect harmony and analogy with all the conditions of human knowledge. Every branch of human knowledge has what in the philosophical language of the day is called its objective and subjective side. In every art, every science, every pursuit, there are these two things; there are general laws, rules, theories, principles, illustrations, examples, which can be committed to writing, stored up in books, taught in words by the teacher to the scholar; and there is the personal aptitude, which may be developed by culture if it be latent, but which can never be bestowed when it is wanting. In the very same family one child has a talent for drawing and painting, and no ear whatever for music; another, if he were to dudge with the pencil or brush for years would never make anything of it, but music speaks a language that

seems like his native tongue, and, with moderate teaching and moderate opportunities, yields up its secret to his ear and his finger. So it is familiarly in business as well as in art and in science, in everything that man can teach man; one succeeds where another fails, and the best and ablest, and most skilful teacher has often to say in despair, "If you cannot see it, I cannot make you see it." Now, if we find something exactly corresponding to this in regard to spiritual truth; if this book is one book to one man and quite another book to another; if doctrines which to some minds shine by their own light need no proof but what is in them, are to others dark, mysterious, difficult, and to others totally incredible or utterly uninteresting—this, you observe, is no more than you might expect; it is merely the repetition within the sphere or region of spiritual truth of what is abundantly familiar to us in all other directions. But it does not follow that the difference between the Christian and the unbeliever, between the earnest inquirer after Divine truth, and the careless, unintelligent, irreligious hearer, is to be accounted for on the same principles, and is simply of the same kind, as the difference between the musician and the painter, between the linguist and the mathematician, between the keen successful man of business and the blunderer who is always failing. Thank God, no; but surely this follows, that the prevalence of scepticism or of irreligion, were these a hundred times more prevalent than they are, does not produce the shadow of a presumption that the Christian is wrong in his faith, or that he is deluded in his experience. 2. The Bible amply recognizes and abundantly teaches this double character of Divine knowledge, this analogy between Divine knowledge and every other kind of knowledge, but at the same time with a broad and vital difference. The Bible knows nothing, either in the Old Testament or in the New, of any doctrine of reserve. Where it speaks it speaks to all; its "voice is to the sons of men"; its "sound is gone out through all the earth, and its word is to the end of the world"; but at the same time nothing is more emphatically and plainly taught in the Bible itself than that these open pages, open to the whole world, and even to be pressed upon the eyes of all men who can be persuaded to look into them, are all the while a sealed book except to those who have eyes to see. So far as it is possible for truth to be put into words, so far the Holy Scriptures are "able to make us wise unto salvation." But the Scriptures themselves tell us that there is a learning that cannot be put into words, that cannot be written, or printed, or spoken, and that, therefore, cannot be communicated by man to his fellow-man; that there must be the eye to see and the ear to hear. 3. It is an unspeakably consoling and delightful reflection that this impossibility of attaining spiritual truth apart from Divine teaching which God's Word so plainly sets forth, puts no hindrance in any man's way, no hindrance in the way of the simplest learner, no hindrance in the way of the unbeliever any more than of the believer, if only the unbeliever is desirous of knowing what is truth. Our Saviour's words, when He says, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who hath sent Me, draw him," are not building up a barrier between Himself and any human soul; they are throwing down all barriers; they are assuring us that so far as is possible, God has put all men upon one spiritual level of privilege and opportunity. It is not that a hindrance and a barrier has been built up; it is that human nature, as it exists, needs the Divine light, the Divine grace, the Divine help, as it needs the Divine atonement and the Divine Saviour, and that as man cannot lift himself, even a single foot or inch from his mother earth by his own power, so much less can he lift himself one step towards God, unless not only the light shine down and shows him what he is, and what God is, but the saving hand lays hold of him and inspires within his heart the assurance that the hand that has once taken hold upon him shall never loose its hold. (*E. R. Conder, D.D.*) *Divine illumination*.—I. SOME THINGS IN WHICH IT DOES NOT CONSIST. 1. It does not consist in any degree of knowledge acquired in the ordinary manner. 2. It does not consist in revelations of new truths. 3. It does not consist merely in lively and affecting views of the truths already revealed in the Word of God. 4. It does not consist in any conceptions, or creations of the imagination, respecting God, Christ, heaven, or hell. II. IN WHAT, THEN, DOES IT CONSIST? It is a sense of Divine things. In its results it differs entirely from a mere opinion or judgment of the mind. There may be an opinion founded on the testimony of others, that light is pleasant; but of this pleasantness the blind man has no just conception. If sight is granted to him, he will find light to be widely different from anything which he had ever con-

ceived. So of Divine things. The natural man may believe them to be excellent and glorious, but of this excellency and glory he has no just conception. The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit. A sense of their superlative excellency and glory in the mind is as certainly the work of God as sight in the natural eye, or hearing in the natural ear, or tasting in its appropriate organ.

III. THE PRODUCTION OF THIS SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING IN HIS PEOPLE IS EVERYWHERE IN THE SCRIPTURES LITERALLY AND IMMEDIATELY ASCRIBED TO THE ALMIGHTY.

IV. CONCLUSION. This subject suggests, 1. The reason why those who have been newly born into the kingdom of Christ seem to regard everything as new, and feel themselves to be in a new world. 2. That persons of very limited capacities may have spiritual understanding. 3. The importance of inquiring concerning the nature of our understanding in a spiritual respect. 4. No other knowledge is so pure and elevated as that which is thus acquired. 5. No other knowledge is so capable of producing sacred joy. 6. No other knowledge is so purifying in its influence. A spiritual understanding of the character of God, a holy sense of His presence, a sacred view of the character of Christ, a holy sense of the presence and work of the Spirit, a spiritual appreciation of the extent and spirituality of the law—all these things are pre-eminently calculated to excite the renovated heart to walk in the statutes and commandments of the Lord. (*J. Foot, D.D.*)

Divine revelation.—I. IT CONTAINS WONDERS. The Bible has many wonders, but the great "wonder" is the Incarnation of Christ. It is that into which angels desire to look, that which will be the study of eternity. II. MAN SHOULD DISCOVER these wonders. To know Christ is of paramount importance to him. It is his life eternal. III. To discover these wonders GOD MUST OPEN MAN'S EYES. Man has spiritual eyes, eyes to see moral truth and God. These eyes are closed. No one can open them but the Divine Ophthalmist. Oh that men saw things as they really are! (*Homilist.*) *Spiritual vision*.—I. WE ARE ALL BORN SPIRITUALLY BLIND. Think of Samson when the Philistines put out his eyes. What a picture of misery! and further, what a picture of man! a mirror where unconverted men, had they eyes to see, might behold themselves. Was he taken captive of the Philistines?—so are they of their vices. Did he pass his days in the service of his enemies?—slaves of Satan, they serve one who hates them with cruel hatred. Was he bound in fetters of brass?—what are fetters of brass or iron to the chains of the drunkard, of the licentious, of the miser, of the lover of this world? Was he blinded as well as bound?—so are they. "Eyes have they, but they see not;" "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not;" they are insensible to their state. But here fails the parallel. Samson felt his degradation keenly; longed for liberty; groped about to find a door of escape. How different the poor sinner! He hugs his chain, and delights in the vices that enslave him. II. CONSIDER SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS BLINDNESS.

1. Blindness deprives its subjects of many pleasures which God's goodness lavishes on us, and, through our eyes, pours into our hearts. 2. Blindness makes the condition of its subjects one of painful dependence. 3. Blindness exposes its subjects to deception. Satan makes thousands believe that all is right, that the path they tread is one of safety, when all the while, step by step down, but gently down, he conducts his blind, deluded, singing, dancing joyous victims on to the brink of ruin, and to that last, fatal step which plunges them into hell. 4. Again, blindness exposes us to danger. A blind man will starve with bread within his reach; parched and perishing with thirst, he will pass the well that invited his lips to drink; drowning, with a rope thrown within his grasp, and the cries of eager voices in his ear, lay hold of life! he will sink into a watery grave—lost, when he might have been saved. Such is the case of the unconverted.

III. THE EYES OF THE BLIND BEING OPENED, THEY BEHOLD WONDROUS THINGS OUT OF THE LAW OF GOD. There was an eminent philosopher who had devoted a lifetime to the pursuits of science, and not, as he thought, in vain. She had crowned his brow with laurels, and inscribed his name in the temple of fame. In the evening of his days, at the eleventh hour, God was pleased to call him, open his eyes, convert him; and now, he who was deeply read in science and conversant with its loftiest speculations, as he bent his grey head over the Bible, declared that, if he had his life to live over again, he would spend it in the study of the Word of God. He felt like a miner, who, after toiling long and to little purpose in search of gold, with one stroke of his pick-axe lays open a vein of the precious metal and becomes rich at once—the owner of a vein that grows the richer the deeper the mine is driven. Such a treasure the Bible offers to those whose eyes

God has opened to its wonders of grace and glory. It is inexhaustible. IV. GOD ONLY CAN OPEN OUR EYES. Hence to Him David directs the prayer of my text; and also this—Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Men use instruments to restore sight, and nowhere does surgery achieve a nobler triumph, or bestow greater blessings on mankind, than in yonder theatre, where skill and a steady hand cut into the sightless balls; and man, opening a way for the light of heaven, imitates Christ in His divine works of might and mercy—pouring light into the blind man's eyes, and joy into the blind man's heart. God also uses instruments—His instrument the Word, His agent the Holy Spirit. By these, working faith in men, and renewing them in the spirit of their minds, He has often answered, and is now ready to answer the prayer, Open Thou mine eyes. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The lifted veil*:—It was an ancient custom for the reader of the Law in a Jewish synagogue to put a veil upon his face. Originally designed as an act of reverence, as if the glory of this law was too dazzling for the human eye to behold, the veil upon the countenance has become an awful type of the veil that is upon the heart. Century after century has passed away, and still in every Jewish synagogue "Moses is read." But so blinded are the minds of those who read, and of those who listen, that they do not perceive the beauty, or understand the meaning of their own Scriptures—an affecting proof of the necessity of the Spirit's teaching, for the right understanding of the Word of God. I. GOD'S LAW CONTAINS "WONDROUS THINGS." All the Divine works are wonderful. There is not a leaf which God has moulded, or an insect He has formed, or an atom He has made, which does not demand, and will not repay, our thoughtful study. But Revelation contains a brighter display of His wisdom and love than nature with all its sublime and glorious discoveries. II. THE ENLIGHTENED MIND CAN ALONE UNDERSTAND IT. 1. There is ignorance. "Having the understanding darkened," is the brief but solemn description which the apostle gives of the Gentiles, and it is a true representation of unregenerate nature. 2. Then there is prejudice. We cannot understand a truth, if we dislike that truth. 3. Unbelief prompts men to misinterpret Scripture, and renders them ingenious in their objections against it. 4. Worldliness is another veil which hides from our view the wonders of God's Word. III. THAT GOD ONLY CAN COMMUNICATE THE LIGHT WE NEED. 1. The Spirit humbles us, and humility enables us to understand the Scriptures. 2. The Spirit purifies the heart, and purity enables us to understand the Scriptures. 3. The Spirit fills our hearts with love, and love enables us to understand the Scriptures. (*H. J. Gamble.*) *Longing for spiritual sight*:—I. THE INVOLVED ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE. II. THE REASONS UPON WHICH THE PLEA RESTS. 1. Spiritual sight or knowledge is of itself a great blessing. 2. Such a petition honours and acknowledges the work of the Holy Ghost. 3. There are wonders in the system of revealed truth which have yet to be explored and known. 4. The opening of our eyes is a work of Divine grace and power, and stands intimately connected with our pardon and regeneration. 5. This prayer stands before us as a spiritual and heaven-inspired petition, because of its opposition to the spirit and desires of the carnal mind. 6. Unless this prayer, or its equivalent, be uttered in an earnest and believing spirit, a blinding process will go on, which can only terminate in the darkness of death eternal. (*A. Barrett.*) *The need of spiritual vision*:—In the Old Testament what do we see? A great many Christian people see very little in the Old Testament, and they are always ready to criticize. I know men in the Church who go into raptures over the poetry of Homer, or the eloquence of Demosthenes, or the philosophy of Plato, about the artistry of Greece or about the jurisprudence of Rome; but they have no enthusiasm whatever for these great, noble teachers who declare the simple everlasting laws which are the very light and life. In this great Book of Righteousness, this Old Testament, a good many of us see but little into the gleam here and there; our eyes have not been opened to its breadth and depth and significance. I remember once looking over a magnificent piece of scenery—mountains, rocks, and sea—and all of it bathed in the splendours of the setting sun. And I heard a lady close to me complain that she did not think much about it because it was all land and water. Exactly. But, I say, what if Claude had been there? What if Turner had been there? What would they have seen in that panorama of splendour and delight? What did your Master see in the Old Testament? How Christ appealed to these prophets, minstrels, and seers, and how He brought out of that Old Testament all the wondrous things of the Sermon on the Mount! The Church wants its eyes opening to the

full noon of the Old Testament, where God has given to us such grand histories, and statutes, and suggestions. You may well pray, Open Thou mine eyes that I may understand these great teachings, that I may appreciate these great parables of truth and of righteousness. What do a great many of us see in the New Testament? Do you think, to-day, that we see all the glory of the incarnate Christ? Do you think that we have seen with open eyes the crucified Christ—the Christ of the Resurrection? "My soul has feelers, not eyes; I grope, I do not see. Oh, that I might get eyes, that I could see," that I could see the glory of God, that I could see the beauty of Christ, that I could see the majesty of His higher law, that I could see a door opening into heaven! Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things out of Thy law. There is another thing. Here you consider the special appeal: that I may see wonderful things out of Thy law. What wonderful things? I tell you one is this: We ought all to pray to God that He would open our eyes to the reality of the law of righteousness. Oh, what you want God to do with this generation is to work into its understanding and soul the truth, the reality, the inviolability of the moral commandment. One French writer says he does not like Christianity because it condemns a man if he does not believe in it. And the law of gravitation condemns you if you do not believe in it. I wish we could for once believe that the law, the higher law, is as true as the law of gravitation, and that it will as certainly inflict upon the transgressor a penalty, only infinitely more disastrous. But there is another thing which we want to have our eyes opened to about the law of righteousness, and that is its universal application; that it is like the sky shutting us all down. Oh, that society might feel the obligation universally, the absolute obligation, rich and poor, intellectual and vulgar; clergy and laity; public virtue and private virtue all under one great commandment—"thou shalt," "thou shalt not!" We want our eyes opening to the broad, solid, imperative commandment, as we shall all one day stand before one throne and each and all give an account of themselves. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The wonders of God's law*:—There is nothing so wonderful as God's law; nay, it may justly be said to include in itself all that is most wonderful, all that truly merits our admiration, all that will really reward our curiosity. For what is it? The psalmist here was not thinking merely of the law given to Moses, or of the words written in any book, however sacred; he was not thinking of spoken words or written characters, but of God's eternal realities. He was an earnest man, and his mind sought to be in contact with truth itself; he was a pious man, and his heart longed for nothing less or lower than communion with the living God. He felt himself in the Divine presence, and he felt that the Divine law was within and around him. The wonders of physical nature, and the human soul and human history, and of redeeming love and grace, are all wonders of that law of God which the psalmist longed and prayed to behold, that law which ruleth alike in what is least and greatest, to which all things in heaven and earth do homage, the seat of which is the bosom of the Eternal, the voice of which is the harmony of the universe. There is no science cultivated among us which can ever have anything else for its highest aim than simply to discover and exhibit some part of the Divine law, since the end of every kind of study worthy of our engaging in is directly or indirectly to extend our knowledge of laws which we distinguish from one another by calling laws of astronomy or chemistry, laws of language or history, physical, moral, or spiritual laws, but which all agree in being laws of God, the operations of His will, the expressions of His character, the rules which He has implanted in His creatures, and assigned to them as the conditions and limits of their workings. But the most important of God's laws are those which He has given us for the regulation of our own lives. In reality, whether we see it or not, there is far more that is wonderful in these laws than in any other. They are, for example, the laws of God in a far higher sense than other laws; the laws of the physical world might have been quite different from what they are. God made them to be what they are by making the physical world itself what it is; if He had made quite a different material world, with quite other laws, He would have been none the less God, the true object of our worship. But He did not make by any forth-putting of His will the fundamental laws of moral life to be what they are; they are eternal and unchangeable. That God should alter them would be for Him to cease to be wise and righteous and holy and loving, it would be for Him to cease to be good. The wonders of these laws are thus the wonders of the Divine nature, and far greater, therefore, than any

wonders of created nature; at the same time these laws are the laws of our natures, of our spirits, of what is much higher and much more wonderful than anything else to be beheld in nature. On earth, it has been said, there is nothing great but man, and in man there is nothing great but mind; and certainly a soul is a far more wonderful thing than even a star, a spiritual being than a material world, and its laws far more wonderful. It is spiritual law which determines men's relations to their God and one another, and it is on obedience or disobedience to it that the weal or woe of individuals or societies chiefly depends, so that all the marvels and mysteries of human life and destiny gather around. If we would see, however, the wonders in the most impressive light, we must turn to Revelation. Every miracle, every prophecy, every striking dispensation recorded in Scripture, whatever else it may have meant, was always a proclamation of God to men that they should reverence this His law. If we can see no wonders in the law which Christ died to satisfy and glorify, if we do not see it to be unspeakably more wonderful than all other law, assuredly our blindness is great indeed, and we cannot too earnestly cry to a merciful God, "open Thou mine eyes." (*R. Flint, D.D.*) *The wonders of God's law:*—The psalmist's delight in God's law, and intense desire to know God's judgments, may thus be read as an expression of a feeling which we may cherish towards everything that is going on in our world and among the stars. There are wondrous things for us to behold in the processes of nature and human life. The more our eyes are open to the ordering and the law of God in all existences and events the more fascinating will our view of the universe become to us; and as our brief sojourning here draws toward its close, the more intensely interesting will all our experience of life and the vistas of promise beyond become to us. Consider, first, why it is that we take pleasure in watching the course of events. What deeper motive is there which leads men with increasing civilization to ask daily, "What is the news?" Why is it that we wish to live where we can keep in quick touch with everything that is transpiring throughout the whole world? Not simply because they are current events, but because they are events in history; because they are things happening in the life and progress of the world; because these facts are parts and moments of some vast half-discovered whole of human history; because they are not mere happenings, but they are orderings of events; because they are not mere blows of events struck over and over again upon the hollow round of the world, sounding ever the same dull tone; but because they are events beaten out to some single purpose; because they are successive notes in the world's marching music. What beyond our passing sympathy interests us so much is not merely the event, or the fact in itself, but something to which the fact belongs, the movement, the order, the problem, the on-reaching history, the providential purpose to which it belongs. Oh, the charm of the seen is the unseen, and the perpetual fascination of history is the revealing of its Messianic law and order! Consider as another instance our interest in common human life. What is that ultimately, in the last analysis of our comradeships or our friendships? Some of you can remember for many years past. But in what, as one whole, lies to you the real human interest of all this which you have been seeing, and knowing in your sojourning here? The persons, the events, the friends, the faces? Yes, they shall always be of concern, some of dear memory and hope to you; but the supreme interest of your life as a whole, in all its human contacts and experiences, lies after all not in what you have seen and known, but in something that you have half seen, or dimly grasped after, or at times without seeing have become inwardly, deeply sure of; it has been the leading of God through it all; something more than human felt through all human love and sorrow; the Infinite surrounding the finiteness of it all; the eternal giving and taking the lives of men back into itself; the larger hope, the ever forward movement, the eventful Providence; the mystery of some higher purpose, measureless, unknown, let with moments of bright revealings; oh, this is something vaster and diviner, which as you sit and think over the long past, seems to take it all up, events, persons, sorrows, joys, all that you have been and seen, and felt, into one indistinguishable memory and dream and hope of glory, and to leave your heart, like the psalmist of old, saying, "I have seen wondrous things," etc. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *Spiritual sight:*—The spiritual eyesight must be opened in order that the spiritual beauty and wisdom and glory of the Divine Word may be discovered. When the great philosopher, Sir David Brewster, was dying, he said to Sir James Simpson, "I have had the light for many years, and oh, how

bright it is! I feel so perfectly sure, so perfectly happy." "Come and see." That is the short, simple, earnest common-sense appeal which is made to every honest seeker after truth, every soul troubled with a sense of sin and guilt. Come and see. (*Christian Age.*) *Removing obstruction to sight:*—The other day (writes Mr. Reader Harris, K.C.) I had the privilege of witnessing one of our great surgeons remove the cataract from a woman's eye. It is a beautiful illustration of God's work of deliverance from sin. It was done almost instantaneously. The cataract was taken out of the eye. The surgeon took it right out, and then, very soon afterwards, he put glasses on that woman's eye, and he said: "Mr. Harris, take out your watch," and to the woman he said: "How long have you been blind?" She said: "I have been blind for six years." "Now," he said, "look through this glass, and tell what his watch says." She read it at once, hour hand and minute hand. Why? Because the surgeon had taken out of the eye that which obscured the vision; and because that operator had not only taken out what hindered the vision but he had given her, in the lens, that which could take the place of it. May God clarify our spiritual vision by purifying our hearts, and filling them with the Holy Ghost! (*Sunday Circle.*) *Spiritual Vision:*—The naked eye can see only about 3,500 stars, but the man who looks and sees through the telescope the star dust of eighty-five million worlds grows more interested through deeper views into the skies. So with the Bible, when the eyes of our understanding are opened on the vast firmament of Bible truth by the aid of the telescope of spiritual discernment. (*J. Crafts.*)

Ver. 19. **I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me.**—*Songs for the way* (with ver. 54):—Two cries ascend from the human heart to God—the cry of the lorn spirit for its Father, and the cry of joy after the Father has been found. A sad life, astrife with perplexities, hedged in by shadows, utters its natural longings in the words, "I am a stranger in the earth," etc. The same life, emerging from the shadow, with God's light shining on its path, exclaims, "Thy statutes have been my songs," etc. Taken together, these words set forth our condition as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and God's bountiful provision for meeting that condition in Christ. I. The fact that we are strangers is forced upon us by OUR IGNORANCE. Apart from revelation, we know almost nothing of the world we live in, and absolutely nothing of its Lord. In every age, and to every thinking soul, arise the great questions, Who sent me into this earth? Why am I here? Whither am I going? The Gospel is God's answer to this cry. It is the revelation of the light which is behind sun and stars. What sun and star, what hill and stream cannot disclose of themselves, their Maker has disclosed in Christ. He reveals Himself in Christ as our Father. By His Spirit He says to each of us, "My child." He puts the faith and assurance of His fatherhood into our hearts. And this great truth of His fatherhood becomes the first round of the song which He has given to cheer us in the house of our pilgrimage. II. OUR SINS still more than our ignorance have put this sense of strangeness into our hearts, and the marks of it upon our countenance. When the soul awakens to spiritual consciousness, and finds itself in the presence of this great truth of the fatherhood of God, the first fact which confronts it is a sense of farness from the Father. It is God's mercy that He has not left us to rest in this depth of strangeness. He has made a way for us in Christ:—the new and living way by the blood. Christ dying for sinners, coming near to the lost to bring them near to God:—this is the light which God has kindled for all strangeness between the soul and God, the light which, touching the heart of the sinner, dissipates his estrangement and fills him with thankfulness and song. III. Another proof that we are strangers is THE ESTRANGEMENT WE FIND AMONG MEN. Think of the conflicts, oppressions, misunderstandings among the inhabitants of the earth at any moment; think of hatreds so fierce and vital that only bloodshed can express their fury; whole races in subjection to other races over large sweeps of the globe, and during many generations; sectarian and selfish policies of nations, of the pride and isolation of classes; narrownesses and spites and arrogances of society, of the evil-speaking and backbiting and talebearing, and the hot and sullen tempers of men; quarrels and contests and ambitions which make up such a sum of the general sum of life:—these are the footprints of the stranger. Christ comes to us with the olive branch in His hand, as the great uniter and binder together. "One is your Father." He carries it up into the region occupied by thinkers and men of science, and down to the lowest levels of active

and suffering life. He comes with the grand purpose of binding those who receive that word into a holy and abiding fellowship. Out from the contending and shifting crowd He calls a people for Himself, baptizes them with His own Spirit, inspires them with His truth, builds them into a holy nation, and rules over them as King. IV. The last and saddest mark of the stranger upon us is DEATH. If we are all to die, if there is nothing beyond the grave, then, indeed, we are strangers in the earth; we are without a home or a fatherland. If there had been no light for this shadow, how great our misery should be! There could be no hope of an immortal fellowship for society, or of an immortal life for individual men. But, blessed be God! He has not hidden the future from His child. A home awaits us beyond the grave. A new life blooms for us in the very presence of God. Our torn and suffering earthly existence is to be crowned with glory and immortality in the world of the risen dead. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *I am a stranger on the earth*:—There is something very affecting in this expression. It is emphatically repeated, at long intervals, in the Scriptures. (Ps. xxxix. 12; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Gen. xxiii. 4; Heb. xi. 18.) The emotion which the very phrase excites, running down from the earliest times to the present generation, shows that it refers to something permanent in human nature. Plato felt it when he tried to prove, from the nature of the soul's operations, that it was but a mysterious visitor from some pre-existent state. A modern author felt it when he described men as ships passing each other on the ocean, and hailing each other in vain for directions on the way. Very shallow must have been our experience, very lightly must we have pondered our condition, if we too have never felt it, and responded to the declaration, "I am a stranger on the earth." The world is beautiful and glorious: it lies around us, as one has said, "like a bright sea, with boundless fluctuations." But we are not at home in it. We are lost and bewildered amid its splendours. We are unsafe amid its wasting forces. We are but little versed in its capacious stores. Our hold upon it is faint and transient. So, across the gulf of past ages, we enter into eager sympathy with those old believers who confessed that they too were strangers; and we would seek with them "a city which hath foundations." But my object is not only to verify the feeling indicated in the text, but to show the deliverance offered us in our religion, from everything in the feeling that is painful or sad. By the terrors of doubt that cloud the prospect of the unspiritual, I would warn—by the satisfaction of Christian hope, I would win you, vitally to embrace the peculiarity of the Gospel, in the ties of fellowship it offers you, not only with the living and present, but with the unseen beings of another world—no longer the dim, shadowy, fitting, uncertain phantoms they were to the pagan faith—with the saints, truly worthy that name, elder and younger, in "the household of God." As the New Testament is true, this association is offered us. Death, terrifier of the world, stands back to let the light stream through his gloomy house, and reveal the holy and happy assembly. Sorrow bends aside her head, so as not to obstruct the inspiring vision. Sickness lifts from the couch her heavy eyes, to catch a glimpse of it. What refinement! What elevation! What generosity and joy! What motive and impulse! There, alive, appear to us the good departed, whom we have known here below, and those we have not known; the celebrated in the calendar, and the uncanonized, as worthy as they; those whose names stand as monumental exemplars on the page of the Bible, with names no less pure, written only in the Lamb's book of life;—and we "strangers on the earth," in these crumbling garments of clay, are invited to be fellow-citizens with them all. But there are conditions. We must give up our selfishness, and every shape of sin. We must leave behind our spiritual sloth and our sensual excess. "So live," says our subject to us, cultivate such sympathies with the departed "wise" and "good," that, when the body goes to mingle with theirs in the dust, the soul may meet theirs in the heavens, not as an alien and a stranger, but as a fellow-citizen and a friend. (*C. A. Bartol.*) *Good men strangers upon earth*:—I. THE PETITION. The psalmist does neither plead by this form of language that God would reveal a new system of precepts to him, which he had never before made known, nor that these already revealed should be expressed in plainer terms; but he prays for grace to improve them, and to apply them to practice, that he might see the proper use of his knowledge; for the internal illumination of God's Holy Spirit to render the external revelation of the Word profitable to his soul; for the practical saving knowledge of his duty in opposition to mere speculation. Now, God is said to hide this knowledge from

us, when He doth not actually impart it; and the psalmist here means, by negative expressions, the very same thing which he speaks in positive terms in ver. 18. II. *THE ARGUMENT* the psalmist makes use of to enforce his petition; "I am a stranger in the earth." Consider the several respects in which good men may be styled strangers in the earth. 1. In respect of their heavenly extraction; they are natives and citizens of heaven. 2. In respect of their inheritance. The children of this world have their portion in the things of this life only. But the resting-place of saints is not in this world; it remains, it waits them. 3. In respect of their affections and desires. As their treasure is in heaven, their hearts are there. No characters can be more unlike, nor tempers more strange, than these are to earthly minds. Their ends, their motives, their principles, their employments are contrary to one another. III. *CONCLUSION*. 1. Let us learn, as strangers upon earth, to keep a close correspondence with heaven, to live near to God, much in the exercise of prayer, under a lively sense of our own necessities, and with believing views of Divine grace to direct and uphold us; otherwise, it will be no wonder if, instead of coming well to our journey's end, mischief befall us by the way. 2. Let us never satisfy ourselves with the knowledge without the practice of our duty. 3. We should meddle as little with the world as may be. 4. We should live indifferent to the pains and pleasures of this world. 5. We should accustom our minds to look forward to our latter end. 6. We should learn to be kind and hospitable to all mankind, as all are strangers in the earth in some respects; and our common lot is a powerful inducement to offices of kindness. (*W. Beat.*) *Human pilgrimage*:—I. I am as a stranger in the earth because of *THE IMPERMANENCE OF MY POSITION*. Here we have no continuing city. II. I am as a stranger in the earth because of *MY LIFE AND LANGUAGE*. If there be but a slight difference between the Christian and the secularist, it is because the Christian has not been "transformed by the renewing of his mind," for though bearing a new name he carries an old nature. We instantly detect a foreigner by so small a sign as an accent or a posture; and the Christian is known to men of the world by a glance or tone, by a frown or smile. This should be the Christian's business as a stranger—to operate as the light, not as the lightning—to master men by attraction, and not by reprobation. III. I am a stranger in the earth because of *THE PERILS TO WHICH I AM EXPOSED*. The adventurous explorer feels that he is in constant danger. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The stranger's prayer*:—I. A *REMARKABLE CONFESSION*. 1. A stranger is absent from home. 2. A stranger has no fixed residence where he is liable to remove, he looks for changes, and meets them without surprise. 3. A stranger feels no particular interest in the place through which he passes, or in the events which transpire around him: he is not wholly unaffected by them; yet many things which concern a resident are of little or no consequence to a traveller: his home is elsewhere, and his main business lies in another quarter. 4. A stranger forms no intimate connection with the society among whom he is cast. He converses with them; he shows to all civility and respect; but as a stranger he never thinks of close alliance and lasting friendship. 5. A stranger reckons on inconveniences, and prepares to meet them. If he cannot have things altogether to his mind, he submits: if he be treated with neglect, it gives him not much concern: direct affronts do not deeply affect him—he is but "a stranger," and he looks forward to home as the seat of comfort, and the place of rest. II. *AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER*. 1. The Word of God is the stranger's best companion. 2. It is his kindest comforter. It makes up for all he needs, and supports under all he endures. III. *CONCLUSION*. 1. The delusion of ungodly men. They are "strangers on the earth" in regard to the fluctuations that await them, but too much at home in the temper of their minds. What awful surprise will such feel when the summons of departure comes! Go they must, however reluctant, however unprepared! 2. The importance of a right spirit in professors of religion. And what is this, but a spirit of abstraction from a polluting world, of holy indifference to its fascinating smiles, and of noble superiority to its forbidding frowns? (*T. Kidd.*) *A stranger in the earth*:—I. *AN ESTIMATE OF LIFE*. The Christian is a "stranger in the earth," because he is conscious of an intense longing for a land of greater purity and perfect rest. His principles also may appear strange to others. II. *A SURE SOLACE IN LIFE*. (1) God's commandments his solace, because they told him—(1) What to be. (2) What to do. (3) Where to go. (4) What to avoid. 2. They were revealed, (1) By the Spirit speaking in the soul, (2) By the Word of

truth, (3) By the openings out of prudential dealings. God is always going before us. III. CONCLUSION. 1. We need not think of ourselves as such strangers, that we are to despise the ordinary joys of life or beauties of the world. 2. We must not try to find our permanent home in this world. We could not if we would. Abraham and David recognized this (Gen. xxiii. 4; 1 Chron. xxix. 15). 3. We should increase daily in our appreciation of God's commandments. (*Homiletic Magazine*.)

Strangers in the earth:—This language may be looked upon in two aspects: I. As expressing a NECESSARY fact in man's earthly history. "Stranger in the earth." Two ideas here: (1) Ignorance. A stranger in a neighbourhood is ignorant of it. (2) Unsettledness. "No abiding city." II. As expressing a VIRTUOUS fact in man's earthly history. A desire to be guided by God's commandments. "Hide not," etc. These are necessary to guide through the labyrinthian path of life. (*Homilist*.)

A stranger in the earth:—When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going—into the immensities again—into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

I. THE STRANGER. Such, in regard to earth, and this human life altogether here, is he who makes the confession and breathes the prayer which these words express. He does not belong to this place. He is, consciously, intentionally, and earnestly passing through. In the ordinary sense, no doubt, he is as much of the earth as any other; yet has he, truly, a higher nativity, for he is "born from above." Let him show that he is, by living as a citizen of the higher land. Let him be in spiritual life a true patriot. Let him be loyal to the kingdom that claims his soul, that has his name registered in its book of life, and that will one day—if he be really of it—call forth its mighty, shining multitudes to receive him and his brethren with acclamations of delight. Let him be "a stranger in the earth," and then it will not only be possible to believe, but it will be impossible not to believe, that he justly claims citizenship in the higher country. A principle, an instinct, a habit of reserve, will be found running through the whole of life on the earthly side of it with the stranger. As for instance:

1. Reserve in secular occupation: in what we call the business of life. Will a man find fittest preparation for calmness, and nobleness, and purity in the everlasting kingdom by giving all his actual energies, and all his time in this world, to these earthly, transient things? It must be the better part to aim high, to "look" far, to disengage ourselves not only from what would corrupt and injure, but from what would over-occupy and thus insensibly degrade and betray us, and in the serene and lofty spirit of the "stranger," to do our duties, and pass through our days.

2. Reserve in pleasure. A pleasure-loving soul never can be unselfish, magnanimous, serene, brave, pure. It is therefore one of the Christian's daily lessons to teach himself effectually how to "use this world as not abusing it"; i.e. how to extract from present things all fair and honest enjoyment, without allowing selfishness and mere appetite so to touch and transmute them in the process that the enjoyment shall have in it some admixture of baser elements, and be no longer the thing which the Divine beneficence provides for man's hunger and thirst.

3. This principle of reserve must run through the whole of life. (1) There are many who would freely allow that it is rightly applied to business and to pleasure, but who have no idea that the application of it is as legitimate and as necessary within and through all the darker spheres of human life—those of pain, and trouble, and sorrow. But this is so. For these things, just like their opposites, are temporal and evanescent. They belong to "the fashion of this world which passeth away." Weep, then, but dry thy tears. Mourn, but be comforted. The great to-morrow will soon be here, whence you will look back, and be ashamed that you made so much fret and moan in this little yesterday. (2) Nor must we fail to apply the principle and cultivate the habit of reserve even in the sphere of highest duty. Underneath all outward, upward manifestation lies the steady purpose—"One thing I do." But in holding to this one purpose and secret law of our life we are subject to many changes, disappointments, reverses. Rather we are subject to a higher will, the faultless, loving will of our heavenly leader, who shapes His own perfect plan and builds it out of the toils and conflicts, the triumphs and reverses, of His servants; and to that will we ought to be always ready to bow. We ought to plan, and purpose, and will our very best, and throw all our heart and strength into our work, and yet have some reserve, and stand ready for some other issue. The fruit may be as good as the flower is fair, or the "blossom may go up as

dust." No matter. I lose nothing if my purpose is true and my will is loyal. My harvest in such case is not really lost—it is only postponed. II. **THE PRAYER**, as we cannot but see, is perfectly suited to the condition which has thus been described. "A stranger"—here but for a little, and yet morally beginning the great hereafter. "Never continuing in one stay," and yet ever possessing one being, and developing and settling that being into character. Passing through a fleeting life, and yet, at every step, gathering and carrying forward what must be the elements of the endless life to come—what need there is of light, direction, sacred influence, so that the passage through this world, which must be swift, may also be prosperous, the traveller finding not merely the supply of momentary needs as they arise, but extracting nourishment out of the vanishing scenes of life as they vanish, for the life everlasting. God's "commandments" revealed and brought home to the heart will yield, plentifully, all that can be needed in the pilgrim state. In one way or other they touch all the chances and hazards of the journey, and all the requirements of the traveller, while they all combine to make one supreme influence of preparation for what will come when the earthly journey is over. And will not God hear such a prayer, offered in such circumstances, and with such consciousness? Can there be the doubt of a moment about this? (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Strangers, but not homeless*.—Dr. South has made the striking observation that one world is enough for one man, and God has given us the choice between this and the heavenly. We cannot reign princes in both, or hold one in one hand and the other in the other. If strangers and pilgrims here we shall be at home in the other, and *vice versa*. (*E. P. Thwing.*) *Sense of pilgrimage state Jewish national trait*.—The Jews never seem to lose sight of the fact that they were descendants of pilgrim forefathers. In the most brilliant periods of their history they still regard the life of the moving patriarchs as a type of their own. The confession of Abraham as he stood asking from the children of Heth a place for his dead, that "he was a stranger and a sojourner," finds an echo in the prayer of David as he consecrates the treasures that had been offered for the building of the temple. "We are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were." The same characteristic view of life is heard again in the prayer of Hezekiah, when he compares his life to a shepherd's tent. Peter, who was a true type of his race, exhorts as "strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." The same refrain surges back from the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We have here no continuing city." Now large numbers of men feel themselves aliens because they have no stake in the soil and land is unequally distributed. But this was not the case with the twelve tribes to whom Canaan was apportioned by lot. Attachment to the soil became a passion of unrivalled fervour, even in those who had not been schooled into a lover-like devotion to the fatherland by years spent in bondage in an alien land, and yet in spite of this Jewish feeling the rational temper seems to have been ever haunted with a sense of the forlorn loneliness of life. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Vers. 20, 21. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times.—*The right and the wrong*.—I. **A HUNGERING** for the right. This hunger indicates: 1. The existence of rectitude. For every Divine instinct there is an objective provision. 2. The condition of healthfulness. As a rule, where there is hunger there is health. The soul that hungers for the right is not utterly diseased. 3. The certainty of supply. Physical hunger is not always satisfied, but spiritual always. Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall be filled. II. **A DEPLORING** for the wrong. Pride is a wrong. 1. That is Divinely rebuked and cursed. 2. Which turns men from the commandments of God. (*Homilist.*) *Holy longings*.—One of the best tests of a man's character will be found in his deepest and heartiest longings. You cannot always judge a man by what he is doing at any one time, for he may be under constraint which compel him to act contrary to his true self, or he may be under a transient impulse from which he will soon be free. He may for a while be held back from that which is evil, and yet he may be radically bad; or he may be constrained by force of temptation to that which is wrong, and yet his real self may rejoice in righteousness. A man may not certainly be pronounced to be good because for the moment he is doing good, nor may he be condemned as evil because under certain constraints he may be committing sin. A man's longings are more inward, and more near to his real self than his outward acts; they are more natural, in that they are entirely free,

and beyond compulsion or restraint. As a man longeth in his heart, so is he. I. **THE SAINT'S ABSORBING OBJECT.** They long after God's judgments, His revealed will. 1. The psalmist greatly revered the Word. All other books are at the best but as gold leaf, whereof it takes acres to make an ounce of the precious metal; but this book is solid gold; it contains ingots, masses, mines, yea, whole worlds of priceless treasure, nor could its contents be exchanged for pearls, rubies, or the "terrible crystal" itself. Even in the mental wealth of the wisest men there are no jewels like the truths of revelation. 2. He intently desired to know its contents. He was not so well able to get at the truth as we are, since he had not the life of Christ to explain the types, nor apostolic explanations to open up the symbols of the law; therefore he sighed inwardly, and felt a killing heartbreak of desire to reach that which he knew was laid up in store for him. He saw the casket, but could not find the key. 3. He wished to feed upon God's Word. The Word received into the heart changes us into its own nature, and by rejoicing in the decisions of the Lord we learn to judge after His judgment and to delight ourselves in that which pleases Him. 4. Doubtless, David longed to obey God's Word—he wished in everything to do the will of God without fault either of omission or of commission. He prays in another place, "Teach me Thy law perfectly." II. **THE SAINT'S ARDENT LONGINGS.** 1. They constitute a living experience, for dead things have no aspirations or cravings. You shall visit the graveyard, and exhume all the bodies you please, but you shall find neither desire nor craving. Where the heart is breaking with desire there is life. 2. The expression represents a humble sense of imperfection. The apostle of the Gentiles said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect"; and the man after God's own heart, even David, when he was at his best, and I think he was so when he was writing this blessed psalm, says not so much that he had obtained anything as that he longed after it, not so much that he had yet grasped it, but sighed for it: "my soul breaketh for the longing that it hath." 3. Furthermore, the expression of the text indicates an advanced experience. Augustine dwells upon this idea, for he rightly says, at first there is an aversion in the heart to God's Word, and desire after it is a matter of growth. The more full a man is of grace the more he hungers for grace. Strange it is to say so, but the paradox is true, the more he drinks, and the more he is satisfied and ceases to thirst in one sense, the more is he devoured with thirst after the living God. It is an advanced experience, then. 4. It is an experience which I cannot quite describe to you, except by saying that it is a bitter sweet; or, rather, a sweet bitter, if the adjective is to be stronger than the noun. There is a bitterness about being crushed with desire; it is inevitable that there should be, but the aroma of this bitter herb is inexpressibly sweet, no perfume can excel it. After all, a bruised heart knows more peace and rest than a heart filled with the world's delights. How safe such a soul is. III. **A FEW CHEERING REFLECTIONS.** Methinks this morning some heart has been saying, "There are comforting thoughts for me in all this. I am a poor thing, I have not grown much, I have not done much, I wish I had; but I have strong longings, I am very dissatisfied, and I am almost ready to die with desire after Christ." My dear soul, listen—let this encourage you. 1. God is at work in your soul. Never did a longing after God's judgments grow up in the soul of itself. Weeds come up of themselves, but the rarer kind of plants I warrant you will never be found where there has been no sowing: and this flower, called love-lies-bleeding, this plant of intense eagerness after God, never sprang up in the human breast of itself. God alone has placed it there. 2. The result of God's work is very precious. Thank Him for it. Though thou canst get no further than holy longing, be grateful for that longing. 3. Not only is the desire precious, but it is leading on to something more precious. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." Rest you sure of that, and cry mightily to Him with strong faith in His goodness. 4. Meanwhile, the desire itself is doing you good. It is driving you out of yourself, it is making you feel what a poor creature you are, for you can dig no well in your own nature, and find no supplies within your own spirit. It is compelling you to look alone to God. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 22-24. **Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Thy testimonies.**—*Social contempt and conscious attitude*.—I. **SOCIAL CONTEMPT** (ver. 22). 1. Is a thing to be deprecated. 2. Is a thing not always to be deserved. It is a characteristic of wicked society, that it condemns the good. II. **CON-**

SCIOUS RECTITUDE (vers. 23, 24). Contrast social contempt with conscious rectitude. 1. The one is painful, the other pleasing. 2. The one depressing, the other elevating. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 23. **Princes also did sit and speak against me.**—1. It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority. (1) First, by reason of their place: the greater power they have, the greater peril to encounter with their displeasure; therefore saith Solomon, The wrath of a king is the messenger of death. (2) Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil. And therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end; that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown; on the contrary, he becomes a favourer of evil men, and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. 2. And therefore, it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when He gives a people good and religious rulers. The Christians in the primitive Church, being sore troubled by the bloody persecutions of Nero and Domitian, thought it a great benefit unto them, when under Nerva the persecution was relented. Albeit he did not profess Christ with them, yet he did not persecute them. What then should we account of such a king, as is not only a protector of the Church, but a professor himself? so far from persecuting Christian religion; that for professing of it, many times hath his majesty been persecuted to the death, but blessed be the Lord, who hath given many glorious deliverances to His anointed. (*Bp. Cowper*.)

Ver. 24. **Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.**—These are two great benefits, which commonly men crave: Pleasure to refresh them; Counsel to govern them. David protests he found them both in the Word and sends all other, who would have them, to seek them there where he found them. 1. As for joy and recreation of mind, commonly men seek it in other cisterns; but with no good success: for as a man in a hot fever is eased no longer by drinking strong drink, then he is in drinking of it; for then it seems to cool him, but incontinent it increaseth his heat; so is it with the troubled and heavy heart, which seeks comfort in external things; however, for a time they seem to mitigate the heaviness, they do but increase it. Only solid and permanent comfort must be drawn out of the fountains of the Word of God. 2. The other is wisdom, which without God's Word can never be obtained. As Jeremiah spake of the wicked in his time (Jer. viii. 9). So is it true of all the wicked: The wisdom of this world is but foolishness. Achitophel his end, with innumerable more, may teach all men that he shall never be found wise who is not godly. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. (*Bp. Cowper*.)

Ver. 25. **My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy Word.**—*Cleaving to the dust*:—Several verses of this long psalm begin with the same words: "My soul melteth away from very heaviness"; "my soul hath longed for Thy salvation"; "my soul is always in my hand"; "oh, let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee." Often as the expression occurs it is the recognition from old time, and even under the old dispensation, of something in us, not imagination, not memory, not intellect, not even conscience; something which is real, important, and everlasting; something of which the health and disease, the welfare and adversity, the happiness and misery makes itself felt, can be marked and recorded, and is of vital moment to the being, the I, myself, I, of the immortal accountable man. I. A DIRE MALADY OF THE SOUL. It is not the occasional, but the habitual loss of interest in things spiritual. It is the inability ever or anyhow to hold conscious intercourse with Him who is our life. It is the hanging for hours over a prayer which will not speak; or, to take the commoner case, it is rather the acquiescing in that dumbness, treating it as a misfortune, or calling it a sin, yet going on in it as though a hardship or else a punishment, but in either view to be let alone and made the best of. It is the shovelling of the Bible as a book which may have a voice for others, but which has no voice for us. It is the going about the daily business as a machine that has neither heart nor will in it. II. THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF A CONDITION SO LAMENTABLE. Either the strength has been undermined, before any effort was made

after God, by some evil habit of boyhood, youth, or manhood, fatal to moral and spiritual energy; or else the very virtue has gone out of the religion by the attempt to serve two masters, the one in name and appearance, the other in deed and in truth. But without this last and saddest supposition, there may have been at some point a definite failure in duty or affection which has given a shock to the better nature from which it has never recovered, and of which this paralysis of the higher being is the Nemesis and the retribution. Yet, again, without any such definiteness of cause and effect, there is much of explanation in that Egyptian taunt of old, "Ye are idle, ye are idle," in its bearing upon the secret life and the Godward relationship. Men who are vigorous in all else, in business or politics, in field sports or personal habits, are unmanly and effeminate in spiritual effort. III. THE CRY FOR HELP. "My soul cleaveth to the dust;" and, though I was taken from the dust, and to dust shall return, yet God breathed into me afterwards a living soul, and that soul is not dust, and that soul must return to the God that gave it. Tell me, thou man of God, how to snap this chain, how to disengage this attachment of the God-breathed soul to the dust from which its mere shell and husk were taken. IV. THE ANSWER TO THE CRY. The psalmist seems to have had but one answer to this request. It forms the last part of the text: "Quicken Thou me; oh, quicken Thou me." You see how he felt that the thing impossible with men is possible with God. To cleave to the dust before God, consciously and purposely, in the sight of God, is at once to pray, to beseech Him to look upon you, and to call Him in to witness my misery, is to pray. We do not say—for it would be untrue—that the soul which has long cleaved to the dust will all at once spread her wings for the everlasting flight. It is not so. It would not be a moral doctrine to leave out of sight and mention efforts, daily possible relapses and frequent disappointments. Only we say, that which God has once done in quickening, God will do again, day by day; will do again and again without upbraiding; and will not leave you until He has done it effectually. (Dean Vaughan.) *The soul reluctantly made fast to earth*.—I. A CONFESSION. The psalmist felt that his mind had become sordid. 1. One in such a state will neglect duty. It is a burden, because there is no pleasure felt in the performance. 2. A state of relapse is generally marked by a heartless performance of those duties which are not entirely neglected. 3. This state is always attended with a pressure of worldly care. 4. The wandering believer must be the subject of small enjoyments. II. A PRAYER. III. THE PLEA used by the psalmist in his guilty and gloomy circumstances. "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word," according to Thy gracious promises. In making this plea, the psalmist discovered both his humility and his faith. IV. CONCLUSION. 1. The subject gives us a humiliating picture of the human heart. 2. The subject gives us enlarged views of the mercy of God, that He will make beings so depraved the objects of His affectionate regard. (D. A. Clark.) *Quickening grace*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." This is the complaint of one: 1. Conscious of the spirit of worldliness. Worldliness is a false relation to human creatures and to worldly things. (1) An unnatural thing—that the immortal should be loaded with thick clay. (2) A dishonourable thing—to subordinate the spirit to things and relations which it ought to use and rule. (3) A destructive thing. Being too much with the world, coveting it, finding our pleasure in it, forgetting its higher uses, we lose our spiritual insights, sensibilities, strivings, delights, and become of the earth earthy. To be carnally minded is death to all the nobler senses. 2. Conscious of the bondage of sorrow. Cleaving to the dust suggests sitting in dust and ashes, as Job did when he was overwhelmed with grief. If we loved the world less, many woes would cease to consume and exhaust us. If we thought more of the honour that cometh from God, we should be less troubled by the reproach of men; if we thought more of the treasures of the soul, we should be less afflicted by the moth and rust which dissolve material treasures; if we lived more in the higher world of thought and feeling, we should be less affected by the ebb and flow of an ever-changing world of shadows and echoes. II. THE PSALMIST'S APPEAL. "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word." This appeal is to the right source. 1. God quickens us by granting new insight into the highest truth. The perception of a great truth invigorates our whole nature (Ps. xxxvi. 9). 2. God quickens us by kindling in us a new affection to Himself and to whatever reflects Him. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the power and tyranny of terrestrial life abate. 3. God quickens us by inspiring us with a new hope. (W. L. Watkins.) *Enlivening and invigorating*:

—I. REASONS WHY WE SHOULD SEEK QUICKENING. 1. The deadening influence of the world. 2. The influence of that which is actually sinful (ver. 37). 3. We are surrounded by deceivers (vers. 87, 88). 4. In seasons of affliction we are apt to fall into a dark, cold, dead state of mind (ver. 107). II. MOTIVES FOR SEEKING QUICKENING. 1. Because of what you are. Life is always aiming at more life. 2. Because of what you ought to be—like Jesus Christ; He was full of life. 3. Because of what you shall be. You are to be a pure spirit in heaven; be spiritual now. 4. In order to obedience (ver. 88). 5. Because it will be your comfort (ver. 107). 6. As the best security against attacks of enemies (vers. 87, 88). III. SOME OF THE WAYS BY WHICH THIS QUICKENING MAY BE WROUGHT IN US. Of course the Lord Himself must do it. In prayer it must be sought, because by His power it must be wrought. God quickens His people: 1. By His Word (ver. 50). 2. By affliction (ver. 107). 3. By means of Divine comfort (ver. 50). IV. WHERE ARE OUR PLEAS WHEN WE COME BEFORE GOD TO ASK FOR QUICKENING? What arguments shall we use? 1. Use first the argument of your necessity. Whatever that necessity is, particularize it, as David does in ver. 107. 2. Plead the earnest desire that God has kindled in you (ver. 40). 3. Appeal to His righteousness. 4. Plead His lovingkindness (ver. 88). 5. Plead His Word (vers. 25, 107). (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A cry from the dust*:—It sounds like a paradox for the spiritual man to say that he is bound by the material, and cannot emancipate himself from it. A paradox, however, only at first sight, and only in seeming. For it is only the spiritual man who is sensible of the humiliations and the degradations of the material, and therefore impatient of them. If he were of the dust, he would be content to remain on the dust-level. He would be in his own element, satisfied with it, unconscious of any higher aspirations. It is a question of spiritual sensitiveness. This is why it is that in the diaries of the saintliest people you find the deadliest self-accusation. John Bunyan, in his "Grace Abounding," paints himself as a villain of the deepest dye for peccadilloes that would never have troubled an ordinary conscience. His spiritual nature was like the outer membrane of the eyeball, and the presence of an infinitesimal evil in his soul caused him the acutest pain. We seem, even the best of us, to be ever sinking back to our native element; the spiritual is ever reverting to the original animal. This, indeed, is the source of all our conflict. Our souls "cleave unto the dust," because we are dust. We are not, however, to despise and hold cheap even our corporeal parts. Matter is evil only when we sustain a wrong relation to it. "First the natural, afterward that which is spiritual." But then the spiritual must dominate the natural. When we take Christ fully into our hearts, the higher elements within us become regal, and the lower subside into their place. They are not suppressed. If they were, our manhood would be left incomplete. But they are subordinated. We are no longer "carnally minded," though the flesh is still with us. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" introduces a new and regnant principle into the soul, to which the animal passions and fleshly instincts transfer their allegiance. And it is while this process is going on, and because it is going on, that such confessions as that of our text break from the struggling heart. We no more belong to the dust when we can make this confession and offer its accompanying prayer. It is the sign and the song of our uprising. By force of old habit we cling to the dust, but not with longing, rather with loathing; not with desire for it, but with passion for freedom from it. We are often like the miserable fly struggling to extricate its cloyed wings from the honey which is its lawful food, but to which it has been too passionately addicted. The poor thing wants to rise, it tries to soar, but it is, as it were, glued to the lower element, and will be suffocated in it, unless some friendly finger comes to the rescue. There is the picture of our condition. Fain would we ascend to the heights of spiritual communion, fain would we breathe the heavenly air and behold the vision of God, but our sins and foolishness cause us to "cleave unto the dust." But for us, too, as for Paul, there is the friendly aid. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (J. Halsey.) *Depression*:—I. IT IS NOT A STRANGE EXPERIENCE FOR BELIEVERS TO BE IN THIS DEPRESSED CONDITION, THE SOUL CLEAVING TO THE DUST.—Sometimes there may be physical causes connected with a man's state of health, and sometimes other providences of God are concerned in producing this state of things, but it is a stage in a man's spiritual history. There are many causes which have to do with it. Generally it is connected with indwelling sin. More particularly it arises in connection with the failure of faith

on the part of believers. Looking at it from the side of God's providence, it is permitted by God just as a step in the believer's history; because it is necessary that the believer's history should include an enlarged acquaintance with himself, with his own insufficiency, with his own tendency to unbelief, and darkness, and sin. II. IT IS NOT CHARACTERISTIC OF A BELIEVER TO BE CONTENTED IN THIS CONDITION. How should he be? If he is a believer he has faith in the living God, and in the power of a life-giving Christ. Now, can any man have a believing consciousness that there is this living and life-giving Christ, this Mediator, this Redeemer, and be contented with an experience which in so humiliating a way contrasts with Christ and the fit state of Christ's people? The believer has faith also in the life-giving Spirit and in the mission and work of the Holy Ghost in its peculiar power and gentleness and love. What it is, perhaps, he can hardly feel when his soul is cleaving to the dust; but he believes it. How can a man who believes this be content to go on with his soul cleaving to the dust? And, again, the believer has the conviction and persuasion that his proper home and portion are above; that there is a heaven on high containing all elements that are pure and suitable to the life and blessedness of God, and he is on the way to it, and his trust is that, through God's mercy, he will reach the country he seeks. And with these experiences how can he be contented to lie in the dust, making no progress—at least not feeling that he is making progress? Therefore he casts himself on God in prayer. III. THERE IS A SURE REFUGE FOR THE BELIEVER WITH REFERENCE TO THIS CASE OF HIS. There is life for those who feel in themselves so much that looks like death. "Quicken thou me"—give me life, cause me to live—"according to Thy Word." This cry is not merely a cry of distress. He has the Word which he can plead made known to him. What Word? There are many particular promises adapting the provisions of the Gospel to the experience of believers; but we should always have regard to the root promise when we betake ourselves to God. That promise was given to Abraham: "I will be a God unto thee." Therefore, he whose soul cleaves to the dust is met and satisfied by that great promise that out of an experience in itself no way good to us or glorifying to God may come lessons good for us and glorifying to God. Application: 1. There is great reason for hopefulness in the condition of believers even when their souls cleave to the dust. There is comfort for the sorrowful, refreshing for the weary, strength for the weak, life for the faint, and forgiveness of sins for sinners. 2. There is great reason for earnestness. It is not a fitting thing that people should be contented while their souls are cleaving to the dust. There should be earnest and instant recourse to God, with the expectation that something very different from cleaving to the dust shall presently be ours. 3. There is a sure reward for those that seek the Lord. (R. Rainy, D.D.)

Ver. 26. **I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me: teach me Thy statutes.**—*A man of God alone with God:*—The first lesson for man is, to know his God; the second is, to know himself; and as the unbeliever fails in the first, he fails in the second also, he does not know himself. He does not think much about himself—about his real self, the most important part of his being. For his body he caters freely, he can scarcely spend enough upon it; but he starves his soul. But a true believer knows himself. We are sure, from our text, that he does, for he would not declare his ways if he did not know them. But he has practised introspection, and looked within himself. He does not understand his own ways; he cannot always comprehend his own thoughts, or follow the devious wanderings of his own mind; but, still, he does know a good deal about himself; and when he goes before his God, he can truthfully say, "I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me." Among other things, he has discovered his own ignorance, and hence he presents the prayer with which the text concludes, "Teach me." He is ignorant even of God's revealed will, so he prays, "Teach me Thy statutes," O Lord! I know the Book in which they are recorded, and I can learn them in the letter; but do Thou teach them to me, in my spirit, by Thy Spirit, that I may know them aright." I. So, first, we see here a MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD; and we notice three things about him, he is making his case known: "I have declared my ways"; he is rejoicing in an audience which he has obtained: "Thou heardest me"; and he is seeking a further blessing: "Teach me Thy statutes." I think the psalmist means this, "My Lord, I have told Thee all; now, wilt Thou tell me all? I have declared to Thee my

ways; now, wilt Thou teach me Thy ways? I have confessed to Thee how I have broken Thy statutes; wilt Thou not give me Thy statutes back again? I have owned my weakness; now, wilt Thou not strengthen me, that I may run in the way of Thy commandments?" II. Now let us turn to **THE MAN OF GOD IN PUBLIC STATING HIS TESTIMONY**. 1. First, we have here a man of God who has borne his testimony. He has spoken to man experimentally. You remember that remarkable expression of our Lord, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through"—what? "through their word." Then, is it their word? No, it is the Lord's, yet it is also theirs, for they have made it theirs by personal appropriation and experience of it. The truth of God never seems to have such vividness about it as when a man tells it out of his own soul. That is what this servant of God could say, "I have declared my ways." And he had not declared them with any view to vainglory, but only that he might glorify God. Neither had he spoken of himself except with the object of persuading others to walk in the ways of the Lord in which he had himself been so graciously led. 2. The next sentence teaches us that God had heard this man. What solemn work it is to preach if we have God for a hearer! And yet what a cheering thing it is that the Lord hears our testimony, and can confirm its truthfulness! 3. This man needed more teaching, so he prayed, "Lord, teach me Thy statutes." We must ourselves be continually making progress if we would lead others onward. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 27. Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts; so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works.—*The student's prayer*.—I. **THE STUDENT'S PRAYER**. I hope that we are all students in the school of Christ—all disciples or scholars—and I trust we shall adopt the student's prayer as our own: "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts." Prayer is to study what fire is to the sacrifice. 1. The student's prayer deals with the main subject of the conversation which is to be that student's occupation, namely, the way of God's precepts. It is well for us to know exactly what the law teaches, and what the law designs; why we were made subject to its precept, and how we may be delivered from its penalties. Great need too have we to understand the way of God's Gospel precepts—what these precepts are: "repent," "believe," "be converted," and the like; to be able to see their relation, where they stand, not as means to an end, but as results of Divine grace—commands but yet promises, the duty of man but yet the gift of God. The way of God's precepts! Does not that mean that we ought to be acquainted with the relative position which the precepts occupy, for it is very easy, unless God gives us understanding, to preach up one precept to the neglect of another. It is possible for a ministry and a teaching to be lop-sided, and those who follow it may become rather the caricatures of Christianity than Christians harmoniously proportioned. 2. Very obviously here a confession is implied. "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts." It means just this. "Lord, I do not understand it of myself. I am ignorant and foolish, and if I follow my own judgment—if I take to my own thinkings, I shall be sure to go wrong. Lord, make me to understand." Who can put wisdom in the inward parts but the Lord? Or who can give understanding to the heart but God Most High? II. **THE OCCUPATION OF THE INSTRUCTED MAN**. When the Lord has taught a man the way of His precepts, it behoves him rightly to use his sacred privileges: "So shall I talk of Thy wondrous works." As a faithful teacher let him testify of God's works—His wondrous works. There are two works, especially, that you Christian people must talk about to others—the work of Christ for us and the work of the Holy Ghost in us. These are themes that will never be exhausted. Some men are far more interested in stating their own crotchets than in unfolding God's counsels. If we understand the way of God's precepts, acquire the language of it, get into the groove of it, then we shall talk with understanding; and there will be a harmony and a wisdom about our utterances which will be blest to the edification of the hearers. III. **THE INTIMATE RELATION BETWEEN THE PRAYER OF THE STUDENT AND THE PURSUIT THAT HE SUBSEQUENTLY FOLLOWED**. "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts: so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works." The connection lies partly in the enchantment of this knowledge and the passion to communicate it. A man who understands Christ and His mediatorial work, and the Spirit and His sanctifying work, cannot be silent. The fire once kindled, the flames will spread. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The teacher must first be taught*:—There is not

really any grave duty a man can be called on to discharge, no responsible office he may be elected to fill, nor even any plan or purpose he lays it on his heart to accomplish, which does not require diligent preparation on his own part to fit himself, to train his faculties, and to discipline his mind. What you call unskilled labour may possibly be utilized by efficient officers, but unskilful labour is a sheer waste of power. How much more imperative the demand that we should be endowed with the requisite faculties and qualified by suitable instruction if we have any work to do for God, or any office, however humble, in the service of the great King! Zeal without knowledge would only betray us into reckless presumption. When called to talk of God's wondrous works, we ought not to rush upon that exercise at once unfitted and unprepared, but we should wait upon the Lord, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, that our stammering tongues may be unloosed, and that our lips may be attuned to tell the noble tale in grateful strains. We must first obtain for ourselves an understanding of the way of the Lord's precepts before we can make it plain to others. He who tries to teach, but has never been taught himself, will make a sorry mess of it. He who has no understanding, and yet wants to make others understand, must assuredly fail. Some there are who cannot teach and will not learn, and it is because they will not learn that they cannot teach. I believe aptness for being taught is at the bottom of aptness to teach. The psalmist had both. He says, "Make me to understand the way of Thy statutes." There he would be taught. "Then," saith he, "I shall talk of Thy wondrous works." There he would be teaching. (*Ibid.*) *The Spirit of God gives understanding of the Word*:—I remember once I was travelling in Germany—I was a student in one of the universities there—and was making a tour of certain caves with some companions. One day we met the village postman. He said, "Would you not like to see a cave that is not down in the guide book?" We said, "Yes"; so away we struck through the brush and came to the cave. It was dark as midnight. He said, "It is perfectly beautiful. Every formation is an altar of the Druidical times," and so forth and so on. "Look out! there is a hole right there, and nobody has ever found the bottom of it." We looked up; we were afraid we would be the first to find the bottom. There was nothing at all pleasant about it; everything was dark and uncanny. But our guide just took a bit of magnesium and lit it, and suddenly the dark, cold, forbidding, dangerous place became luminous, and the stalactites came down from the ceiling to meet the stalagmites as they came up from the floor. Every one was an altar, not a Druidical altar, as they supposed, but an altar built by the hand of God. It was a place of marvellous beauty. It is just so with the Word of God. How often we come to a passage which looks dark, forbidding, and dangerous. You are often afraid that you will fall into some pitfall, but just look up to God in prayer, and let that passage be illuminated with the light of the Holy Ghost, and it becomes full of beauty, transcendent and glorious. (*R. A. Torrey, D.D.*)

Ver. 29. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Thy law graciously.

—*Lying*.—I. The FACULTY of lying. Man has a faculty for misrepresenting facts and for deceiving men. The mere possession of this faculty is not necessarily wrong; all depends upon the motives that inspire it, and the uses to which it is directed. II. The PROPENSITY of lying. Most venal lies spring from the following wrong states of heart. 1. Fear. 2. Vanity. 3. Greed. 4. Ambition. III. The HABIT of lying. 1. Popular. How rare are true men in this world of shams! 2. Dangerous. It is inimical to moral health, beset with perils, and leading to moral ruin. (*Homilist.*) *But had not David the law already?*—No doubt he wanted not the Book of the Law: he heard it, he read it, he professed it; yea, somehow he understood it. What, then, is it he craves? Surely, that the law might be so imprinted in his heart, that it might abolish that natural vanity, and deceit of sin, which carrieth him to the offence of God. A necessary petition for these days; wherein the knowledge of the Word is exceeding great, but the zeal, spiritual life, and feeling of the hearts of men is not answerable unto it. They think all is well, in that publicly they profess it. They hear it with their ears; they speak of it with their mouths; they read it in their books finely bound; though in that duty many fail also. But certainly when they think they have it, they want it; so long as it is not printed in the table of their heart, to frame their motions, affections and actions conformable to it. And this is it which David here craves. (*Bishop Cowper.*)

Ver. 80-82. **I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me.**—*The commendable past and the desirable future in life:*—I. **THE COMMENDABLE IN THE PAST.** 1. The best choice has been made. The way of truth is the way of reality, in contradistinction to the way of sham and fiction. 2. The best guide has been followed. God's Word is the only true guide. 3. The best cause has been adhered to. Whatever else he had given up and forsaken, he had stuck to God's testimonies. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples." II. **THE DESIRABLE IN THE FUTURE.** "I will run," etc. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." 1. The pursuance of the Divine law is essential to human happiness. Man can find no happiness in any way but in the way of God's commandments. 2. The enlargement of the human heart is essential to the pursuance of the Divine law. The moral heart of man is sadly contracted by selfishness and materialism. Love alone can expand it, and make it wide enough to embrace God and His universe. (*Homilist.*) *The way of truth:*—I. **THE WAY OF TRUTH.** It is the way of God; for the Lord is the God of truth: it is the way of Christ; for, said He, "I am the way," etc.: it is the way of the Spirit; for "the Spirit beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." And as all that we know of God—of God who made us by His power, of Christ who redeemed us by His blood, of the Spirit who renews us by His grace—is contained in Scripture, "the way of truth" is the way of God's Word. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." II. **TO CHOOSE THE WAY OF TRUTH.** 1. To determine, with entire honesty of intention, and with full purpose of heart, that you will walk, as far as you know it, in the way of God's precepts—entertaining, not only a confident hope, but cherishing a firm assurance, that so doing you shall attain, sooner or later, when the days of your appointed time are past, to the end of God's promises. 2. To be careful that, so far as lies in our power, we act out what we have determined; that we do not, like too many, ask one thing in our prayers, and seek another in our practice; that we do not through the after stages engage in any occupation, or devote ourselves to any amusement, or join ourselves to any society, by which our early approach to God may be made to seem hypocrisy, and our very petitions be turned into sin. 3. A continual dependence upon the help of God, as promised for the sake of Christ, and conveyed by the influence of the Holy Spirit; and not only a continual dependence upon it, but a constant expectation of it; and not only a constant expectation of it, but an earnest and frequent entreaty for it. (*T. Dale, M.A.*)

Ver. 31. **I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.**—*The sticking to God's testimonies:*—I. **WHAT THE PSALMIST MEANS BY GOD'S TESTIMONIES.** 1. The children of God do not cleave to the bare letter of the Word—the mere vowels and consonants and syllables of Scripture, but to such testimonies as the Lord Himself is pleased to drop into their heart and conscience through the medium of the Scriptures of truth. Now, before we can receive the Scriptures as a revelation from God, it must be shown to us by the Holy Spirit that they were inspired by Himself. 2. But we come to the particular testimonies which God reveals to His chosen. (1) One of the first testimonies that God seals upon the heart and conscience of His children is a manifestation of His own being—I mean His spiritual being; some discovery of Himself as He really is, some manifestation of Himself as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures of truth. (2) But when we come to a more particular description of these testimonies, we may divide them into two grand classes, testimonies against us, and testimonies for us, that is, in the way of experience. (3) But there are other testimonies of another nature—not so much testimonies against, or testimonies for our interest in covenant mercies, as testimonies of Divine instruction. The Lord has said, for instance, in His Word, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." That is a testimony from the mouth of God; and how does the soul first receive, and then stick to that testimony? By the opening up of the depths of corruption in our heart, by the breaking up of the secret fountains of iniquity, that great deep that coucheth beneath. Again, God has said in His Word, "I, the Lord, hate evil." Now, this testimony the Lord speaks out of the Word into the hearts of His chosen. He writes it as with a sunbeam upon the consciences of His living family that He abhors evil; and this He transfers from the Word, and stamps upon a man's conscience; and he who has never had that solemn truth stamped upon his conscience is destitute of the knowledge of the only true God. II. **HE WHO STICKS TO GOD'S TESTIMONIES WILL NOT BE PUT TO**

SHAME. 1. Sometimes the child of God is afraid that he will be put to shame in the hour of death; lest his religion in that solemn moment should be sifted clean away, and his hope should prove a delusion; and therefore he says, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame in that solemn hour when I must stand before Thee, without any one to help, or anything to hope in, except Thyself." Now, he that sticks to God's testimonies will not be then put to shame. He will not die in despair, but he will die in the fear and love of God; or, at any rate, will die with a good hope through grace in His mercy, with some rest of soul, and some sweet confidence that he is His. 2. Sometimes the child of God is afraid of being put to shame openly before men, by being overcome by some sin; but he says, "I have stuck to Thy testimonies." "Thou hast said, 'I hate evil'—I believe it, Lord. Thou hast shown me my ignorance, and inability to keep myself—I believe it, Lord. Thou hast warned me by solemn rebukes; Thou hast hedged me up by inward reproofs; Thou hast shown me what I am, and what there is in my heart;—I believe it, Lord. Let no sin entangle me, no disgrace overtake me, no corruption prevail against me. Let not the enemies of truth shout, 'Ah, ah! Ah, ah!' against me. 'O Lord, put me not to shame.'" 3. The soul is sometimes afraid lest a furnace will come, when all his religion shall be proved to be untrue, when Satan shall say, "It is all a deception; it was not the manifestation of God to thy soul; mercy never was received; it was but excited imagination; it was but the heated working of thy carnal mind." The soul says, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame. I cleave to Thy work, I hang upon it, I have nothing else to cleave to. O Lord, put me not to shame. (J. C. Philpot.)"

Ver. 32. **I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.**—*Liberty of heart*.—I. CONSCIOUSNESS OF ACTUAL CAPTIVITY. The feeling may be illustrated by the case of a messenger in time of war charged by a great king with an important commission, who on his way is seized by the king's enemies, disarmed, stripped, bound, and led away in an opposite direction; longing to be free that he may do his master's will, and appealing to his lord very much as the psalmist cries to God in this place, "Help me, and set me free, that I may do Thy will and accomplish Thine orders." There is hope in such a state. A man who wishes that he could do God's will has taken the first step towards life. The conscience has got free and stretches out its suppliant hands for help; the affections are, however, still in bondage, and the tyrant power of long-formed habits of sin holds the soul even while it turns its longing eyes to the sweet paths of righteousness, from which, a slave to his own iniquity, it is being borne away. The prisoner in yonder dungeon may madly tear at his chains, or furiously beat his poor flesh against the solid walls that hold him in, but he is not more powerless to snap the strong iron, or wrench open the ponderous stones, than is a poor sinner to break his own bondage. But there is One who can help, One only, One able to help so effectually, that the chained limbs in their delighted freedom shall actually run. That One is God. II. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF NARROWNESS OF AFFECTION AND DESIRE AFTER GOD. The psalmist craved for more freedom of faith; for warmer and stronger love towards God. There are few Christians who will not have the same feeling, and will not be conscious how small and low is their state of grace; how poor their service to their God, compared to what it should be, and what it might be with God to help them. Nor will it be difficult to trace, in some degree, the causes of this narrowness. With a man it may be a too engrossing occupation in earthly business, too predominant and absorbing a care for earthly success, limiting the times of prayer and interrupting that free and full communion with God without which no growth in holiness is possible. With a woman it may be the troubling about "many things," such as kept Martha of old from the feet of Jesus: the absorption of thoughts in her children, her household, and her daily cares. Here, again, our hope is in God. He can enlarge our hearts by more perfectly revealing His own blessed self within them. He enters into the soul, and the soul grows with His presence. His glory and greatness and beauty snap the restraining bonds, and stretch the heart in which He dwells till it becomes capable of peace and joy unknown before. (G. Garbett, M.A.) *The secret of moral progress*.—"The way of Thy commandments." To many people not an attractive road! It is suggestive of fences, and trespassing boards, of curbs and restraints. "The way of Thy commandments." Through the Christian Scriptures the way becomes steeper and more uninviting to the natural man as the centuries move along. The gradient of the moral ideal becomes increasingly

precipitous. You may get up the lower and earlier slopes, but when you get to Amos and Hosea and Isaiah the track becomes exceeding steep, until when you get to the Lord Himself the radiant ideal lifts itself sheer and clear as the Matterhorn. "I looked then after Christian to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and his knees because of the steepness of the place." Yes, the way becomes very steep as we draw near the Lord! Take the teachings of our Lord, map out the way of His commandments, make a contour map of the road, and you will find that you are face to face with a shuddering ascent, an ascent so stiff and steep that some declare it to be the dream of a visionary, the moral prospectus of a fanatic, proclaiming imperatives which are unpractical and impracticable. The moral ideal of Jesus is just overwhelming; so much so, that many do with it as the Swiss did in the olden times with the Alps, build their houses with their backs to the towering heights, and they face the lowlands of human expediency and moral commonplace. Now, let me remind you that the word "heart" has a much wealthier significance than we commonly attach to it to-day. The symbolic significance of the word in our own day is confined almost exclusively to the emotions. If we say that a man has a big heart we do not refer to the range of his thought, but to the quality of his sympathies. If we say that a man has no "heart" we mean that the channels of feeling are as dry as a river-bed in time of drought. Nay, we even bring the brain and the heart into distinct and isolated positions. We say that a man has not very much brain, but that he has a very big heart. Now all these modern distinctions must be laid aside when we seek the interpretation of the Word of God. I am not aware that the word "brain" or "brains" ever occurs in the Bible. According to the primitive physiology of those times the heart was the mysterious seat of thought as well as of feeling. The heart was "the seat of man's collective energies, the very focus of his personal life." Moral speed will come with spiritual enlargement. "I will run . . . when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." When Thou shalt enlarge my thought. Many of us go slowly because we do not see far. There is no long range of purpose in our eyes, and therefore our feet are sluggish. Our imaginations are not peopled with the glories of attainment, and therefore there is no eager haste in our steps. Napoleon got his men over the Alps by richly sharing with them the promises and purposes of the campaign. Their eyes were filled with the resplendent riches of Italian cities even while they were contending with the stupendous obstacles of the trackless wastes of snow. Their thoughts included the sunny Italian plains as well as the grimness of the immediate toil, and that forward-cast of the eyes gave strength and inspiration to their labours. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my" thought, when my mind is filled with Thy blessed purposes, when even now the eyes of my imagination rove over the celestial fields, and when even now I feel something of the warmth and liberty of the coming noon. The ultimate purpose is not obscure. "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." "We have the mind of Christ." Our minds may be expanded to take in the glorious purpose, and eyes that are held in that vision will most assuredly communicate buoyancy and speed to the feet. Look at the Apostle Paul. The far-off goal was always flinging its kindly ray upon the immediate task. Aye, that is the enlarged mind, which in its inclusive range gives hospitality to the ultimate, and brings the glory of the far-away to relieve the burdensomeness of the present task. That's the way to get over the hill, and to get over it at a run! What is the philosophy of it? It is this. Small and exclusive thinking is like a closed and tiny room, in which the inmates become asphyxiated, and reduced to lassitude and languor. Large thinking oxygenates the powers, it lets in the vitalizing wind from the far-stretching moors of truth, all the faculties are toned and braced into strenuousness, and they can move in difficult ways with ease. It may be, too, that further enlargements are required before the desired speed is obtained. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my motions." The mill will not work if the mill-race is empty! The weakness of many a life is explained by the poverty of its emotions; the emotional energy is only that of a reduced and languid stream, and there is no power to run the mill. There are lives that are seemingly destitute of any great capacity to be deeply stirred. Their storms are only "storms in a tea-cup"; they have nothing of the terrific movement of the disturbed sea. They cannot be moved into mighty indignation like the Apostle Paul; "who is made to stumble and I burn not?" They cannot be constrained into passionate love; "I could wish that myself were separated from

Christ for my brethren." They cannot be upheaved by sullen sorrow, nor made to dance in ecstatic joy. Now see the consequence. We must not expect much speed where there is little feeling. The insensitive are not the strenuous, rather are they the victims of sluggishness and sleep. The man who has no emotional wealth will never be found among the pioneer runners in the moral way. He requires enlargement before he can run! And this very enlargement is provided for us in the grace of God. "I will take away the stony heart and I will give thee a heart of flesh." That miracle has been performed in innumerable lives. Love has been born where indifference reigned. And so it is also with the third primary element in the contents of the heart, the factor of the will. Many of us crawl and faint in the paths of the moral ideal because our wills are weak and irresolute. We can run for a while, but we fail in the "long run." We are good for a hundred yards, but we are spent at the mile. We begin well, but the end is very near. Our wills are something like the batteries of those portable electric night-lights, good for so many flashes, and good for nothing more. We have volitional spasms, succeeded by a forceless lethargy. We shall "run the way" of His commandments when God shall enlarge our wills. And that is just one of the wonderful resources of grace. "It is God that worketh in you to will," to enlarge your will, to fill it with all needful power, to make it adequate to the attainment of the far-off goal. We shall be "strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man," and "our sufficiency" shall be "of God." (J. H. Jowett, M.A.)

Soul-enlargement:—I. ITS ATTAINMENT. 1. It consists in—(1) The true growth of our social sympathies. (2) The true growth of our religious sympathies. 2. It is attainable. Thousands have experienced it. Hearts once encased in sensuality and selfishness, have by the love of Christ widened so as to grasp the world in its sympathies. The narrow-souled atheist has expanded into the greatness of a saint; the mean temporizer has become a moral hero, battling the world for the right. The churlish miser has bounded with an unconquerable love of his race. II. ITS DEVELOPMENT. 1. Man is under law, binding him to purity of thought and rectitude of feeling. 2. A willing obedience to this law is the chief end of man. 3. Where this soul-enlargement is, this obedience will be realized.

III. ITS AUTHOR. "Thou." All the influences of nature, the events of Providence, the means of grace are for the enlargement of the soul. A growing soul is the most interesting object in the universe. (Homilist.)

Heart-enlargement:—The true Broad Church is that in which an enlarged obedience to God's commandments is brought about by an enlarged experience of His love; and His commandments and His love are both of them exceeding broad. True spiritual life will widen the soul in its possessions, its perceptions, its will, and its love; it will extend our powers of having, of knowing, of willing, and of loving; and, in one or other of these four, most of our life is included. 1. How very little we possess, both in outward and inward things. Our hands are small and the world is large. "Tell me how I can make my broad acres more broad," is the request of the rich man. "Tell me how I can make my narrow holding less narrow," is the cry of the poor. But a life in God makes us rich, for "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos," etc. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." 2. How trifling is our knowledge. We know but little of things in this world, with all our sciences and study, and we know much less about God, and glory, and immortality, and the spirits which live outside the tent of this mortal flesh, or of any of those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." But we believe that for those whom God enlarges, there is an unspeakable increase in the perceptive powers of the soul; they are taught things that are hidden from the wise and prudent. There is knowledge for the simple and lowly ones; for those who, in the spiritual strength they have derived from God, run in the way of His commandments. Looking into the Father's face, and into the Saviour's heart, the soul can say (John xvii. 3). And with the knowledge there comes the aspiration (Eph. iii. 17). 3. How little is our will-power. We often want to do right, and the force of habits or of grooves is too strong for us. We have not enough momentum to carry us out or enough moral force to deny the past and to assert the future. The only remedy is the Divine enlargement of heart which comes from the visitation of the Spirit. We carry our brokenness to God; we put our helpless will at His feet, and He energizes it, and sends us back from the altar-steps able to say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." 4. How small is our capacity for forgiving. Only those who have the Spirit within them, energizing them, can truly love at all. Again, we fall at the Lord's feet, and tell Him we have no power even to be civil to some people, much less to love them;

scarcely power to put up the weapons of revenge against some; and even to those whom, like the publicans and Pharisees and sinners, we love because they love us, we have not been able to make an adequate return for the love they have lavished upon us. Then God teaches us that there lies in Him the power of enlarging the human affections, and He enlarges our hearts that we, "being rooted and grounded in love,"—not only in the experimental realization of His love to us, but also in the experimental living out of our love to Him, and to all that He has made and given us,—are able to "run the way of His commandments." For that is His new commandment, "that we love one another." (*J. Rendel Harris.*) *To do more, we must first of all be more:*—You may see a little child trying to lift a heavy weight, and you tell it that it must wait till its muscles are stronger: it must wait till it has "become." This was the way at the beginning in conversion: "dead works" means that in us there does not dwell force or power to lift the great weight of the commandment or righteousness of God; hence they are useless or stupid works. When you find in your heart your inability to fulfil the Divine commandment, and have not the strength and power you want, though all day trying to lift the heavy weight, you come to God and say, "It is plain that, as I am, I cannot live out this righteousness, and I come for a new life to live it out. I must have Thine own strength." Then we understand our Lord's saying, "Except a man be born again," etc. (*Ibid.*) *The successful race:*—I. AN ATTAINABLE OBJECT. The city of God, the holy Jerusalem, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise (Rev. xxi. 10; Isa. lx. 18). II. A WAY OR ROAD ALONG WHICH TO PROCEED. 1. The commandments of God are universal in their application; none are exempt from their obligations. 2. They may be designated a "way," because they describe a course of conduct, a line of duty, and mark the bounds of good and evil, right and wrong. III. A SWIFT APPROACH TOWARDS THAT WHICH WE ARE ANXIOUS TO ATTAIN. "I will run." 1. Here is the expression of decision and resolution. How necessary is this for the Christian! How small must his progress be, if any, without it! 2. Here, you see, diligence and earnestness are required: running implies exertion, labour, toil. 3. Here is rectitude of principle, as well as stability of character. 4. Courage and fortitude are both required to ensure your progress towards the holy city. 5. Perseverance is absolutely necessary (Matt. x. 22; Heb. x. 38). It is not the race of a day, or a year; but through the entire course of your life. (*R. Treffry.*) *Heart-enlargement:*—In these words we see the connection between theology and morality. I. THERE IS A HEART-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. God is perpetually awakening some dormant energies of our spirits, by which all past achievements live in present efforts and productivities. Glorious is that heart-relationship which there is between man and God. II. MAN'S HEART-ENLARGEMENT IS ENTIRELY OF GOD. Men, and books, and events are means in God's hands of waking all the germinal glories of the human heart, which is in eternal connection with the Divine. Our successive heart-enlargements have been the results of Divine visitations. Our Father works hitherto, and therefore we work. III. EXPRESSING OBEDIENCE PROCEEDS FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXPANSIVENESS WHICH GOD ALONE PRODUCES BY HIS OPERATIONS WITHIN US. (*W. R. Percival.*) *Enlargement of heart the preparation for obedience:*—I. THE DELIGHTFUL SPIRITUAL STATE CONTEMPLATED BY THE PSALMIST. 1. Emancipation from the thralldom of sin. 2. Deliverance from temptations and afflictions. 3. The expansion of the understanding, and the attainment of just and comprehensive views on all matters relating to our salvation and duty. 4. The love of God shed abroad in the heart. II. THIS BLESSED STATE OF HEART WILL CAUSE A CORRESPONDING COURSE OF ACTION. 1. Deliverance from guilt and condemnation brings with it power to serve God. 2. Some of the most valuable lessons imparted by the great Teacher are learned in the school of affliction; and often, after having ourselves suffered temptation, we are the better able to strengthen our brethren. 3. Expansion of understanding in the things of God brings with it increased obligation to "run the way of His commandments." 4. The manifestation of pardoning love to the believer in Jesus enables him to love God in return. Without this, our obedience may be that of a servant, but cannot be that of a child. Love is the fulfilling of the law. (*L. H. Wiseman.*) *A heart enlarged:*—The occupation of the heart is the great thing in religion, not because, the heart being mastered, other parts may be overlooked, for religion is the nourisher and not the despiser of intellect, but simply because, in the first place, until the heart is carried there can be no real conversion, for the converted man loves God, and love is from the heart, and because, in the second place, the conquest of the heart involves as a natural and necessary conse-

quence the conquest of the remainder of the man. I. Supposing that by the heart, the whole soul, with all its powers and affections, is intended, NOW COMES IT TO BE TRUE THAT GOD BY HIS GRACE ENLARGES THE SOUL? We take a man's understanding. We are accustomed to think and to say, that through busying himself with scientific inquiries, through all those processes of discipline which are furnished by the study of abstruse and sublime things, through converse with history and with the writings of illustrious men, through the exercising itself on those difficult and unsolved problems which are presented by the mysteries of nature and the fortunes of nations, we are accustomed to believe that by these and similar means the human understanding may be made stronger and more comprehensive. And we are far enough from underrating these proscribed modes of enlarging the mind. But, nevertheless, we are clear upon the point, that nothing more enlarges the understanding than the grace which God pours in upon it when He is engaged in carrying on to perfection the work of sanctification. For, if it be the contemplation of noble and majestic things which causes the understanding to shoot up its stature, and to amplify itself on the right hand and on the left, so that the mind remains dwarfish through not being brought into contact with gigantic truth, where will you find us such a nourisher, such a magnifier of the understanding, as religion, seeing that through the operations of God's grace there is a comparative abandonment of a survey of the created, and a fastening of the gaze on the Creator Himself, and the spirit is carried into a region inaccessible to an unconverted man, and is engaged in climbing truths which are never surmounted by the loftiest intelligence, and thus brought precisely into that intercourse with the mighty and the colossal, which tells most on its powers, quickening them into rapid growth, and bringing to light unsuspected resources? God is so magnificent, so wonderful, that it must be an effort to the soul to take in any discoveries which He makes of Himself; but the very effort will be an improving and invigorating thing. The soul will grow, through her strivings to embrace the infinite; the understanding will dilate as more and more of Deity presents itself to the grasp; and thus, from the beginning to the end, God is enlarging the heart. It is one great characteristic of a righteous man that he is gradually conforming his own will to the will of his Maker. It would be Christian perfection to have no will but God's will; and though we do not say that this perfection is actually obtained by any of the righteous on the earth, yet there will be a continual advance towards the attainment, so that the identification of wills, if not in every respect complete, will daily become more and more accurate. And a man's will being thus gradually exchanged for God's, there must be going forward an enlargement of the will. II. You will not require much proof that **THE RUNNING THE WAY OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS FOLLOWS THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE HEART.** The enlarged heart includes, as we have shown you, an enlarged understanding and an enlarged will. The enlargement of the understanding supposes you more disposed to follow only what is good. The former, therefore, is the same thing as our discerning more and more of the demands of God's law; the latter is the same thing as our determining to act on the discernment. But what is this, save in so many words an enlarged heart producing an ampler obedience? The understanding is enlarged, so that we see more of what is demanded; the will is enlarged, so that we resolve on conforming ourselves to those discoveries of the understanding; and if we both find out more and more of what is to be done, and move more in the course which we ascertain to be right, then we are clearly advancing in the work of obedience. And if, yet further, both these results are to be traced to the heart's enlargement as a cause, who can avoid discovering the force of the connection—"I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart"? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The secret of speed:*—This was the language of one who did not run; and many still lag behind. We are far more in danger of standing still than of running ourselves out of breath. Most of us have reason to be ashamed of the defects of our obedience, the meanness of our sacrifices, the meagreness of our work, the formalism of our worship. 1. The enlargement of the heart is the secret of speed. It implies an increase of light, insight, love, trust, hope, gladness, God touching our spirit anew, and awakening it to a higher and fuller life in Himself. 2. Note how such an enlargement of the heart conduces to a prompter and more acceptable obedience. (1) We may find ourselves impeded by the nature of the path on which we walk. The path of a perfect obedience is high and difficult. What, then, is to be done? Let us seek the solution of the difficulty in the strengthening of the soul; let us crave more of the cherub's illumination, more of the seraph's fire, and we shall find the path of perfection to be what the

angels find it—a summer path of flowers. (2) A traveller may be hindered by obstructions on the road. So the Christian pilgrim finds a variety of trials to be stumbling-blocks in the heavenly pathway. And we are tempted to think that the removal of these barriers is all that is required. But our text is framed on another philosophy. The psalmist had trials and difficulties, personal, domestic, and political; but he does not plead for the removal of these: he simply pleads for a larger heart. Let it please God to enlarge our soul with fresh affection and heroism, and we shall run through a troop and leap over a wall. (3) The pilgrim is impeded by burdens he may have to carry. Riches, honours, pleasures, friendships—these get too much hold upon us, and spoil our speed. Are these embarrassing things of earth to be renounced, to be laid aside? It may be well from time to time to chasten earthly desire; but the loftiest teaching of Christianity does not promise spiritual progress through the reduction of material interests and relations. And this was the view of the psalmist. For the acceleration of our speed we do not need less of this world's goods and honours, but more inward grace and force. (4) The racer is impeded by superfluous garments. "The sin which doth so easily beset" is the chief entanglement and arrestment. The unmastered corruption of our hearts fetters us most; like a garment it encircles us, wraps us round. There is but one remedy for this—fresh and fuller spiritual power. A new heart, and ever new, disencumbers of the besetting sin, and gives us the secret of speed. We need not ask for a lower path, a smoother path, or a shorter path to heaven, but for a soul fuller of spiritual enthusiasm; then shall the rough places be smooth, the crooked paths straight. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The true way of going to heaven:*—We are to run. It is not wise, right, or safe to live coldly and loosely. Old Donne says, "Let me go upon crutches, so I go to heaven." But there are two objections to going to heaven that way. First, no man chooses a pair of crutches when he is offered a pair of wings. No one, surely, ought to go to heaven slowly, painfully, when he can go triumphantly. And the second objection is, that those who go upon crutches hardly get to heaven. "Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." A halting Christian is more likely to be turned out of the way than to continue unto the end; for any trivial thing in the path sends him sprawling on all fours. Away with such tardiness and precariousness! We are to march as conquerors; we are to return with joy upon our heads; we are to mount with eagles—our spirit regal, our mood heroic, our step unflinching. (*Ibid.*) *The secret of power and progress:*—Our progress is not regulated by the state of things about us, but by the fact and intensity of our spiritual life. Great faith, high resolve, and glowing love go over Jordan dryshod. All difficulties dwindle as the soul expands. Bitter mysteries are solved by a simpler trust. Barren branches blossom and bend as the roots of our life are enriched. Grace abounding, a double portion of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, reawakening hunger and thirst after righteousness, the second blessing leading to the third and so on to infinity—here is the consolation and hope of the saints. Strengthened with strength in our soul, we shall trip no more, crawl no more, stand still no more, but run in the path of life, and

"Even in running think ourselves too slow."

If our heart has become faint and cold, we know what to do. When the fire went out on the altar of the Greeks, it was relighted by the beams of the sun. Let us bring our heart into fresh contact with the purging Fire, the quickening Flame, and difficulty and failure shall be things of the past. (*Ibid.*) *Speedy obedience:*—Promptness is one of the brightest excellencies in faith's acting. Delay spoils all. Some one asked Alexander to what he owed his conquests, and he said, "I have conquered because I never delayed." While the enemy were preparing he had begun the battle, and they were routed before they knew where they were. After that fashion faith overcomes temptation. She runs in the way of obedience, or rather she mounts on the wings of eagles, and so speeds on her way. With regard to the things of God, our first thoughts are best; considerations of difficulty entangle us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 33-36. **Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.**—*Ethical instruction:*—I. ETHICAL INSTRUCTION IS INSTRUCTION IN DUTY. There is no knowledge so important as the knowledge of our obligations to ourselves, to society, and to God. Scientific instruction is nothing to this, even theological instruction is not to be compared to this in importance. Ethical

instruction is the great want of man. This instruction is here represented as instruction in the "statutes," the law, "commandments, testimonies." All words representing the same thing—duty. II. ETHICAL INSTRUCTION IS TO BE SOUGHT OF GOD. There is no teaching so difficult as effectual moral teaching. Men are more disposed to learn anything rather than their duty—history, science, philosophy, anything. Hence God alone can effectually teach it. III. ETHICAL INSTRUCTION IS TO BE SOUGHT OF GOD IN ORDER TO BE PRACTISED. Why does the author of these words pray for God to instruct him in His commandments? In order that he might speculate in moral science and talk eloquently on such subjects? No; but in order that he might "keep it unto the end," "observe it with my whole heart," "go in the path of Thy commandments." Moral knowledge is to be practised. (*Homilist.*) *The Divine Teacher and scholar.*—1. What be these statutes? (1) As a statute-law the Word written sets down limits and rules, how far we are to go, and what to do, and leave undone. (2) As statutes are enforced with rewards and penalties, so are the Lord's precepts, in keeping of which is great reward, and no less danger in transgressing any of them. 2. Whose be they? (1) God is the Author of them all. (2) He is the principal object or subject-matter of them. (3) He is the preserver and maintainer of them. (4) They are His by eminency, for the excellence and perfection of them, and to distinguish them from all the laws and statutes of men. 3. Why doth David call the Word the way of God's statutes? (1) A metaphor, implying—(a) That we are all travellers here in a strange country (Heb. xi. 13, 14). But the way we know not, nor can man or angel teach us the way, unless God show it to us, as He did to Adam, who could lose his way, but of himself could never find it. (b) That God hath made known the way in His Word; called the way, because it points us the way, as also because it leads us to heaven and happiness, as a way tends to some end, or intended place. (c) That this way and Word of God must be known of us, as the way must be of a traveller. And therefore as travellers, and as David here, we must be ever asking after the way. (d) That as a traveller must keep the beaten and high-way, so must these statutes be pathed and trodden of all the travellers of heaven; neither must we turn out of this way to the right or left hand. (e) That whosoever are out of this way, and transgress these statutes, they wander from the God of peace, and from life, are out of God's protection, and liable to all the curses of the law, as men out of the king's highway are out of the king's protection. Hence it is said of wicked men (Ps. xiv. 3). These things lie in the metaphor. (2) Then for the singularity of this way: he saith, Thy way, not ways; for God's way is but one, but by-paths are many. Many are the sciences, and other knowledges worthy our labour and pains; but David above all desires the knowledge of this one and only way of God and of salvation. 4. Why doth David desire to be taught of God? (1) David had good means, and was most diligent in the use of them; he was a diligent reader, and spent nights and days in meditation of the Word; but yet to all these, and above all these, he desires God's teaching, without which all these are in vain. (2) He knows that all other teachers can but teach the ear; God alone teacheth and openeth the heart (Acts xvi. 14). And whereas Satan and wicked men may have a great deal of speculative knowledge, and go to hell, he desires an inward teacher, and to be inwardly taught by the teaching of the Spirit. (3) He here craveth four things in this one petition, beyond all men's teaching: (a) Teach me to attend the way of Thy statutes, that I may understand them, and Thy Word be not a clasped book unto me; neither may I, by missing the right scope, pervert the same to mine own destruction. (b) Teach me to affect the way of Thy statutes, that my heart may melt as Josiah's at the hearing of the law, and be pricked and broken with the threats of it, as were those converts that cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? (Acts ii. 37). When the promises are preached, or promulgated, let my heart dilate and open itself, as the thirsty ground, and rejoice that it understandeth the Word taught, as (Neh. viii. 13). (c) Teach me to believe Thy statutes; for all true and comfortable knowledge is applicatory; it rests not in the understanding, but is a firm assent in the will, laying hold on the thing known. And this must we pray, seeing all knowledge, not mingled with faith, is unprofitable. (d) Teach me to obey Thy statutes; for all sound knowledge is practical; and to know Christ as the truth is in Christ, is to cast off the old man with his lusts, and put on the new. This must be our prayer, that the Lord would so teach us His way as we may walk in it; that He would so take us into His school as to become both more skilful and more holy; that seeing not hearers, but doers are justified, our portion may be in their

blessedness, that hear the Word and keep it. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *God the source of instruction*:—I. WHO IT IS THAT TEACHES. II. WHAT IT IS THAT GOD TEACHES. III. HOW GOD TEACHES. IV. THE RESULT OF BEING TAUGHT THE WAY OF GOD'S STATUTES BY GOD HIMSELF. We shall "keep them unto the end." (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *The province of reason in matters of religion*:—I shall consider the word reason, as denoting the power, generally, of apprehending truth, and applying it to its proper uses;—a power which distinguishes man from all other animated beings around him, and fits him for performing duties and enjoying pleasures, of which they are totally incapable. That God is our teacher, and that He communicates instruction by His works and by His Word, is one of the first lessons which human reason should learn. After becoming satisfied of this, we are to make it our object to discover what is the instruction which He actually communicates. And as our chief concern is with the truths of revelation, our chief business is to apply ourselves, in the proper use of our rational powers, to the study of the Holy Scriptures. The position which I take on this subject will require that two things in particular should be set aside, as not falling within the province of reason. The first is, attempting to originate truth. And the second is, sitting in judgment upon any of the doctrines or facts, which God makes known. The remarks I have made may furnish a ready answer to a question often proposed to us by rationalists. "If," say they, "we are to bow with such submission to the Word of God, and to receive so implicitly all its doctrines and precepts, and are never at liberty to call in question the reasonableness or truth of any of its dictates; then what has reason to do?" I reply, it has everything to do, which falls within its province; everything for which it was designed; everything to which it is competent.

1. The province I have assigned to reason, evidently corresponds with its nature. To learn is an employment peculiarly congenial to the essential properties of the human mind. Every created, finite mind must, from its very nature, be dependent for all its knowledge on the uncreated, infinite mind. While our reason is duly sensible of this, and confines itself to the business of learning what God reveals, its efforts are all natural and safe. But whenever it leaves the place of a learner, and undertakes, by its own power, to originate any doctrine or fact, it undertakes a work which is unnatural and dangerous, and which will inevitably lead to false and hurtful conceptions.

2. Confining reason to the province which I have now assigned to it, will conduce to the honour of God. He is, in fact, the fountain of all created intelligence; and to acknowledge Him as such, is only to treat Him according to truth,—to render Him the honour which is His due.

3. Confining our reason to the work which I have assigned to it, will conduce directly to intellectual improvement. An acquaintance with the truths of religion will enlarge and elevate our understandings; and it will produce this effect in a much higher degree than our acquaintance with objects of inferior value. But there is no way for us to become acquainted with the truths of religion, except by learning them of our Divine teacher, in the use of the means which He has appointed.

4. Confining reason to its legitimate province will contribute in the highest degree to our moral improvement. If we pass in review all that God has made known to us; the holy law He has given us; the sin and ruin of all men in consequence of one man's disobedience; the eternal purposes of God; the Trinity; the whole work of the Redeemer; regeneration by the Holy Spirit; the perseverance of the saints, considered as a duty on their part, and a matter of promise on God's part; and the everlasting retributions of the future world; we shall find, in each case, that the doctrine which produces the salutary effect is just that which God has clearly revealed, and which every person of common understanding is capable of knowing. It is the belief of the simple truths, the plain, intelligible facts taught in the Scriptures, which has raised the character of the saints to the highest elevation; has given strength to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, and freedom to the slaves of sin; and has prepared the people of God for the most glorious achievements. (*L. Woods, D.D.*) *God the teacher*:—This psalmist held that a man could see nothing unless God showed it to him. He held that a man could learn nothing unless God taught him; and taught him, moreover, in two ways. First taught him what he ought to do, and then taught him how to do it. Surely this man was, at least, a reasonable and prudent man, and showed his common sense. For supposing that you were set adrift in a ship at sea, to shift for yourself, would it not be mere common sense to try and learn how to manage that ship, that you might keep her afloat and get her safe to land? You would try to learn the statutes, laws, and commandments, and testimonies, and judgments concerning the ship, lest by your own ignorance you should sink her, and

be drowned. You would try to learn the laws about the ship; namely the laws of flotation, by fulfilling which vessels swim, and by breaking which vessels sink. You would try to learn the commandments about her. They would be any books which you could find of rules of navigation, and instruction in seamanship. You would try to learn the testimonies about the ship. And what would they be? The witness, of course, which the ship bore to herself. The experience which you or others got from seeing how she behaved—as they say—at sea. And from whom would you try to learn all this? from yourself? I trust not. You would go to the shipbuilder and the shipmaster for your information. Just as—if you be a reasonable man—you will go for your information about this world to the builder and maker of the world—God Himself. And lastly; you would try to learn the judgments about the ship: and what would they be? The results of good or bad seamanship; what happens to ships, when they are well-managed or ill-managed. It would be too hard to have to learn that by experience; for the price which you would have to pay would be, probably, that you would be wrecked and drowned. But if you saw other ships wrecked near you, you would form judgments from their fate of what you ought to do. If you could find accounts of shipwrecks, you would study them with the most intense interest; lest you too should be wrecked, and so judgment overtake you for your bad seamanship. Now, the only way to attain eternal life is to know, and keep, and profit by God's laws, God's commandments, God's testimonies, God's judgments; and therefore it is that the psalmist says so often that these laws and commandments are life. But some will say, How shall I learn? I am very stupid, and I confess that freely. And when I have learnt, how shall I act up to my lesson? For I am very weak; and that I confess freely likewise. How, indeed? Stupid we are, the cleverest of us; and weak we are, the strongest of us. And if God left us to find out for ourselves, and to take care of ourselves, we should not sail far on the voyage of life without being wrecked, and going down body and soul to hell. But, blessed be God, He has not left us to ourselves. He has not only commanded us to learn: He has promised to teach. And he who wrote the 119th psalm knew that well; and therefore his psalm is a prayer, a prayer for teaching, and a prayer for light; he cries to God—My soul cleaveth to the dust. I am low-minded, stupid, and earthly at the best. Oh, quicken Thou me; that is—Oh, give me life—more life—according to Thy Word. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Ver. 34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.—*David's prayer and resolution*.—I. THEIR ORDER. Knowledge must necessarily precede obedience, since there can be nothing chosen by the will but what the understanding has first allowed; the will being destitute of all light save what is borrowed: for as the stars derive their light from the sun, so does the will her light from the understanding, that directive faculty of the soul, "the candle of the Lord," that light whereby we discern good from evil. II. THEIR CONNECTION. 1. Knowledge and obedience are not things inseparable, for one may be without the other; we may have understanding, and yet not keep God's law; for knowledge does not change the will, but direct it; it does only rationally persuade, not effectually convert it; so that the will must be sanctified, as well as the understanding illuminated, before our obedience to God's law can be answerable to our knowledge of it. 2. We may both understand God's law, and keep it. God that employs, enables us; He that calls us gives us a power to come, otherwise His invitation would be a mockery; He that saith, "Depart from evil, and do good," has doubtless made us capable of so doing. III. THE MAIN SCOPE AND DESIGN OF THE WORDS. Do this for me, and I do promise on my part to keep Thy law, to meditate upon Thy precepts, and to have respect unto Thy ways, to delight myself in Thy statutes, and not to forget Thy Word. Our obedience must be—1. Sincere. This renders our endeavours acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves. 2. Universal. Catholic faith without catholic obedience is of little value. 3. Constant. If we faint, we shall never reap; if we are weary of running, we shall never obtain the prize. (*E. Lake, D.D.*) *The need of understanding*.—"Understanding." That is what he urgently prays for. If only the poor man could understand what God was about; if only he could detect the track, catch the clue, hear the voice behind him saying, "This is the way"? what a relief, what a strength it would be. He is ready, eager, willing; his heart is aflame; he desires keenly to do the right, to walk with God—so, at least, it seems to him; so he thinks. He may discover, later on, that his will is not so

strong as he imagines. But, at any rate, as he stands, it is his head, rather than his heart, which he feels to be at fault. He feels, but cannot see; he desires, but cannot decide. That will of God which he would so delightedly follow refuses to pronounce itself and give clear utterance. It vanishes. It hides itself. It is dissipated into hesitating and disappointing negations. Just when he fancied he had got his grip upon it it slips through his fingers. What ought he to do? What ought he not to do? How much does God ask of him? or how little? What is the rule he must obey? If he did but know, he would be loyal enough. "O give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law! Yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart." "His whole heart," for then the whole man would go along with what it saw to be so right. The fitness, the meaning, the method, the end would all commend themselves. As the reason joyfully assented, the heart would commit itself to a plan so sound and so intelligible. And there would be no disappointing blunders to check the heart's advance; no slips, no doubtful experiments, no foolish hesitation in moments of uncertain suspense. The heart would not cringe in fear, trying its road before it with trembling anxiety. It would go with a swing, sure of itself; sure of its direction, sure of its success. Oh! to have this confidence, this security, this understanding—then he would keep the "law with all his heart and soul." "Give me understanding!" A true prayer for us all! What a lot of harm is done in the world by the folly, the stupidity, the blindness of those who are on God's side, and genuinely desire to keep His law! We make so little way in carrying God's law into effective action, because our grasp on its principles is so frail, our apprehension of its height and depth is so cheap, and poor, and thin. A whole world of assumptions, moral and religious, are under challenge; and are undergoing the transformation which such challenges enforce. We are compelled to reconsider our familiar language; to recast our phrases; to review our apologetics. A resettlement of the entire position is proceeding, in the sense that the proportion and balance of our modes of expressing and defending our convictions are shifting. It seems as if the world of spirit and of grace had slipped out of our ken—as if we had lost our way in it, and could not move in it with any confidence. It has grown to feel far-off and out of touch—a strange land, where we are not at home. So our religious life comes to a halt, gets in a tangle, grows timid and dolorous. If we did but know better what it is that God is saying to us! If our ears were but open, if our apprehension of Him were but more firm and clear! "Understanding," moral insight, spiritual intelligence, an instructed conscience, a purer and truer judgment, a power to decide, to resolve, a skill in discernment. Oh, pray for that—our grievous lack! It can come from God only. He not only commands, but enables us to understand His commands. Yet this is left us—to bring our faculties under His handling, under His discipline. We have got minds; we have got the gift of reason. We can set these to work, with a little more seriousness and efficiency. First, we can recognize that this law of God which we do genuinely desire to keep with our whole heart is no light and easy affair, to be known straight off at a hearing. It is a serious business; and calls upon our reason to search it out. Can we apply the moral law, as Christ gave it to us, to modern life, to commerce, to luxury, to social intercourse? Can the modern conditions of big cities allow for Sunday? Can the Christian ideal of marriage stand the strain of the present freedom of relationship between man and woman? Can it justify its rigidity? Can we say why, or how, it should be when we are asked? These questions cannot be answered without thought and care and trouble; they cry out for an intelligent understanding. Oh, grant us understanding "that we may keep Thy law." Secondly, it is a prayer that implies the incessant revelation of fresh law to be kept. We desire to serve God not only better than we now do, but better than we yet know how to serve. He has a law for us which is far above out of our sight. His law is making demands of us of which we have as yet no intelligence. Oh, if we saw and knew, how bitter would be our shame at failing Him so totally! Oh, pray to understand more of what He wants of us! Be ever occupied in lifting your standard, in pushing forward your moral frontiers, in raising the demands. (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *On the identity of wisdom and religion:*—Let us survey, one by one, the characteristic marks of wisdom; and examine whether they are not, singly and collectively, exemplified in the conduct of the man who fixes his heart upon God through Jesus Christ. I. WISDOM SELECTS SUCH OBJECTS OF PURSUIT AS SHE DISCERNS A SATISFACTORY PROSPECT OF ATTAINING. II. WISDOM SETS ITS AFFECTIONS UPON THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE IN THEIR OWN NATURE THE MOST EXCELLENT. III.

WISDOM CHOOSES FOR ITS PORTION THOSE ACQUISITIONS WHICH, IN THE POSSESSION, ARE ACCOMPANIED WITH THE HIGHEST DELIGHT. How, then, stands the case with respect to religion? 1. Consider the point first with regard to present satisfaction. 2. With respect to the life to come, comparison cannot be mentioned. Whether the blessedness of heaven or the pains of hell be preferable; whether it be wisdom to choose the future rewards of religion, or the future punishments of guilt; these are questions which require not an answer. IV. WISDOM OCCUPIES ITSELF IN THE PURSUIT OF EFFICIENT REMEDIES FOR EVILS ACTUAL OR PROBABLE. Is this position descriptive of religion? Evils are temporal, or spiritual. Compare as to evils of each class the advantages of the righteous and of the unrighteous. V. WISDOM FIXES HER ATTENTION ON THOSE DESIRABLE OBJECTS WHICH, OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES BEING EQUAL, ARE THE MOST DURABLE. Is this characteristic of wisdom to be found in religion? How long do the pleasures of sin continue? Suppose that the wicked man grasps his good things, be they what they may, until death. The righteous man, travelling by his side, enjoys his delights unto the same period. So far as to duration, the servant of God is not under any disadvantage. But from the instant of death how stands the comparison? That instant which for ever extinguishes the pleasures of the wicked, sees the happiness of the righteous only in its commencement. (T. Gisborne, M.A.)

Ver. 36. *Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.—The bane and the antidote.*—I. THE EVIL OF MAN AND ITS ANTIDOTE. 1. The evil of man is covetousness. This is the root of the moral Upas. 2. The antidote of this evil is Divine truth. The Word of God not only condemns covetousness, but inspires the soul with that love to God and man that expels it. II. THE HEART OF MAN AND ITS TENDENCY. 1. The heart of man is his moral self. According to it so he is, right or wrong. 2. According to its tendency will be his destiny. (1) It has a tendency to covetousness, and this leads to ruin. (2) It must have a tendency to Divine truth, and this requires Divine help. (Homilist.) *Covetousness a mother-sin.*—He prays in particular that his heart may be diverted from covetousness, which is not only an evil, but "the root of all evil." David here opposes it as an adversary to all the righteousness of God's testimonies; it inverts the order of nature, and makes the heavenly soul earthly. It is a handmaid of all sins, for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain. We should beware of all sins, but specially of mother-sins. (Bishop Cowper.)

Vers. 37, 38. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way.—An exemplary prayer.*—This prayer includes three things:—I. DIVERSION FROM THE FALSE. 1. Vanity is a bad thing. 2. Men are interested in this bad thing. 3. Their interest in it is a great evil. 4. Deliverance from this evil requires the agency of God. II. DEVOTION TO THE TRUE. The way of—1. Practical spirituality. 2. Practical benevolence. 3. Practical godliness. This is God's way. To walk in this way is to walk away from vanity and into all the blest realities of being. III. CONFIRMATION IN THE RIGHT (ver. 38). Set me "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (Homilist.) *Deadness and quickening.*—I. DAVID HERE PRAYS FOR DEADNESS IN ONE DIRECTION, —deadness to the world, that he may be so dead to it that he will not even look at it: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." 1. What, think you, does the psalmist mean here by vanity? I think he probably means four things, or one thing which may be seen under four aspects. (1) Frivolity. (2) Carnality. (3) Falsehood. (4) Wickedness in every form. 2. He felt that his eyes were inclined to go this way. Alas! we seem to drink up sin readily enough; but we have with care to put good and true thoughts into our minds. This river of our life brings down plenty of snags, the old dead trees from the evil country come floating down the stream; but seldom does it bring to our door a log of the cedars of Lebanon. Such good wood is scarce in this river; but its torrent seems to bear along all that is base and vile. We find another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death, so that we have to cry, with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" and with David, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." The psalmist knew the evil of a growing familiarity with vanity. For the most part, men do not fall into great sin by sudden surprises. It is sometimes so; but, usually, there are several descending platforms, and the descent is made by slow degrees. 3. He craved Divine help. 4. He expects God to help him in a particular way. He

does not say, "Put out my eyes, O Lord!" but he prays, "Let me look another way,—a better way." The way not to be affected by sin is to look at something else. If you have fixed your eyes on Christ the crucified, the risen, the exalted, the soon to come, if your eyes are taken up with Him, you shall find that passage true in many senses, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

II. Having prayed for deadness in one direction, DAVID PRAYS FOR LIFE IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. 1. He was in God's way. If you are not, may He bring you into it at once! 2. Those who are in God's way are to pray that they may have increasing life while they are in that way. 8. Nobody but God can give us this life in God's way. 4. We need this quickening often. "Quicken me, quicken me, quicken me," is the prayer of the soul when first it begins to live. It is the prayer of the Christian when he gets into the stern struggles of life, and the poisonous damps of the world; and the prayer of the Christian when he is about to die is still, "Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me in Thy way! O Life of life, be life to me! O Spirit of God, breathe into me power, vigour, force, energy! Give me all these by giving me Thyself to be my life." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *How may we get rid of spiritual sloth, and know when our activity in duty is from the Spirit of God?*—I. EXPLICATION. 1. Spiritual sloth is threefold. (1) Resolving sloth is when a soul is settled upon its lees, and resolves to lie still, and never to stir in that momentous concernment of its own eternal salvation (Prov. xxvi. 14; Jer. xiv. 16, 17). (2) Delaying sloth; when a person intends to look after soul-concernments, but not yet (Prov. vi. 10). (3) Disturbing sloth is when a person doth intend and endeavour to walk in God's way; but sloth, as rust, hinders the wheels of his soul from coming to and running in the way of God. 2. Activity in duty is a victorious conquest over the great Goliath, sloth, and riding triumph in the way, work, and worship of God. There are three things which concur and contribute to complete this activity in duty:—(1) A straining and stretching of the soul to the utmost peg, and highest pin; a putting of it upon the tenter-hooks in service. (2) An unsatiable and unsatisfiable desire or longing for the effecting and accomplishing of a duty. (3) A constant and continual waiting and working until the duty be perfected. II. COROLLARY. Every man and mortal hath some of the ass's dullness and sloth in him; and therefore I have brought a whip of ten strings to scourge this sloth and dullness out of us. 1. Keep a strict watch over your eyes at all times, especially when you are in duty. The eyes are the port-holes that sin and Satan creep in at. It is accounted a great piece of charity to a man's body to close his eyes when he is dead: I am sure it is more charity to our souls to close our own eyes whilst we are living (Job xxxi. 1). 2. Send sin packing, bag and baggage. Sin is the soul's sickness. Now, sickness makes men lazy, loath to stir. 3. Frequent a quickening ministry. 4. Make out to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose promise and office it is to make us active and vivacious (John x. 10). 5. Get quickening love to the ways of God. 6. By faith apply the quickening promises, and the promises of quickening. 7. Consider quickening considerations. They that are apt to faint and tire in a journey, carry about their bottles of water to quicken their spirits. Let these considerations be such bottles to you when you tire in the journey of a duty:—(1) Consider how odious and abominable sloth is to man or God. (2) Consider, sloth exposes you to all manner of sin, especially these two desperate and dangerous ones:—(i.) Sordid apostasy. (ii.) Spiritual adultery. (3) Consider how impossible it is that creeping snails in God's way should ever get to their journey's end. "Fair and softly" goes far, but never so far as heaven. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," etc. (4) Consider how equitable it is that you should be as active in the way of God as you were once in the way of sin and Satan (Rom. vi. 19). (5) Consider how you contradict your own prayers, your very Paternoster, wherein you desire God's will should be so done by you on earth, as it is done by the angels in heaven. Now, those winged Mercuries and messengers of heaven do speedily and spitefully execute the commandments of God. (6) Consider you lose the very soul and life of your duty if you do not perform it as for your life and soul. (7) Consider the infinite and wonderful glory, greatness, majesty of Him you appear before and approach unto in your duties. (*J. Simmons.*)

Ver. 38. **Stablish Thy Word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear.**—*Confirmation:*—By the "Word" here, some understand simply the promise of God. But, in truth, the meaning is far larger, and comprehends the whole Word of God's revelation—truth, precept, command, judgment, promise—he prays for

the confirmation or establishment of the whole. I. IN RESPECT TO ITS TRUTH. Are there any serious intellectual doubts about the "Word" of God? About its Divine origin? its inspiration? its great doctrines? These doubts must be dealt with in their own nature, and for what they are. As they affect a man's mind he must meet them with his mind—he must examine the evidences which have been adduced for the disputed points, and take time to make the examination complete. If a man, for instance, reads a good deal of the sceptical criticism of the time, and a good deal of light literature, which is not unfrequently spiced by a little scepticism to make it more piquant, and—nothing, or something by the merest chance, in the department of the Christian apology and defence—that is not fair, either to the truth or to the mind. He is not taking the proper way to solve his doubts. He is feeding them. The Book itself should be read. It carries its own light, evidences, defences. To read it is, in many an instance, to find an answer to the objections made against it. Then, again, there are doubts and irresolute conditions of mind which can only be exchanged for faith and fixedness by the instrumentality of work—honest, earnest work for God. "Exercise thyself unto godliness." But our text seems especially to remind us that there are some doubts—affecting the Word of God as truth—which will yield only to prayer. Not to thinking, not to "reading," not to Christian working—only to prayer. The text is a prayer. It is the looking of the shadowed soul up to the very source of light. "Stablish Thy Word unto Thy servant;" and unless religion is all a dream, and our hopes in God the greatest vanities of our life, there must be answer. II. IN RESPECT TO ITS PRECIOUSNESS. The Gospel is exceedingly precious. When first consciously received, it is accepted with thankfulness and joy. The first love is fed by fresh discoveries, by wondering thought, by rapid acts of faith, by grateful memories, by new-born hopes,—these all make fuel for that holy flame. Alas! that it should change, and cool, and wane, and darken! Just where and when discovery is made of decline and failure, there and then begin renewal and repair. III. IN RESPECT TO ITS PRACTICAL POWER. If there be one point in human experience more dangerous than another, it is exactly the point between faith and practice, between inward love and outward work. That point, or region rather, is one where Satan has great advantage. He persuades us that it is enough to think truly, to feel tenderly, and that we really need not fritter away the fine bloom and strength of the inner man in constant rounds of dusty activity. Are there not many intelligent Christian people who do very little visibly and expressly for Christ? Our emotion should not be a turbulent and intermittent thing, like the pool of Bethesda, which took motion and gave healing only after it had been "troubled" by the angel; but rather like "the waters of Siloah—that flow softly," but also steadily, and equally, all day long, and all through the year. "Continuing in Christ's Word, we become His disciples indeed." (A. Raleigh, D.D.)

Vers. 39, 40. **Turn away my reproach which I fear; for Thy judgments are good.**—*The dreaded and the desired:*—I. What is here DREADED (ver. 39). 1. Reproach is of two kinds. (1) The deserved. The man who is false, mean, corrupt, deserves reproach. (2) The undeserved. 2. Now, whether reproach is deserved or undeserved, it is a thing to be dreaded. In fact, it is more to be dreaded when deserved than when undeserved. The best men have been reproached. Even the Son of God Himself was reproached. But undeserved reproach may be well borne. II. What is here DESIRED? (ver. 40). 1. God's precepts are desirable things. "Thy judgments are good." They are good in every sense. Good in their origin, in their essence, in their results. 2. A righteous life is a desirable thing. "Quicken me in Thy righteousness." Man's well-being consists in living in the righteousness of God. (*Homilist.*) *Reproach rolled away:*—A man who had lived for many years the Christian life told me how there was a place in a street in Edinburgh which was associated with a sin. Every time in his early life he passed it, it brought back again the keen remorse and shame. It seemed to stain his life afresh whenever he saw the very place. But when he came to God and gave his heart and life to Christ, the first time he passed that place afterwards his soul, he told me, was filled by a great transport of joy that all that was done, that it was no longer part of his life, that God had forgiven and forgotten and cast it behind His back. And he entered, he told me, for a moment at least in foretaste, into the perfect joy of soul, and he forgot the shame of his youth and remembered the reproach no more. (*Hugh Black.*)

Ver. 41. **Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Thy salvation, according to Thy Word.**—*A gracious prayer*.—1. It is in itself a very gracious prayer. (1) It is offered on right grounds. There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is for mercy only. (2) It asks for the right thing—"Thy salvation." Do not dispute against God's salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. (3) It is put in the right form. "According to Thy Word." He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. (4) It is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. He owns his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy, he wants it to "come to" him. 2. This prayer may be supported by gracious arguments. Pray like this. Say, "Lord, let Thy mercy come to me, for I need mercy." Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself. Next plead this: "Lord, Thou knowest, and Thou hast made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if Thy mercy does not come to me. I must perish miserably. I have heard the Gospel, and have neglected it; I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang His praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite's lips. The hottest place in hell will surely be mine unless Thy mercy come to me. Oh, send that mercy, now." This is good and prevalent pleading: hold on to it. Then plead: "If Thy mercy shall come to me it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come; but, oh, if Thou dost ever blot out my sin I will tell the world of it; I will tell the angels of it: through eternity I will sing Thy praises, and claim to be of all the saved ones the most remarkable instance of what Thy sovereign grace can do." There is another plea implied in the prayer, and a very sweet argument it is—"Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord." It means, "It has come to so many before, therefore let it come also unto me. Lord, if I were the only one, and Thou hadst never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon Thy word and promise. Especially I would come and trust the blood of Jesus: but, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech Thee, then, of Thy great love, let Thy salvation come unto me." 3. This blessedly gracious prayer, which I have helped to back up with arguments, will be answered by our gracious God. Oh, be sure of this, He never sent His prophets to preach to us a salvation which cannot be ours; He never sent His apostles to report to us concerning a mere dream; He never set the angels wondering at an empty speculation; He never gave His Son to be a ransom which will not redeem; and He never committed His Spirit to witness to that which after all will mock the sinner's need. No, He is able to save: there is salvation, there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 42. **So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in Thy Word.**—*The reproach answered*.—His state was this—depending upon, and trusting to that word of promise which the Holy Ghost had applied with power to his conscience; not relying upon the bare letter of truth, but leaning upon the sure word of promise which had been brought home with power to his heart. Being, then, in this state, he only had a greater hungering and thirsting after further food. What he had already received from God had not brought into his soul lasting satisfaction; it had rather enkindled his appetite for more. Fresh wants called urgently for fresh deliverances; new diseases required anew the healing hand. Being in this state, then, he longs after the "mercies" of God, and hungers after His "salvation." He was driven as well as drawn, impelled by urgent necessity as well as allured by Divine encouragements. An enemy was at hand who dogged his steps, an accuser with a heavy bill of charges was waiting at his gate. I. THERE ARE MANY ACCUSERS THAT REPROACH A LIVING SOUL. 1. The law of God reproaches every living soul to which it is spiritually applied, for disobedience to it. 2. Our own heart is continually reproaching us, for our shortcomings in all we desire to perform to God's glory. 3. Professors of religion are continually casting their reproaches upon us. They treat us as Peninnah treated Hannah. 4. Even the world will sometimes reproach God's people for covetousness, worldliness, a slanderous tongue, resentment of injuries, levity, frivolity, carelessness, etc. 5. Satan often reproaches the children of God (Rev. xii. 10). II. THE INABILITY OF THE CREATURE TO ANSWER ANY OF THESE REPROACHES. Can he bring forward his good works? No; the sentence of the law is within, and good works, could he perform them, are merely external things. Can he bring forward resolutions, and promises, and vows to do better

for the future? No; these promises, resolutions, and vows spring from the flesh, but condemnation is written in his spirit. Shall he answer these reproaches by his own prayers? No; for the condemnation of the law is written in his spiritual conscience, and only so far as prayer is indited by the Spirit, will it go up out of a spiritual heart. III. THE DESIRES AND BREATHINGS OF THE SOUL AFTER SUCH A MANIFESTATION OF MERCY AS SHALL AFFORD A SUFFICIENT ANSWER (ver. 41). If you will observe, the word "mercies" is in the plural, there being many mercies; but "salvation" is in the singular number, there being only one salvation. In what way, then, did he want these "mercies"? Merely as standing in the letter of the word? Only as recorded in the inspired word of truth?—as things to look at—as objects hung up, as it were, in a picture, merely for the eye to gaze upon? No; he wanted them in his heart, "to come to him," to visit him, to be breathed into him, to be made part and parcel of him, to be the life-blood that should circulate in his veins, to be the very Kingdom of God set up with power in his soul. And why did he want internal mercies? Because he had internal reproaches. Why did he need mercies in his soul? because condemnation was in his soul. It was there the sentence of death was written; it was there the sentence of acquittal was to be recorded. It was there that reproach was felt; it was there the answer to the reproach was to be given. IV. THE WAY IN WHICH THESE ANSWERS ARE COMMUNICATED. If the law reproaches, salvation in the heart is an answer to its reproach. If our own heart condemns us, to have a sense of God's salvation in the soul is an answer to every reproach that the heart can bring. If the world condemns us, casts out our names as evil, imputes to us practices which we abhor, tarnishes our fair fame, and throws upon us every base imputation, if we have salvation in our hearts, it is a sufficient answer to all the reproaches that are cast upon us. (*J. C. Philpot.*)

Vers. 44—48. **So shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever.**—*A noble resolution.*—I. To be CONSTANTLY OBEDIENT (ver. 44). What is obedience? Not conformity to the letter of the law, but the incarnation of the spirit of the law. It is to have the Divine will not only written in the heart, but living and reigning in the heart. II. To be MORALLY FREE (ver. 45). Soul liberty is not mere freedom to act, not licence; it is the spontaneous action of love. Where "the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." A reigning love for God breaks all the shackles of the soul, and dispreads a sphere of action as wide as immensity. III. To be HEROIC IN TEACHING (ver. 46). 1. Here is a resolution—(1) To speak truth, (2) To speak it in the highest circles, (3) With the greatest boldness. "Will not be ashamed." 2. We should be bold in speaking out truth—(1) Because it is Divine, (2) Because it is rational, (3) Because it is powerful, (4) Because it is restorative, (5) Because it is universal. IV. To be HAPPY IN DUTY (ver. 47). You cannot be happy by merely resolving to be happy, but you can by resolving to obey with a loving heart. Happiness, like a deep crystal stream, follows every step in the path of true obedience. All the creatures in the universe that obey the laws of their natures are happy. V. To be DEVOUT IN LIFE (ver. 48). 1. Religious love is devout. "I have loved." 2. Religious love is contemplative. "I will meditate." 3. True living is devotion. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 45. **And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.**—*Liberty.*—I. LIBERTY IS IN PROGRESSIVE ACTION. Few can truthfully say, "I will walk"; they are carried, they are driven on the way of life, they act not from themselves, but from others. They are mere spokes in the wheel of the social machine. II. LIBERTY IS IN THE PURSUIT OF RIGHT. (*Homilist.*) *Obedience the secret of liberty.*—I. MEN IN THIS WORLD ARE UNDER THE REIGN OF LAW. We can see that this is so in matters of everyday experience. II. THE ROOT OF BONDAGE LIES IN DISOBEDIENCE TO LAW, AND SO IS IN MAN AND NOT IN GOD. He says, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts," and the reverse of that saying is no less true. A plain truth it is, simple even to self-evidence, and yet how slow men are to take it in. It must be the purpose of any true scheme of redemption to lead those who receive it to magnify the law and to make it honourable. III. LIBERTY, FREEDOM, ENLARGEMENT, ARE FOUND IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW. (*E. Medley.*) *Conditions of spiritual freedom.*—I. DEEP TRUST is essential to perfect freedom. "Love casteth out fear." The return of the spirit of man to God is inward emancipation—to be the child of God and say Father—"Our Father." To trust in Him is unshackled freedom. II. HOLY LIVING is essential to emancipation. To walk

at liberty. Liberty is loving service. Freedom to sin would be vilest slavery.

III. ILLUMINATION is needful for perfect freedom, knowledge, etc. IV. The SPIRIT OF LOVE is needful for full emancipation. 1. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. 2. Fear not. If this spirit of ours be in earnest, God is working in us. May the light of His Spirit guide us "to perfect peace"! (*Homilist.*)

Liberty only in the truth:—Liberty is not so much a producing force as a product of other forces. It is not so much a power as it is open space within which other powers work. We want to walk at liberty. How can we do it? If we do not thus walk at liberty, there is only one alternative—stay in bondage. If the psalmist studied God's will that he might walk at liberty, how much greater is the obligation upon us to do the same, and how much greater our facilities and our encouragement! 1. There is liberty from the world. Sometimes men are in bondage to the world in this sense, that the mainspring of their life is to stand well with it, to do what their set, their society, the world round about them, wishes them to do. Sometimes the bondage is aggravated by another feature, viz. the effort to rise higher, to get into another set; and, oh, how aggravated is the bondage under which many thus live and labour! Freedom from that is obtained when we walk according to God's statutes. "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" and these things, the godliness with the contentment, will break these clanking chains of insane and stupid ambition and will prepare you to walk at liberty. 2. There is liberty from bad ways—love of the world, drunkenness, gambling, etc. We learn to walk circumspectly; we learn to keep the heart with all diligence; we learn to hate evil and to do good. We walk securely, for we have been taught of the Spirit to walk with God. 3. There is liberty from bad memories—bad, putrid memories. There may be compunction for the sin, there may be vows against it, there may be honest purposes to resist and overcome it, and these purposes to a good degree carried out; but the horrid, poisonous memories remain in the soul. There is liberty from these to those who walk in God's statutes, liberty that can be had nowhere else. "A new heart will I give you," etc. 4. There is liberty from fear and terror. With the dark cloud of impending wrath overhanging you, how can you walk at liberty? But take God's precepts, know them, believe them, do them, and this terror is removed, this fear is taken away. (*John Hall, D.D.*)

Walking at liberty:—Liberty and freedom are words not unfrequently used in the Bible in a political, social, and religious sense. How greatly did Israel rejoice in his freedom from the yoke of Egypt. Among the rewards offered to the man who should silence the boastings of Goliath was this, "that his father's house should be made free in Israel." Both the psalmist and St. Paul recognized it as an essential feature in spiritual life, for the one declares that he walked at liberty when he sought the Divine precepts" (Ps. cxxix. 45); and the other, that "where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. iii. 17).

I. WHAT, THEN, IS TRUE LIBERTY? Whether we choose to call it by this term, or by the Saxon term "freedom," it must be evident that it has reference to restraint of some kind. The word emancipation indicates the same. It necessarily implies the removal or absence of something which cramps energies we wish to exert, or impedes acts we purpose to perform. But here a question arises. Is there such a thing in the world as absolute and entire freedom? and if there be, is it worth the having? Alexander Selkirk, on his desolate island, had such liberty. A man may have it now, if he will. Let him only go into a lonely wilderness, far away from human society, there provide for his own wants, and do everything for himself, and he will realize the idea of absolute and entire liberty. No one will restrain, control, or interrupt him; he is at liberty to do whatever his power may be sufficient to accomplish. Whether this absolute and unrestrained liberty be worth much seems to be settled by the fact that very few choose it. But is this the only sort of life in which absolute and unrestrained liberty can be realized? We believe it is. We may safely affirm that a man who had adopted such a course of life could not come out of his isolated position to mingle with other persons without giving up some portion of his liberty. He obtains indeed an equivalent for what he gives, perhaps more than an equivalent; but his liberty is abridged, he is no longer absolutely and entirely free.

II. SOME OF THE RESTRAINTS WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH GENUINE FREEDOM, AND REGULATE IT TO GOOD ENDS. 1. The general welfare of society. 2. The rights of other individuals. On passing down the street, you see in an open shop window, or at a door, an article of food or clothing: you greatly desire—perhaps you urgently need it. Why is it that you do not at once exercise your liberty and take it?

It is easy to do so; and if it lay in the street you would do it at once. You will reply, that the man inside, in the shop, has a right to it, and you have none. You may buy that right from him, if you please; but until you do, you are no more at liberty to take that article than he is at liberty to put his hand in your pocket and take your purse. His right, then, restrains your liberty, and your right restrains his. 3. A person may say, I admit these restraints and will respect them; but I will do as I please, so long as I do not interfere with the rights and liberties of others. I will enjoy my liberty, and allow them theirs; I will eat, drink, and be merry; I will choose the companionship of those who wish to do as I do; and if I spend my money foolishly, and revel in what you stigmatize as vices, what does it matter, since I allow all others to do as they like? Such seems to have been the liberty which the prodigal son in the parable desired, sought, and exercised. Yet is this liberty of his subject to no restraint? What means, then, that violent headache, that prostration of strength, that empty purse? We find, then, that there is no such thing, except in solitude, as absolute and unrestrained liberty; every man's freedom is checked and limited every day and at every turn, and must, of necessity, be so restrained. III. APPLY THIS IDEA OF REAL LIBERTY TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AND WALK OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN. The Christian is a free man. St. Paul speaks of the liberty with which Christ has made him free. Is this liberty of his, then, absolute, or restrained? He rejoices in the liberty wherewith Christ has set him free, and yet he feels that he is "not his own, because bought with a price." He knows, he feels, that God's law is a restraint; but he rejoices that it restrains him; for "he serves God with his spirit in the Gospel of His Son," and loves his servitude as much as his liberty. In fact, he regards them as identical; much as our Prayer-book has expressed it: "Whose service is perfect freedom." St. Paul also unites the two ideas: "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Conclusion.—1. We should always remember that we are not at liberty to do evil. 2. Let us learn to love the restraints of God's law. (*Christian Observer.*) *The nature of liberty*:—Lawlessness, licence, is not liberty. True liberty is found only in obedience to proper restraint. A river finds liberty to flow only between banks; without these it would only spread out into a slimy, stagnant pool. Planets uncontrolled by laws would only bring wreck to themselves and the universe. The same law which fences us in fences others out; the restraints which regulate our liberty also ensure and protect us. It is the right kind of control and a cheerful obedience which make a freeman. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

Ver. 46. **I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.**—*The moral martyr*:—Religion is proposed to us in two different points of view, a point of speculation, and a point of practice. Accordingly, there are two sorts of martyrdom; a martyrdom for doctrine, and a martyrdom for morality. It is for the last that the prophet prepares us in the words of the text. I. THE AUTHORS, OR, AS THEY MAY BE JUSTLY DENOMINATED, THE EXECUTIONERS, WHO PUNISH MEN WITH MARTYRDOM FOR MORALITY. I understand, then, by the vague term, "kings," all who have any pre-eminence over the lowest orders of men, and these are they who exercise tyranny and inflict the martyrdom for which the prophet in the text prepares us. II. THE MAGNANIMITY OF SUCH AS EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO IT. III. THE HORRORS THAT ACCOMPANY IT. IV. THE OBLIGATION OF SPEAKING OF THE TESTIMONIES OF GOD BEFORE KINGS. We ground this on the nature of this duty. You have heard, that it consists in urging the rights of God before great men; and, though it be at the hazard of all the comforts and pleasures of life, in professing to respect the moral part of religion. How often have we denied our holy religion? How often, when it hath been jeeringly said to us, "Thou also wast with Jesus," have we sneakingly replied, "I know not what thou sayest"? V. THE CROWN OF MORAL MARTYRDOM. A man who can say to God, as our prophet said, finds a rich reward, first in the ideas which a sound reason gives him of shame and glory; secondly, in the testimony of his own conscience; thirdly, in the approbation of good people; and lastly, in the prerogatives of martyrdom. These, if I may so express myself, are four jewels of his crown. (*J. Saurin.*) *Boldness in religion*:—There are several reasons to justify this boldness in religion:—I. It is a DIVINE SYSTEM. 1. All the arguments for the Divinity of this book may be ranged under one word—congruity. (1) The congruity of its contents with collateral history. (2) The congruity of its contents

with itself. Though written by different men in different ages, in different lands, there is no essential contradiction. (3) Congruity with our antecedent notions of God. (4) Congruity with man's reason, intuitions, wants. 2. What folly to be ashamed of speaking of a book whose author is God Himself. II. IT IS A RATIONAL SYSTEM. 1. In saying this we do not say—(1) That men's interpretations of it are rational. Nor—(2) That all it contains can be comprehended by reason. 2. Its incomprehensibles answer two purposes—furnish an argument for its Divinity, and a schooling energy for the student. 3. There are two facts in favour of this rationality. (1) That its most thoughtful students have ever been impressed with its reasonableness. (2) That it has ever proved itself the most powerful agent in developing the rationality of mankind. Why, then, should we be ashamed of speaking of a system so rational, a system that can bear the scrutiny of the keenest intellect, the analysis of the severest philosophy? III. IT IS A POWERFUL SYSTEM. 1. Because it is true. All truth is powerful. 2. Because it is moral truth. Truth for the affections and conscience is the most powerful kind of truth. 3. Because it is remedial truth. Truth revealing provisions for recovering sinners. 4. Because it is embodied truth:—Truth, coming, not in mere proposition or precept, but in example, in the example of God Himself. It is, indeed, "the power of God." Every page in the history of its triumphs demonstrates its almighty power. Then you may well glory in it. IV. IT IS A RESTORATIVE SYSTEM. It is a power, not to destroy, but to save. V. IT IS A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM. It is not for a class, a sect, a province, a period; it is for universal man. (*Homilist.*) *Guilty silence*:—A silent religion, or a speaking religion—which shall it be? David says, "I will speak";—what do we say? Too often we resolve that we will keep silence. The theme on which David says he will speak is God's testimonies. Has he chosen a barren topic? Look at the range, the explicitness, and the emphasis of those testimonies, and you will say that never did man choose so fruitful, so abounding a theme. The fact is that there is not a single aspect of life which lies beyond the circumference of the Divine testimonies. God has anticipated everything, provided for everything. David, then, is ready for all occasions, for all men, at all times, and in all places. What, then, is the urgent practical lesson to be deduced from all this affluent provision? If there is one lesson clearer than another suggested by these circumstances, it is that we are left without excuse if we fail to speak of the Divine testimonies. Opportunities occur every day. Circumstances arise under which no words can be so beautiful, so touching, so pithy, so real. There are many curious and startling inconsistencies perpetrated in connection with this matter of not being faithful to the Divine testimonies. We have before the mind's eye a man who is a large employer of labour. He might have an immense moral influence over those who work in his employment. By a wise word here, and an encouraging word there, he might achieve untold good. That man is a member of the Church, but his own servants are perfectly unaware of his piety until they see his name advertised as a speaker at a religious meeting. Is this right? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Religion acknowledged*:—There is a splendid tonic in the biography of Hedley Vicars, who, when he was converted, put his Bible on his mess-room table as the best answer to the jeers of his fellow-officers in the British army. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Ver. 47. **And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved.**—*God's commandments to be loved*:—The love of God's laws is certainly to be distinguished from the mere outward observance of them. As in the law of Moses, so far more in the Gospel of Christ, religion is "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." As to the reason of the thing, it is plain that in proportion as we have a regard for any person, we always take pleasure in doing what will please him; and that, if we are indifferent and careless about this, it is the strongest of all proofs that our regard for that person is little or none. In the same manner it is plain that there is no proof so decisive of our love or neglect of Almighty God, as whether we love or neglect His commandments. Scripture also solemnly confirms this most reasonable opinion. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." "If a man love Me, he will keep My Word." And the same kind of warning is to be found in the writings of the apostles, particularly in the Epistles of St. John. And what we particularly observe in it is that, as Christians, we are called to put in practice, not some vague, undeter-

mined, fanciful notions of goodness or virtue, but the plain will and pleasure of our best, I ought to say, our only Friend. The Christian, then, who loves Christ Jesus must of necessity also love His commandments. This being certainly true, it seems no less than necessary for us all, to the best of our ability, to see whether or not we really, as we ought, love what our God commands, and, as the prophet says, "delight ourselves in it." For in this respect, as in others, no doubt we may deceive ourselves with false confidence. Yet still there is the utmost necessity that, at the very best, we should bear in mind the solemn caution of the apostle, "Be not high-minded," be not too confident of your growth in spiritual grace, of your willingness to endure anything for your Redeemer's sake; "but fear." (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*) *Delight in God's commandments*:—It is not a small progress in godliness to delight in the commandments of God. Our corrupt nature counts them burdenable: but the grace of Christ makes us find His yoke easy, and His burden light. And, indeed, so do His children esteem of it, who have found by experience there is more solid joy in the obedience of God's commandments than in the perishing pleasures of sin. And would to God they who of a long time have proved the pleasures of transgression would turn them, and prove by experience, on the other hand, what comfort there is in mourning for sin; what is the joy of a good conscience, and the sweet inward pleasures of a godly conversation; they should then easily perceive that the delights of the one do by infinite degrees surmount the pleasures of the other. Natural men do some external works of God's worship, but not with an inward delight; this is no acceptable service to God. They assemble themselves on the Sabbath with the godly to hear the Word; but what the one doth of delight, the other doth of custom, or compulsion. The Lord looks to the affection more than to the action; and we should not only consider what we do, but how we do it; so to come to the temple, that we come with Simeon, by motion of the Spirit; so to hear the Word, that it be with spiritual joy and delight, as David did. And this also condemns those of our age to whom the Word of the Lord is a reproach and weariness. (*Bishop Cowper.*)

Ver. 49. Remember the Word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.—*Pleading prayer*:—I admire in this psalm very greatly the singular amalgam that we have of testimony, of prayer, and of praise. In one verse the psalmist bears witness, in a second verse he praises, in a third verse he prays. It is an incense made up of many spices, but they are wonderfully compounded and worked together, so as to form one perfect sweetness. My text is a prayer, but there is testimony in it, and there is a measure of praise in it too. **I. THE PRAYER.** "Remember the Word unto Thy servant." 1. "Remember." That prayer is spoken after the manner of men, for God cannot forget. 2. It is language which has some trace of unbelief in it. 3. The intention of him who prayed this prayer was to ask God to remember His Word by fulfilling it. "Lord, let me not only be in Thy thoughts, but let me be in Thy acts! Thou hast promised to supply my needs; remember me by supplying my needs. Thou hast promised to forgive my sin; remember me by giving me a sense of pardon. Thou hast promised to help Thy servant, and give me strength according to my day; remember the word by fulfilling Thy Word, and granting strength to me according as I have need of it." 4. Sometimes this word "remember" is very fitly used, because it seems to the mind that God is likely to remember something else which would be to our loss. Suppose you and I have been walking contrary to God—then the Lord may remember our sin, and He may begin to deal with us in a way of chastisement, and lay us very low. Then is the time to come in with this prayer: "Remember the Word unto Thy servant." **II. THE PLEAS WHICH THE PSALMIST USES.** 1. The first is, "Remember the Word." It is a blessed plea—the Word; for by the Word upon which God has caused His servant to hope is meant God's Word. He never makes His people to hope in anybody else's word. Let us consider the power, the dignity, the glory of that Word. This is the greatest of all grounds of assurance. 2. The second plea lies in the words, "Thy servant." "Remember the Word unto Thy servant." A man is bound to keep his word to anybody and everybody, but sometimes there may be special persons with whom a failure would be peculiarly dishonourable. Among the rest, a man must be true to his servant. 3. "Upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." Lord, I have been hoping on Thy Word, and I have acted upon that hope: I believe the Word to be true, and I have pledged the truth of it. That

is good plodding. (*O. H. Spurgeon.*) *A genuine hope*:—Hope is an instinct of the soul. As an instinct it implies—1. An instinctive faith in the existence of a future good; 2. An instinctive faith in the possibility of obtaining it. Hope is either the greatest blessing or curse to a man: a blessing when it is realized, curse when it is disappointed. Notice—I. The **GROUND** of a good hope. "The Word"—1. Not human calculations; 2. Not personal merits; 3. "The Word" firmer than the everlasting heavens. II. The **AUTHOR** of a good hope. "Thou hast caused." God—1. Inspires it; 2. Directs it; 3. Settles it. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 50. This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me.—*Comfort and quickening*:—I. **IN OUR AFFLICTION, THE WORD OF GOD QUICKENS TO COMFORT.** 1. By leading us to God, who is able to bless. 2. By showing us that God is willing and waiting to bless. 3. By throwing a mild and beautiful light on Providence. 4. By spreading before us "exceeding great and precious promises," which adapt themselves with a fine flexibility to all the varieties of our experience. 5. By establishing in our hearts the anticipation of another and a sorrowless life. II. **IN OUR AFFLICTION THE WORD OF GOD NOT ONLY QUICKENS TO COMFORT, BUT ALSO COMFORTS TO QUICKEN.** First the Word becomes life, and then comfort; and then, through the comfort, the Word becomes further and fuller life. How? 1. By confirming our faith. 2. By giving new scope and ardour to gratitude and love. The Divine Word helps us to see that the Divine chastening is the sign and manifestation of the Divine mercy. 3. By stimulating the spirit of prayer. 4. By spiritualizing our tastes and aspirations. 5. By restraining our tendencies to wander from God. (*J. P. Barnett.*) *What is your comfort?*—In some respects the same event happens to us all: to good men, to great men, to well-instructed men, as well as to the wicked, the obscure, and the ignorant. Each of these can speak of "my affliction" (Prov. xiv. 10). It is a grand matter when "my affliction" is in each case balanced by "my comfort." It was so in David's case, and he is a fair representative of all believers. I. **BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR PECULIAR COMFORT.** Each tried child of God can say, "This is my comfort." 1. "This," as different from others. Worldly men get their drops of comfort from such sources as they prefer; but the godly man looks to his experience of the Word, and says, "This is my comfort" (Ps. iv. 6). 2. "This," as understanding what it is. He knew his consolation as well as he knew his tribulation. He was not like Hagar, who could not see the well which was so near her (Gen. xxi. 19). "This," as having it near at hand. He does not say that, as if he pointed it out in the distance; but this, as grasping it. 4. "This," as pleading in prayer that which he had enjoyed; urging upon the Lord the mercy already received. II. **THAT COMFORT COMES FROM A PECULIAR SOURCE.** "Thy Word hath quickened me." 1. In part it is outward. (1) The Word of God, full of promises, is our comfort (Rom. xv. 4). (2) The Word of God, full of records of His goodness, is the confirmation of our confidence (Ps. lxxvii. 5-10). (3) The Word of God, full of power, is our strength (Ecc. viii. 4). 2. In part it is inward: "Thy Word hath quickened me." (1) In past experience he had felt the power of the Word in raising him—Into life from death (Ps. cxvi. 8). Into energy from lethargy (Cant. vi. 12). Into higher life from lower (Ps. cxix. 67). (2) In all things it had been a source of quickening to him. (3) In present experience he was then feeling its power in making his mind less worldly. His heart more prayerful. His spirit more tender. His faith more simple. III. **THAT COMFORT IS VALUABLE UNDER PECULIAR TRIALS.** 1. Hope deferred. Quickening enables us to hope on. 2. Trial endured (ver. 50). Comfort is most needed in trouble, and there is no comfort like quickening. 3. Scorn suffered (ver. 51). We care nothing for mockers when we are lively in spiritual things. 4. Sin of others (ver. 53). More grace will enable us to bear up under abounding sin. 5. Changes (ver. 54). The Bible has a song for all seasons, and a psalm for all places. 6. Darkness (ver. 55). There is no night-light like the Word, enlightening and enlivening the heart. IV. **THAT THE FORM OF OUR COMFORT IS A TEST OF CHARACTER.** 1. Some look to wealth: when their corn and their wine are increased, they say, "This is my comfort." They mind the main chance: they are worldly (Luke xii. 19). 2. Some seek to dreams and visions, omens and fancies, impressions and presentiments: they are superstitious. 3. Some run to sin, drink, gaming, worldly company, dissipation, opium: they are wicked. 4. Some resort to their fellow-men for advice and assistance: they are unwise, and will be disappointed (Jer. xvii. 5). (1) What is your comfort? (2) Has this blessed

volume quickened you? (9) If so, look to it under all trials, for it will never fail you. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Spiritual quickening*.—I. EFFECTED BY THE DIVINE WORD. How does God's Word quicken the soul into supreme love? By presenting Him—1. As the supremely Kind. This quickens it into gratitude. 2. As the supremely Beautiful. This quickens it into admiration. 3. As the supremely Great. This quickens it into adoration. II. SUPPLYING COMFORT UNDER TRIAL. The soul quickened into supreme love for God can bear up under all the trials of life. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" (Homilist.) *Quickening by the Word*.—What energy a text will breathe into a man! There is more in one Divine sentence than in huge folios of human composition. There are tinctures of which one drop is more powerful than large doses of the common dilutions. The Bible is the essence of truth; it is the mind of God, the wisdom of the Eternal. By every word of God men are made to live, and are kept in life. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 51. **The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from Thy law.**—*The contemptible and admirable in character*.—I. THE CONTEMPTIBLE. "The proud." 1. Who are the despicably proud? Not the men who have formed a true estimate of their powers, and are nobly self-reliant, but the supercilious. 2. In the character of these men there are always two base elements. (1) Servility. They cringe to their superiors; they are the flunkeys of society. (2) Tyranny. Whilst they bow with a slavish spirit to those above them, they are contemptuous and despotic to those beneath. II. THE ADMIRABLE. He is the true nobleman who will dare to pursue the right, regardless of the frowns or smiles of men. (Homilist.) *The Christian armed against ridicule*.—I. THE PERSONS WHO ASSAIL YOU. "The proud." On the heart, which is so possessed, the Holy Spirit will not, cannot enter. Whether it be right to hearken to such a one rather than unto God, judge ye. II. THE MEANS WHICH THEY EMPLOY TO DRAW YOU FROM THE FAITH. "Derision." Arguments against the truth of your religion you could have confuted; or, had you been defeated, would not have thought yourself disgraced;—but to have your judgment laughed at, the generosity of your spirit denied, your principles scorned, to be branded with the name of simple, coward, hypocrite,—alas! who is sufficient for these things? III. THE LAW FROM WHICH THEY WOULD DRIVE YOU. If it be true that a revelation has been given by God to man, it is not for man to trifle in obedience. (G. Mathew, M.A.)

Ver. 52. **I remembered Thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.**—*A blessed field for memory*.—The Divine Word may be looked upon here—I. As a field for MEMORY. 1. A refreshing field. What flowers bloom, what fruit clusters, what salubrious air breathes here. 2. A large field. It goes back through eternity; it begins with the creation, it embraces the human race, it runs on through centuries into the interminable future. 3. An imperishable field. II. As a SOURCE OF COMFORT. 1. By the presentation of examples. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, Daniel, Paul, etc.; and more,—Christ, the model of all virtue, enduring affliction, overwhelming and undeserved. 2. By the revelation of principles. It teaches that the afflictions of good men are not penal but disciplinary, not sent in anger, but in fatherly love (2 Cor. iv. 17). (Homilist.) *The Divinely memorable*.—I. THE MEMORABLE in the Divine conduct to man. "Thy judgments." Whatever the Almighty does is memorable, and ought to be remembered. But there are some things in His conduct to man most strikingly memorable. 1. Some things with man generally. The deluge, the confusion of tongues, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the exodus of the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem, etc. 2. Some things with man individually. Every man is conscious of some memorable event in his life; especially,—if he is a Christian,—his conviction, conversion, etc. II. The memorable in the Divine conduct REMEMBERED by man. "I remembered." Sad to say, the memorable things in the Divine conduct to man are not generally remembered. 1. This is unnatural. How unnatural it is for a child to forget interpositions in the conduct of the loving father. But how much more unnatural to forget the wondrous works of God in His dealings with our race and with ourselves. 2. This is ungrateful. Ought we not to remember the self-sacrificing deeds of our benefactors? This indeed we generally do, we rear monuments to those whom we consider to be philanthropists. But how ungrateful to forget the wonderful mercies of God. 3. This is pernicious. Forgetfulness of God leads to moral deadness, gross carnality,

black atheism. III. The remembrance of the memorable in the Divine dispensation BLEST TO MAN. "And have comforted myself." The memory of what God in past times has done for His people is adapted to administer comfort under the trials of life. 1. He has always granted strength according to need (Isa. xxv. 4). 2. He has always fulfilled His promises. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 53. **Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law.**—*The most horrible*:—Of all the horrible things in the universe wickedness is the most horrible. I. It is most revolting to our sense of the BEAUTIFUL. The æsthetical element exists in a greater or less degree in all moral minds. And the Creator has provided for it by flooding the universe with beauty. The hideous and the ugly shock it with inexpressible pain, but what is so incongruous, so horrible as to see puny creatures rising in rebellion against the mighty Creator? II. It is most revolting to our sense of the REASONABLE. What is more reasonable than for the greatest Being to be revered the most, the kindest Being to be thanked the most, the best Being to be adored the most? Yet wickedness is in antagonism to all this, it is an outrage on all the principles of moral propriety. III. It is most revolting to our sense of the BENEVOLENT. In all moral minds there is implanted by the benevolent Creator a desire for the well-being of self and others. But wickedness strikes right against it, it breathes misery to all. (*Homilist.*) *The folly of forsaking the Divine law*:—"The wicked that forsake Thy law." Men are like four-year-old children, that, going down to the seashore, and finding there a boat with its various appliances, think they will try their hand at navigation. It has been the custom of their elders to have, as a means of navigating boats, sails and oars and a tiller, with a rudder attached; but these children say, "Let us not be bound to our fathers' notions." And so with might and main they heave the mast and sails overboard, cast away the oars, and, unfastening the boat, they climb into it. And then, laughing and saying, "Now for a voyage of the newest fashion," they push off, and when once the boat is set free the tide takes her, and as there is nothing to steer her she goes whirling round and round, or drifting in this direction or that, at the mercy of the waves. And when they are far from the land, and night is coming on, and the sea begins to get turbulent, then, without sails, without oars, without rudder, and without the capacity to manage the boat, with their little palms they try, over the side, to paddle her back. But what can these children do towards paddling that masterly boat with the wind and tide against them, and with no power but that of their little palms? And yet they are mighty to manage that boat, compared to men who unharness faith and throw off its spars, its oars, its ordinary means of navigation, and say, "Now, having got rid of these superstitions, we will paddle our new views and systems in our own way." (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 54. **Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.**—*Obligation a privilege*:—When the Eastern traveller takes shelter from the scorching heat of noon, or halts for the night in some inn or caravansary, which is for the time the house of his pilgrimage, he takes the sackbut, or the lyre, and soothes his rest with a song—a song, it may be, of war, romance, or love. But the poet of Israel finds his theme in the statutes of Jehovah. Multitudes of men feel Divine law, Divine obligation, responsibility in any form, authority under any conditions, to be a real annoyance to life. They want their own will and way. The psalmist's doctrine is that obligation to God is our privilege. Every man, even the most licentious and reckless, is a pilgrim. But the pilgrimage of the text is made by no sense of restriction. Here is perfect harmony between obligation to God and all the sources of pleasure and happiness God has provided, so that there is no real collision between the statutes over us and the conditions around us. It is a false impression that the very enforcements of penalty and terror added to God's law, to compel an acceptance of it, or obedience to it, are a kind of concession that it is not a privilege, but a restriction or severity rather, which cannot otherwise be carried. But terrors are only restrictions to the lawless and disobedient, never to the good. A right-minded people will value their laws, and cherish them as the safeguard even of their liberty. Just so the righteous man will have God's statutes for his songs in all the course of his pilgrimage. How would it be with us if we existed under no terms of obligation? The true alternative between obligation and no obligation supposes, on the negative

they foster his love of his eternal home in heaven. IV. SONG IS RESORTED TO BY THE TRAVELLER, IN ORDER TO BEGUILLE THE LENGTH AND WEARINESS OF THE WAY; and the Christian makes God's statutes his song in the house of his pilgrimage, because they beguile the length and weariness of his pilgrimage journey through this life. V. SONG IS RESORTED TO FOR ENCOURAGING AND EMBOLDENING THE MIND; and the Christian makes God's statutes his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, because they encourage and embolden him in the face of the dangers that lie in his way. VI. SONG IS EMPLOYED TO CHERISH SOCIAL FEELING; and the Christian makes God's statutes his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, because they cherish and develop the social pleasures of religion. VII. SONG IS EMPLOYED FOR THE SAKE OF RELAXATION AND AMUSEMENT; and the Christian makes God's statutes his song in the house of his pilgrimage, because his hours of relaxation and amusement cannot be more cheerfully and pleasantly spent than in awakening the music of Judah's harp. (A. Nisbet.) *Songs in the house of pilgrimage*:—I. TRUE RELIGION IS AN UNSATISFIED ANTICIPATION. 1. It is an anticipation, for there comes out in the language clearly enough—(1) The consciousness of an indwelling spiritual nature. (2) A consciousness of the greatness of the spiritual nature. 2. It is unsatisfied anticipation. This is suggested by the word "pilgrimage," and is implied in the very sentence which tells the joy. This must be to a certain extent the result of the awakening of the religious life. It is quite true, on the one hand, that they who drink up of the water which Christ gives shall never thirst: and yet it is equally true, on the other, that "we who are in this tabernacle do groan," not because we are dissatisfied, "for that we would be unclothed," but because we are unsatisfied, "for that we should be clothed upon." II. TRUE RELIGION IS A PRESENT JOYOUS APPROPRIATION. 1. The statutes of Jehovah are the definite and authoritative declaration of the supreme law of right. The good is also the beautiful. The light which flows from God's throne excites in us a holy glow (Rom. vii. 22). 2. It makes all the difference in the world in respect of the aspect of God's statutes towards you, on which side of the wicket gate you are. If on the outside, these statutes will lift themselves up as an overhanging mountain burning with tempestuous fires and thundering forth eternal anathemas. But if on the inside, and especially if near the Cross, these statutes will become a firm path, along which your feet will run. 3. God's statutes are the instrument of discipline. Take the yoke, and ye shall find rest. 4. God's statutes—that is, God's ordinances—minister unto us seasons of gracious visitation and exalted spiritual delight. (H. R. Roberts, B.A.) *Holy pilgrimage*:—I. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN PILGRIM? He is a traveller, and as such does not expect to meet with ease and comfort, as if he were at home. II. WHAT DOES A CHRISTIAN PILGRIM REQUIRE? 1. He requires decision. 2. He requires self-effort. 3. He requires self-control. 4. He requires perseverance. 5. He requires an assurance of success. God has given us this. II. THE GRAND OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM. It is not to visit holy places, but to be holy. (W. Birch.) *The cheerful pilgrim*:—I. A GOOD MAN VIEWS HIS RESIDENCE IN THIS WORLD AS ONLY THE HOUSE OF HIS PILGRIMAGE. II. THE SITUATION, HOWEVER DISADVANTAGEOUS, ADMITS OF CHEERFULNESS. III. THE SOURCES OF HIS JOY ARE DERIVED FROM THE SCRIPTURE. (W. Jay.) *Duty set to music*:—I. DUTY SET TO MUSIC. 1. This is not a common experience. Men do not generally exult in responsibility and in law. 2. Though uncommon, it is (1) Desirable. Because duty cannot be got rid of, and because its connection with us must be either a source of misery or happiness. It is—(2) Attainable. He who loves the Lawgiver supremely will turn His laws into music. II. DUTY SET TO MUSIC IN UNFAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. Our earthly life is a house of pilgrimage—strange, unsettled, inconvenient, temporary. 2. Why, in this house of pilgrimage, we should keep up a spirit of cheerfulness. (1) It is our best protection in a world of strangers. (2) It is a permanent possession in a world of change. (3) It is a spiritualizing power in a world of materialism. (Homilist.) *The transformation of slavery into liberty*:—Slavery, licence, liberty, law. These four words are often on man's lips. Licence is simply permission to do what one wants to do. But it requires no long experience to learn that licence results in slavery. A man sees some tempting bait of pleasure. It conceals a hook of pain. Yet he thinks it is genuine happiness. But having once caught it, and been caught by it, he is held. He may rush and dash every way in mad fury, hoping to free himself. He may even tear himself free, but he can only do it by tearing out a part of his life. It is more probable that, once caught by it, he will be held by it till what once seemed to him perfect liberty becomes to him

assured slavery. A man is obliged to watch his mail as a sheriff watches his prisoner. Letters may be coming to him any morning which, if known to those that stand nearest to him, would throw him into prison or clothe his life with black shame. Licence results in sin, and sin results in slavery. Law and liberty are words quite as common to the human lips as licence and slavery. Law and liberty: law is designed to result in liberty. Perfect law does result in liberty, and liberty is simple obedience to perfect law. At first law seems to be slavery, at last law is known to be liberty. The child at the piano would hold her hand in any form convenient to herself. The faithful teacher carefully and forcibly directs the position of each joint. It is hard for the little fingers thus to keep themselves straight, and to strike from the centre of force. The teacher knows that only as there is this slavery at first can there be liberty at last. The soldier is ordered to restrain his appetite, to discipline his body, to keep every power in subjection; he and his commanding officer know that as he thus disciplines and trains himself, making himself subject to rule and order, can he be free and active in the most efficient movement when freedom and swiftness mean victory and salvation of his native land. Several of the experiences of life present occasions when the statutes of God become the songs of man, in which slavery, limitation and hardship become freedom, joy, delight. One such experience is, I think, that which we call conversion. Conversion means at once so little and so much. Conversion does not usually cause us to give up our work or place, but conversion broadens, deepens and heightens this work. It pushes further off the grey way of circumstance, it lifts far above us the overhanging dark ceiling of fate. Conversion brings God into our life and seems to give life all that liberty which belongs to God, and therefore to His children. "Thy statutes have been my songs." A second experience is common to man in which the laws, the statutes of God, may become the songs of man. It is the experience of each of us in which we try to put down some one sin. The love for money, the love for drink, the love for power, the love of any indulgence, each is still strong; but your soul, your God, have become so much stronger that you shut these baying bounds of desire in the kennel of their own deserved fate. You now rejoice so infinitely more at the righteousness of the law that you now can lament the penalty of disobedience. The law has become your song. I say again that the growth of this song element in our appreciation of God's laws marks the growth of character. A man comes to love God in obedience to the statute, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." It is obedience to a law; it is far better than disobedience. Yet one who loves in obedience to a command has not much real love. But the little love that is thus begotten begets knowledge, and this knowledge begets more love. At last a man comes to love God without thinking of the command any more than a boy loves his father and his mother because of the fifth commandment. The duty has become a right, the right a privilege, and the privilege a joy. (C. F. Thwing, D.D.)

Vers. 55, 56. **I have remembered Thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Thy law.**—*Thought*:—It is the glory of man that he can think. We conquer Nature by thought. Thought has stretched out its hand, reached the clouds, caught the lightning, made it stand quivering at our side, ready to waft through rocks and oceans our messages to the ends of the earth. Still more, thought can create new universes. Thought gave Milton his paradise, and Dante his hell. Thank God for the power of thought! I. A GRAND SUBJECT for thought. God's name is Himself; and what is He? The Infinitely Wise, Good, Holy, and Mighty One, the Cause, Means, and End of all things in the universe but sin, the Alpha and the Omega. He is the most quickening, the most invigorating, and the most ennobling Subject of thought. By thinking on Him we rise to the true ideal of being, and in no other way. II. A FINE SEASON for thought. 1. Night is the season of quietude. 2. Night is the season of solemnity. 3. Night is the season of reality. Thoughts that come to us in the night seem far more real than those that come in the day. It is the season when the material gives way to the spiritual. III. A NOBLE RESULT of thought. The highest and the only true end of thought is to lift us into conformity with the Divine will. Thought upon Him will stamp us with His image and bear us into His presence, where there is "fulness of joy." (*Homilist*.) *The effect of keeping God's law*:—I. THE KEEPING GOD'S LAW PROMOTED BY REMEMBERING GOD'S NAME. The name of God includes all the attributes of God. If, for instance, I remember the attributes

of God, I must remember amongst them a power before which every created thing must do homage, which hath called into existence whatever moves in the circuits of the universe, and which might in an instant reduce into nothing all that arose at its summons; and if I couple with the memory of this Power the thought that the undying principle which I carry within me must become hereafter an organ of infinite pleasure or of infinite pain, subject as it will be to the irreversible allotments of this Power, what is there which can more nerve me to the work of obedience than the remembering God's name? For does it not necessarily involve the remembering, that to disobey is to arm against myself throughout eternity a Might before which all creation must bend? And if this be sound reasoning when applied to the power of God, it will equally hold good when justice is the attribute remembered. Let us suppose a man to have mused in the night on the justice of the Creator, so that there shall have passed before him all the instruments of retribution, and he shall not be able to cheat himself with those false delusions which at other times have been woven out of the idea of uncovenanted mercies—will the morning find him as reckless as before, as determined to pursue a course that must end in death? The direct and distinct tendency of the remembrance is to the producing obedience; and therefore in regard of justice, as well as of power, the remembering God's name stands closely connected with the keeping of God's law. II. THE KEEPING THE LAW REWARDED BY KEEPING THE LAW. "I have kept Thy law. This I had because I kept Thy precepts." Now, we do not doubt that there is given to every true Christian just that portion of grace which is requisite for the duties appointed him of God. But although without the grace nothing can be done, and with the grace all may be done, it does not follow that because the grace is bestowed the work will be accomplished. Two men may receive the same portion of grace, just as two servants may receive the same number of talents. There may be industry in the one, and watchfulness, and earnestness; in the other there may be comparative indolence, and remissness, and carelessness. What shall be the consequence? The one improves God's gift, and therefore grows in grace; the other neglects God's gift, and either therefore he is stationary, or he goes back. Grace emanates wholly from God; but, nevertheless, growth in grace depends much upon man. Obedience is like faith—it gathers strength as it goes. We know, indeed, and we tell you again and again, that whatever strength we have in spiritual things comes wholly from God; but a man may be idle, though he may be strong, and a Christian may be remiss, though he have grace. If we do not "stir up the gift of God which is in us," we shall drag on languidly and heavily along the path of life, scarce conscious of any of our privileges, harassed continually by doubts and conjecture, surrounded by a darkness which shall perplex and confound us. You are bidden by St. Peter to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. We must "run not as uncertain," and we must "fight, not as one that beateth the air"; out of those efforts of obedience shall evidence continually spring of our acceptance with God; with greater and greater clearness shall we read our title to mansions in the skies; we shall be happier, and fuller of confidence, and more assured of an entrance at death into everlasting glory. Tell me, then, whether it will not be true, that there is a reward in obedience, and that this reward consists in further obedience; and all according to the experience of the psalmist—"I have remembered Thy name, O Lord," etc. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *In the night season:*—There is a widespread belief that the powers of evil are especially alert and mischievous during the night hours; that is that the darkness is peculiarly the sphere of malignant spirits, whose realm is the outer darkness of the universe, and whose present occupation is to tempt mankind and do all they can to frustrate the coming of the kingdom of universal righteousness, into which they can never enter. I. IT IS REASONABLE FOR US TO ASSOCIATE THE NIGHT HOURS WITH THE POWERS OF EVIL. 1. The psalmist points out how the wild beasts move about in the dark seeking their prey, and return to lie down in their dens at the day-break. They are the figure and type of evil spirits who go forth especially at night to persuade men to sin. 2. Temptations come to many people more strongly and seductively at night than in their waking hours. 3. Under the cover of the night men commit many crimes. The darkness is friendly to their misdeeds. II. THE PSALMIST IN MANY PLACES TELLS OF HIS DEVOTIONS IN THE HOURS OF THE NIGHT. Every night he waters his couch with his tears. In the night he communes with his own heart and searches out his spirit. At midnight he rises to give thanks for God's goodness. One might multiply the illustrations, and in every case find this

spiritual thought appropriate to them, that by availing oneself of the night hours for prayer, meditation and penitential self-communing, one carries the soul-warfare into the enemy's country, as it were. III. THE NIGHT SEASON IS A TYPE OF THOSE TIMES OF DESOLATION, OF MELANCHOLY AND LONELINESS WHICH ALL HAVE SOMETIMES TO ENDURE. And it is the way in which we bear ourselves in such circumstances which declares the power and reality of our Christian faith. 1. The seasons of sorrow and of despondency are for the most of us veritable night seasons, hours of darkness. And it may be there are more of them than there are periods of sunshine. What then is our conduct in those night seasons? 2. The night season of sin. The only things which our Lord requires for the full pardon of human guilt are honest penitent confession, and genuine effort to amend. 3. The night of isolation, loneliness, it may be of old age, with loss of friends and of such as have taken interest in us hitherto. 4. The night season is the hour of death. What is to be one's solace in the hour of his passing? The thinking upon the name, the holy name of the Redeemer of our souls. (Arthur Ritchie.)

Ver. 57. *Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Thy words.*—*The wealth of life:*—A man's portion is that which he deliberately chooses as the chief object of his life, that on which he concentrates his thought, bestows his energy, lavishes his affection; that which in turn colours him, moulds him. No man need tell us in so many words what is his portion, his life is an eloquent proclamation of that fact. The sensualist who wallows in mire writes this message like the mark of the beast across his brow, "Lust is my portion." The pleasure-seeker, whose one thought is selfish gratification, and who flits from gaiety to gaiety like a short-lived butterfly from flower to flower, announces by his whole bearing, "Enjoyment is my portion." The avaricious man, whether known as a miser or not, as he surveys the golden pile and smiles over his ever-fattening bank account, tells you, heedless of his shrinking soul, that Mammon is his portion. The student, as he betakes himself to some sequestered nook where he can quiz the angel Truth, and secure sweet whispers from her lips, quietly asseverates, "Learning is my portion." It may help us to realize how rich we are in God if I name a feature or two of this portion. I. IT IS SPIRITUAL. One of the saddest phases of life to-day is the disparagement and denial of the spiritual nature of man. The body is too much in evidence to be denied or disparaged. The mind, too, comes in for a good measure of attention, but our real self, our upper self, our spiritual part, has meagre attention. Some deny the existence of the soul, others treat it just as though it were not; and there can be no doubt that the soul of many is an undiscovered world. Yet, in spite of our bad treatment of it, our spiritual nature will assert itself,—“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” I am not to be put off with matter. It is no use sending me to Nature—singing streams, flowery meadows, towering hills, shining stars, beauteous phenomena, shifting scenes of splendour cannot satisfy me. I am not to be put off with mind. It is no use sending me to books. I am a person, and only a person can satisfy me. I am a spirit, and only the spiritual can meet my mighty longings. I am immortal, and only the eternal can be enough for me. And so it comes to pass, the moment a man discovers himself, he feels that no earthly portion can cover the whole of his necessity, can slake the whole of his thirst, and so he looks heavenwards, stretches out his little hands to grasp the hands of the Infinite One, and cries, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee, there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” II. IT IS PRESENT. The psalmist was not thinking of a far away patrimony which would be his when the river we call death should be crossed. God was then his treasure—“Thou art my portion.” And we have not to think of God as an estate which we have to die to realize in some distant heaven. That kind of feeling has wrought incalculable mischief in numberless Christian lives. There are those who conceive of their portion as wholly yonder, and they doom the present to sheer emptiness. Be not deceived. The whole of our heaven is not there, a good slice of it is here. Yonder is the tree of life, but the branches hang over the wall, and the grapes are not too high to be sour. Whatever God will be to us in heaven He is to us in large measure on earth. We need not go through the world as paupers, seeing we have such treasure at hand. Our life need not be a wilderness waste, a flowerless garden,

a waterless well, a bankrupt bank, a sunless day, since God is ours. Let us appropriate our treasures; let us seek a present heaven; let us believe that we have in God an unspeakable fund of blessing—a present love, higher than the heavens, deeper than the sea, broader than the earth, and closer than the atmosphere; a present joy, keeping the heart young and warm, the face bright, the tongue musical; a present peace, keeping the soul unchafed and the life tranquil amid the strife of unfriendly voices; and a present grace enough for our sorest need, our darkest hour. III. IT IS PERMANENT. Many portions are precarious, perishable, evanescent. Millionaires have ere this seen their mountain of gold vanish. Grand estates have exchanged hands by a stroke of the pen. A great preacher says, "Nothing really belongs to a man if it can be taken from him. What we may lose we can scarcely be said to have. The only thing that is worth calling mine is something that so passes into and saturates the very substance of my soul; that, like a piece of cloth dyed in the grain, as long as two threads hold together, the tint will be there. That is how God gives us Himself, and nothing can take Him out of a man's soul." As the sun gives itself to the flower, nourishing, painting, and perfecting it, so God gives Himself unto the soul that trusts in Him. We may have all that belongs to God in perpetual possession. He and all He has are ours every day alike. IV. IT IS SATISFYING. Pleasure, does that satisfy? It never did; it never can. Xerxes felt, when surfeited with his indulgences, that something more was wanted, and offered a reward to the man who would invent a new pleasure. Wealth, does that satisfy? Nay, it rather breeds dissatisfaction. Social distinctions and worldly honours, are these satisfying? (*W. Pearce.*) *God our portion, and His Word our treasure:*—1. Observe the close connection between privilege and duty. "Thou art my portion, O Lord;" this is an unspeakable happiness. "I have said that I would keep Thy words"—this is the fitting return for such a blessing. Every mercy given us of the Lord brings with it a claim which we ought in gratitude to recognize. 2. Notice very carefully the order in which the privilege and the duty are arranged. The blessing of grace is first and the fruit of gratitude next. The grace given is the root and the resolve is the fruit growing out of it. 3. Each possession not only involves service, but appropriate service, even as each plant bears its own flower. The general principle which calls for service bears a particular application, for each particular Gospel benefit is linked with some special Gospel service. The unspeakable boon of having God for our portion has here fastened to it the peculiar excellence of keeping God's words. I. THE INFINITE POSSESSION. "Thou art my portion, O Lord." 1. A clear distinction. The psalmist declares the Lord to be his portion in distinction to the portion of the ungodly. The seventy-third psalm gives a full and particular description of the ungodly in their prime and glory, when "their eyes stand out with fatness," and "they have more than heart can wish." But David did not desire to share their short-lived joys, he sought his happiness elsewhere, looking to the Creator rather than the creatures and to eternity rather than time. 2. The positive claim—"Thou art my portion, O Lord." He deliberately declares this in the silence of his soul. As for the ungodly, they are boasting of their prosperity, they are girding themselves with pride as with a golden chain; but I dare not seek my joy in such matters, "Thou art my portion, O Lord." You see he speaks in the present tense. "Thou art my portion, O Lord." There are some things which I have not received as yet, but I have already laid hold upon my God. At this hour "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." I know whom I have believed, and I know that He has given Himself to me as I have given myself to Him. Beyond a doubt, "Thou art at this very moment my portion, O Lord. 3. The portion itself. "Thou." (1) What a boundless portion. (2) How abiding it is. (3) An appropriate portion, in every way suitable to content the soul. (4) In the fullest degree satisfying. (5) An elevating portion. (6) If God be my portion, then my portion is all of grace, for no one can merit God. II. THE APPROPRIATE RESOLUTION. 1. The preface, "I have said." Why did he not put it, "Thou art my portion, O Lord; I will keep Thy words"? No, he writes "I have said it," which means deliberation. He had thought over his happiness in having such a portion. What then? His thoughts began to stir within Him and to devise a fit expression for his gratitude, and he at last said, "I will keep Thy words." It was no hasty thought, but a determined resolve. I suppose he also means that he had given a distinct pledge. He had opened his mouth to the Lord, and could not go back. 2. The link between the portion possessed and the resolution made: it is not very

difficult to discover. God is best known to us by His words. His works reveal Him by a reflected light as, the moon, but His words display Him by a direct light as a very sun of light to us. How do I know God except by His words? The God of the inspired Word is our God, and because this God is our portion, and we know Him by His words, therefore have we said we will keep His words. 0. What is this work of keeping God's words? (1) First, then, there is a Word which above all is to be kept, enshrined in the heart and obeyed in the life. "In the beginning was the Word." That very name, "the Word," given to Christ puts the highest honour upon every other word of revelation. Beware of trifling or being negligent towards any word of the Lord, since Jesus Christ is the chief and sum of the words of God. (2) The word of the Gospel. (3) Doctrines. (4) Precepts. (5) Promises. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The wealth of the good*:—What is the portion of a good man? Nothing less than the Lord Himself. I. This is an ALL-COMPREHENSIVE "portion." It embraces everything else: all good in this life and for ever. The man who can say, "The Lord is mine," can say, "All things are mine." II. This is a SOUL-SATISFYING "portion." Nothing short of this can satisfy the soul. Man's spiritual nature has a deep hunger that the whole universe cannot satisfy, that nothing but God Himself can appease. III. This is an IMPERISHABLE "portion." All inheritances of the earth will pass away, the kingdoms of the world will vanish as a cloud. IV. This is an ATTAINABLE "portion." There are but few men in any generation that can attain an earthly inheritance of any value; but here is a portion open to all, He offers Himself "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (Homilist.)

Vers. 58-60. I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy Word.—*The duties which mark the commencement of the Christian course*:—I. THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR WAYS. 1. He betakes himself to consider—(1) not the ways of other people, officiously prying into their characters, scrutinizing what is amiss in them, etc. (2) Nor the light in which his own ways are regarded by other persons. 2. But his own ways, as they are in reality, and as they appear in the sight of that God, who trieth the heart and the reins. II. AN ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD. 1. Man's sinful and lost state. 2. The great remedy for this. III. EARNEST PRAYER FOR GOD'S PROFFERED MERCY AND GRACE. 1. The object of his prayer—God's favour and God's mercy according to His Word. 2. The cordiality of his prayer. IV. AN IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. 1. The nature of his obedience. It is not the obedience of an angel that never sinned; but of a sinner under a dispensation of mercy. 2. This obedience is immediate; is not delayed, but attended to at once. (1) Because he is aware of the shortness and uncertainty of his life. (2) Because, even though his life should be spared, his faculties may not. (3) Because, even though both his life and his faculties should be continued to him, the grace of God, without which all attempts at Christian obedience must be utterly vain, may be denied him. (4) Because, even though this most tremendous of all judgments should not be inflicted on him, still, by his delay, he would only increase the difficulties of his obedience, whenever he should set about it. (5) Because by his delay he would lose all that comfort and sweet satisfaction of mind which are the ordinary accompaniments of obedience. (6) Because by such delay he would lose also so many opportunities never to be recovered of doing good to man, and of glorifying the God of his salvation; and—(7) Because he would suffer materially as to his eternal state; for, though the idea of merit is to be entirely excluded and our admission into heaven is to be ascribed solely to God's mercy in Christ; still, through that same mercy, will no sincere attempt at obedience, not even the grant of a cup of cold water given on truly Christian principles, fail of an abundant gracious reward. (John Natt, B.D.) *Laws for the bestowment of the Divine mercy*:—I. PRINCIPLES OR LAWS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHICH GOD SHOWS MERCY. 1. His own pleasure. 2. Through Jesus Christ. 3. He limits its highest exercise to the penitent and godly. 4. His own glory. II. WHY THE DEVOUT MIND WOULD HAVE THESE LAWS ALWAYS OBSERVED. (J. R. Page.)

Vers. 59-64. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.—*A godly life*:—I. THE WAY INTO a godly life. "I thought." Wonderful act is this; an act which no creature on earth but man can perform. By thought he has created the civilized world. Let a man think on his "ways" in relation to God, and the fires of penitence will be kindled within him. II. THE URGENT NEED

of a godly life (ver. 60). When a man reflects profoundly on his ways, he will feel that there is no time to lose; the question of his duty to God becomes terribly urgent. 1. The interests involved are momentous. 2. Much time has been lost. 3. The future is very short and uncertain (Prov. xxvii. 1). III. The EARTHLY TRIALS of a godly life (ver. 61). Few good men pass through this life without being victimized in some way by the wicked (John xvi. 83; xv. 18; 2 Tim. iii. 12; Acts xiv. 22). IV. The IRREPRESSIBLE JOYS of a godly life (ver. 62). The joys of a godly man are like the waves of the spring tide, they rise at times beyond the level and break over the barriers. They are "filled with all joy and peace in believing." "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed," etc. V. The VAST FELLOWSHIPS of a godly life (ver. 63). "All them that fear Thee!" How many are the godly? A multitude which "no man can number." A good man has the fellowship of the good. VI. The INFINITE RESOURCES of a godly life (ver. 64). (*Homilist.*)

History of a conversion:—I. REFLECTION. "I thought," etc. When a sinner once begins to think he finds many things to think about, as—1. His long-continued neglect of God. 2. The fearful number of his sins. 3. The many duties he has neglected. 4. The world of light, mercy and grace he has resisted. 5. The many favourable opportunities he has for ever lost. 6. God's amazing forbearance and unwearied efforts to bring him to repentance. 7. The anxiety felt for him all these years while he felt none for himself. II. REFORMATION. "And turned my feet," etc. Thinking of no use unless it prompts to action. Many a soul takes the first step, but not the second. Here the devil makes a bold stand, and plies all his arts to retain his hold on the sinner. III. MAKING HASTE. 1. Multitudes lose their convictions of sin by hesitancy and delay. 2. One of the strongest tendencies of human nature is to put off turning to God. 3. The devil cares not how a man thinks, or weeps, or resolves, if he can but induce him to wait a little longer! Not so with the psalmist. He made haste, and delayed not his obedience. So will every sinner do, if he means to be saved. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Thinking and turning:—I. RIGHT THINKING—"I thought on my ways." 1. That this thought upon his ways caused him dissatisfaction is evident; or otherwise he would not have turned. 2. This right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. My soul, sin even now hath not profited thee while it is in the bud; what will it be when it ripens, and its scattered seeds fly over the whole of my being, and turn that which should be a fruitful field into a tangled mass of weeds? Surely it is time for a change. 3. The retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be Godward—"I turned my steps unto Thy testimonies." It is no use turning if you do not turn to something better. II. RIGHT TURNING, which grows out of right thinking. "I turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." 1. Here observe how complete this turn was. A man may turn his head, and turn but little; he may turn his hand—there is not much movement of the whole body in that; but when he turns his feet, he turns himself completely. The turn we sinners all need is a whole turn. The nature must be changed. 2. The turning of the text is also a practical one. "I turned my feet:" I did not merely say, "I turned my eyes," but I showed the reality of the change of heart by change of life. 3. It must be, moreover, a Scriptural turn, too. "I turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." There is a spurious conversion which is not true conversion to God. A man may have another heart and yet he may not have a new heart. We read of King Saul that he had another heart, but he remained unsaved. A man may change his idols; he may change his sins, but may not be changed in heart. 4. The turning was immediate. The actual point of the conversion is instantaneous. I am walking through a wood, and I am going wrong; well, I pause and look about, but whenever I actually turn there is a critical moment when I turn, is there not? It may be that I take some time to consider and look about me; but when I do actually go back there is a particular moment when I turn and take the first step. I desire that this present moment may be the instant of conversion to each one of you who are dead in sin. You have been thinking of your ways, now may you turn your feet to His testimonies. This must be the work of grace. The omnipotent power of God must turn you to Himself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Self-examination and its results:—Self-examination is to man a work of much difficulty, and one to which he feels a strong repugnance. To think upon his ways, to bring his doings in review before him, is too serious and self-denying an employment for him, and he is never disposed to turn to it. The reason is obvious: he dreads the issue of it. I. IF GOD THINKS UPON OUR WAYS, IT SURELY BEHOVES US TO THINK UPON

THEM. If we are accountable to Him for our doings, it would be but reasonable now to sit in judgment on ourselves. II. **WHATEVER EVILS WE NOW DISCOVER BY THE EXERCISE OF SELF-EXAMINATION MAY BE REMEDIED.** The sins which are detected may be repented of and forgiven. But if these things are suffered to lie hid till the day of the Lord reveal them, the discovery will come too late. 1. Think upon your past ways. They are past, but not forgotten. The record of them has been kept. 2. But if it tax your memory too much to recall forgotten hours, and the labour seems too great to ponder over what is so obscured by distance, then look at what is immediately before you. Think of your present ways: your life and conversion at this time. III. If we thus engage in the work of self-examination, the same important result will, through the blessing of God, follow from it, namely **AMENDMENT OF LIFE.** Self-examination, when honestly pursued, will discover to us our need of amendment, and the conviction of this is the first step in the way to it. For when once the conscience has been disturbed by the discovery of evil, it will not be pacified till it is in process of being cured. The result will be an improvement which has its seat in the heart, and makes itself visible in the life and conversation. (*G. Bellett.*) *Religious thoughtfulness.*—I. **ITS EXERCISE.** The text supposes that we look at our "ways" as sinful and needing reformation. Such the fact. Conscience, experience, and revelation testify that "we have all gone astray," etc. Think, then, upon—1. The essential evil of a sinful course. 2. The boundless aggravations of our sins. 3. The fearful and fatal end of a sinful life. II. **ITS RESULTS.** Such thoughtfulness will—1. Convince us of our sinfulness, and lead us to the only Saviour. The longings of the soul only satisfied in God. 2. Maintain constancy of fixed principle. Illustrate from the "three Hebrew youths." 3. Inspire inflexibility of purpose and steadiness of progress. (*James Foster, B.A.*) *The nature and benefit of consideration.*—I. **THE COURSE WHICH DAVID HERE TOOK FOR THE REFORMING OF HIS LIFE.** 1. This thinking on our ways may signify a general survey and examination of our lives; respecting indifferently our good and bad actions. And this, no doubt, is an admirable means to improve men in virtue, a most effectual way to keep our consciences continually waking and tender. 2. This thinking of our ways may particularly and specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of our lives. (1) The taking of a particular account of our sins, together with the several circumstances and aggravations of them. (2) A hearty trouble and sorrow for them; "I thought on my ways;" that is, I laid them sadly to heart. (3) A serious consideration of the evil and unreasonableness of a sinful course. (4) A due sense of the fearful and fatal consequences of a wicked life. (5) A full conviction of the necessity of quitting of this course. (6) An apprehension of the possibility of doing this. II. **THE SUCCESS OF THIS COURSE.** It produced actual and speedy reformation. I do not say that this change is perfectly made at once. A state of sin and holiness are not like two ways that are just parted by a line, so as a man may step out of the one full into the other; but they are like two ways that lead to two very distant places, and consequently are at a good distance from one another; and the farther any man hath travelled in the one, the farther he is from the other; so that it requires time and pains to pass from the one to the other. Conclusion:—1. Consideration is the proper act of reasonable creatures (*Isa. xlv. 8*). 2. This is the end of God's patience and longsuffering towards us—to bring us to consideration. 3. Consideration is that which we must all come to one time or other. When we come to die, then we shall think of our ways with trouble and vexation enough; and how glad would we then be, that we had time to consider them? And, perhaps, while we are wishing for more time, eternity will swallow us up. To be sure, in the other world, a great part of the misery of wicked men will consist in furious reflections upon themselves, and the evil actions of their lives. But, alas! it will then be too late to consider; for then consideration will do us no good. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*)

Ver. 60. **I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.**—*The fully and danger of irresolution and delaying.*—I. **CONSIDER THE REASONS AND EXCUSES WHICH MEN PRETEND FOR DELAYING THIS NECESSARY WORK, AND SHOW THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THEM.** 1. Many cannot at present bring themselves to it, but they hope hereafter to be in a better temper and disposition, and then they resolve by God's grace to set about this work in good earnest, and to go through with it. I know not whether it be fit to call this a reason; I am sure it is the greatest cheat and delusion that any man can put upon himself. Thou hast no

reason in the world against the present time, but only that it is present; why, when hereafter comes to be present, the reason will be just the same. 2. The great difficulty and unpleasantness of it. But then it is to be considered that how difficult and painful soever this work be, it is necessary, and that should overrule all other considerations whatsoever; that if we will not be at this pains and trouble, we must one time or other endure far greater than those which we now seek to avoid; that it is not so difficult as we imagine, but our fears of it are greater than the trouble will prove; if we were but once resolved upon the work, and seriously engaged in it, the greatest part of the trouble were over. 3. Another pretended encouragement to these delays is the great mercy and patience of God (Eccl. viii. 11). But it is not always thus; and if it were, and thou wert sure to be spared yet a while longer, what can be more unreasonable and disingenuous than to resolve to be evil because God is good; and, because He suffers so long, to sin so much longer. II. I SHALL ADD SOME FARTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO ENGAGE MEN EFFECTUALLY TO SET ABOUT THIS WORK SPEEDILY, AND WITHOUT DELAY. 1. Consider, that in matters of great and necessary concernment, and which must be done, there is no greater argument of a weak and impotent mind than irresolution; to be undetermined where the case is so plain, and the necessity so urgent, to be always about doing that which we are convinced must be done. 2. Consider that religion is a great and a long work, and asks so much time, that there is none left for the delaying of it. 3. Consider what a desperate hazard we run by these delays. Every delay of repentance is a venturing the main chance. 4. Seeing the delay of repentance doth mainly rely upon the hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, let us consider a little how unreasonable these hopes are, and how absurd the encouragement is which men take from them. To sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent is to do a thing in hopes that we shall one day be mightily ashamed of it; in hopes that we shall be full of horror at the thoughts of what we have done, and shall treasure up so much guilt in our consciences as will make us a terror to ourselves, and be ready to drive us even to despair and distraction. And is this a reasonable hope? 5. If you be still resolved to delay this business, and put it off at present, consider well with yourselves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the last, nor till sickness come, and death make his approaches to you. This is just as if a man should be content to be shipwrecked, in hope that he shall afterwards escape by a plank, and get safe to shore. But perhaps thou art not altogether so unreasonable, but desirest only to respite this work till the first heat of youth and lust be over, till the cooler and more considerate part of thy life come on; that, perhaps, thou thinkest may be the fittest and most convenient season. But still we reckon upon uncertainties, for perhaps that season may never be. Some seem yet more reasonable, and are content to come lower, and desire only to put it off for a very little while. But why for a little while? Why till to-morrow? To-morrow will be as this day, only with this difference, that thou wilt in all probability be more unwilling and indisposed then. 6. Consider what an unspeakable happiness it is to have our minds settled in that condition, that we may without fear and amazement—nay, with comfort and confidence—expect death and judgment. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*)

The great folly and danger of delaying repentance:—I. THE LONGER YOU DELAY THIS WORK, STILL THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE TO YOU, AND THE MORE LABOUR AND PAINS YOU WILL BE PUT TO, IF EVER YOU PROSECUTE IT SUCCESSFULLY. II. BY MAKING HASTE TO KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, WE MIGHTILY CONSULT THE PLEASURE AND COMFORT OF OUR FOLLOWING DAYS, AS, ON THE CONTRARY, BY DELAYING IT, WE NECESSARILY PREPARE FEARS AND DISQUIETUDE, AND UNAVOIDABLE ANXIETIES OF MIND ALL OUR LIFE AFTER. Why, therefore, should we not now begin to live so, as when we come to be old, if ever we be so, we shall wish we had lived? Why should we not now, in our vigour and strength, make some provisions wherewith to sustain and support ourselves under the burden and infirmities of old age? III. OUR HAPPINESS IN THE FUTURE STATE WILL BE SO MUCH THE GREATER BY HOW MUCH THE EARLIER WE BEGIN TO BE RELIGIOUS. Oh, how happy would it be for such if they would seriously lay this matter to heart, before either a habit of carelessness, or sensuality, or worldly-mindedness hath got possession of them! IV. THE INFINITE HAZARD WE ALL RUN BY NEGLECTING THIS WORK, UPON ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT UNCERTAINTY OF OUR PRESENT LIVES. (*Archbishop Sharp.*)

Procrastination:—I. PROCRASTINATION GENERALLY. In some cases this procrastinating temper, this disposition to put off from the present moment what ought to be done at the present moment, arises from actual indolence, a selfish love of ease; a kind of

inertia of mind, a dislike of exertion; a kind of paralysis of spirit, only a voluntary one. In other cases it seems to be traceable to a lamentable want of decision of character—that fine, healthy tone of fixed, deliberate, unalterable resolution, with which every man ought to go forth in the business of life to those things which are proper to be done. It not unfrequently is the result of a timid mind, frightened at difficulty; it is the mark of a cowardly spirit, that starts at shadows—that means to act, but is always calculating the force of difficulties, and predicting opposition where no opposition is. But generally, after all, it is a vicious habit, acquired we may not perhaps be able to say how, by what accidental circumstance or how early; not unfrequently even in childhood, when the judicious eye of a mother should have detected it, and parental solicitude have checked it, and the child would have started in life with the principle that he should never put off till to-morrow what ought to be done and can be done to-day. II. PROCRASTINATION IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS. 1. It is irrational. If religion be false, let it never trouble you; never have another thought about the matter; if true, no longer delay submitting your whole mind and heart to its influence. 2. It is unpleasant, disagreeable, painful. 3. It is disgraceful. 4. It is sinful in the highest degree. 5. It is dangerous. (*J. A. James.*) *Promptitude in duty*:—I. Promptitude in duty is SUPREMELY BINDING. Duty is the supreme end of existence. We are made to “keep Thy commandments.” Unless we do this our existence will prove a failure, and a curse. Even Seneca has said, “To obey God is perfect liberty, he that does this should be safe, free, and quiet.” II. Promptitude in duty is SUPREMELY NECESSARY. 1. The great Creator seems to have made the happiness of all His sentient creation to depend on obedience to His laws. Hence from the microscopic insect, to the huge mammoth, we find pleasures flowing into them through obedience to their instincts. Disobedience is misery in all worlds. 2. Hence the necessity of promptitude in this matter. (1) The sooner it is attended to the better. (2) The longer it is delayed the more difficult to begin. Both the inclination and the power get weaker with every moment's delay. (*Homilist.*) *Second thoughts not the best in religion*:—How often do we hear the saying—“Second thoughts are best”! And, for the most part, second thoughts are best. In ordinary affairs, there is the greatest likelihood of our acting wrong if we act upon impulse, if we do not take time for reflection, if we judge things according to their first appearance, in place of looking at them minutely and considering all their bearings. In worldly things, in regard of the businesses and intercourses of life, it might perhaps with safety be affirmed as universally true that second thoughts are best. But will now the same hold good in respect of religious things? Are our first thoughts, or our second, ordinarily our best, when the subject of thought has to do with duty towards God, and the saving of our souls? “I made haste, and delayed not, to keep Thy commandments.” What hurry there is in the sentence! They are the words of a man determined not to wait for second thoughts, as though he knew they would be different from the first, but on that very account less worthy to be followed. And in the foregoing verse, the psalmist had expressed himself to nearly the same effect: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.” Now, let us first look a little practically at the subject. We shall perhaps find ground in the very nature of the case, or in the testimony of experience, for questioning whether in religion second thoughts are best. There may be many theories in regard to the nature of conscience—that principle which acts within us with so mighty an energy; and writers on ethics may have their different suppositions, and propose their different explanations. But we never see that the Scriptural student has any but one theory to adopt, namely, that conscience is virtually the Spirit of God—an instrumentality put into play by the workings of the Holy Ghost; according to the express statement of Solomon—“The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” Herein lies the great reason for what we have affirmed; in a matter of conscience, where the question is between what is morally right and what morally wrong, the first thought is the thought to trust, the first impression the impression to retain. What is whispered, what is suggested to you, at the moment of the question being raised, is whispered, is suggested by that Spirit which, whether or not it be conscience itself, makes conscience its instrument, and secretly touches its springs; but when you hesitate, when you will not follow the Divine impulse, but wait to try whether it will abide certain tests, the almost certainty is that the Holy Spirit, grieved by your unbelief, will suspend His actings, or act with a less direct energy. You are but giving time for the world to pour in its counter-suggestions; for your own

corrupt affections to muster their strength; for reason, always swayed by inclination, to arrange something plausible in the way of objection or excuse. Second thoughts!—fruitful parents of “the second death”! Second thoughts make infidels, when first would have made believers. Second thoughts tie men to the world, when first would have devoted them to God. Second thoughts crucify the Lord Jesus afresh, when first would have crucified self. Away henceforwards from religion the maxim, “Second thoughts are best.” Uphold it, if you will, in the concerns of commerce; cling to it in the researches of science; defend it in the arrangements of life; but have nothing to do with it in the suggestions of conscience. If you have not begun in religion, second thoughts will prevent your beginning; if you have begun, they will keep you from proceeding. They are “of the earth, earthy.” They produce those waverings, inconsistencies, and backslidings, which are so deplorable, yet so common, amongst religious professors. (H. Melvill, B.D.)

Ver. 62. **At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments.**—*Incitements to gratitude*.—I. THE PARTICULAR INCITEMENTS TO DAVID’S GRATITUDE HERE SPECIFIED. “Because of Thy righteous judgments.” The reference appears to be to the afflictive dispensations of Providence. 1. They are judgments, as they are all deserved, in consequence of a violation of God’s love. 2. They are judgments also, as they are types and representations of the final execution of the warrant of God’s law against all those who remain enemies to God by wicked works. 3. These judgments are called righteous. Partly because they are the decisions and procedures of a wise and holy God, who is righteous in all His works; partly as they are perfectly consonant with the declared laws of His rectitude, and partly as they are to accomplish righteous purposes, in visiting the wicked according to their deserts, in chastening His people for their profit, that they may be made partakers of His holiness. 4. What is there in these judgments to create the gratitude of a pious mind? There are three aspects in which they may be viewed. (1) As vindications of the Divine government. (2) As they secure the most beneficial consequences and results. (3) As they afford a presumptive proof of the arrival of a crisis, when all the apparent inequalities shall be removed from his administration, and there will be a time of restitution of all things. II. THE FERVOUR AND ARDENCY WITH WHICH DAVID EXPRESSES HIS THANKFULNESS. “At midnight,” etc. 1. Our gratitude to God for mercies and for providential deliverances should be ardent and animated. 2. Gratitude should be often expressed in retirement. 3. All times and places are alike to God, at which we tender to Him the sacrifice of praise. 4. This conduct of David should serve to impress us with the value which he set, and we ought also to put upon time. (Evangelical Preacher.)

Ver. 63. **I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts.**—*Good society*.—God has made man for society and society for man. The society, however, to which the text points is the society of the highest type, composed of those who fear God and keep His “precepts.” I. This is the most HONOURABLE society. The only honourable society is the society of honourable men, and the only honourable men are those who fear God and keep His commandments. II. This is the most HAPPY society. All good men are happy. III. This is the most GROWING society. It is large now, composed of an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; its numbers increase with every conversion. (Homilist.) *The best company*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. They fear Him. There is a twofold fear of God:—(1) A servile fear. (2) A filial fear: this is the fear intended in the text. This fear is promised (Jer. xxxii. 40). 2. They keep God’s precepts. (1) In purpose and resolution; they approve of them all (Ps. cxix. 117). (2) In affection (Ps. xix. 10; cxix. 77). (3) They endeavour to observe them; and to observe them all (Ps. cxix. 1, 28). II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING A COMPANION OF THOSE THAT FEAR GOD. 1. A high esteem and affection for them (1 John iv. 20, 21; Lev. xix. 18; John xiii. 34; xv. 12). 2. A delight in communion with them (Ps. xvi. 3). 3. Joining with them in public worship (Ps. xlii. 1, 2; lxxxiv. 1, 2). 4. A readiness to converse with them (Mal. iii. 16; Ps. xv. 4; Rom. i. 12). 5. To sympathize with them (Rom. xii. 15; Rev. i. 9; Heb. x. 33). 6. A readiness to do them good (Gal. vi. 10; James ii. 15, 16; Matt. xxv. 34). III. THE OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO ASPIRE AFTER SUCH A TEMPER AND BEHAVIOUR. 1. The relation

we profess to stand in to God. Children of one Father (1 John iii. 1). 2. This temper and behaviour are represented as inseparably connected with true love to God Himself (1 John iii. 14; v. 1). 3. Love to all who fear God is mentioned as the most essential and vital part of true religion (1 Cor. xiii. 4-8, 13). 4. Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, hath laid us under this obligation (John xiii. 34; 1 John iii. 16-19; Gal. ii. 20). 5. The utility or profit that resulteth from being a companion of those who fear God (Ps. lxxxvii. 2). (*T. Hannam.*) *A proper choice of company recommended*.—I. ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR PRINCIPLES. But if you mingle without caution with the men of the world; if you "come into their counsel," and unite in their pursuits, you may expect in time to adopt their maxims, and to abandon your own. II. ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR CONDUCT. It is dangerous to form an intimacy with those who despise the laws which ye wish to obey, and are addicted to the practices from which you ought to abstain. By degrees you will venture to copy their manners. But, on the contrary, while the companions of ungodly men are in danger of exhibiting in their own behaviour all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, those whose companions are chosen among the servants of the Lord make use of a powerful means of preserving and improving their virtue. III. ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR ENJOYMENT. In the company of those who "fear God and keep His precepts," your happiness will be promoted, whatever may be your rank and situation in life. The best affections of your hearts will be called forth into exercise; and an entertainment will be furnished, of which you may partake without degrading your character, and on which you may afterwards reflect without pain and remorse. IV. ITS TENDENCY TO PREPARE US FOR HEAVEN. (*John Johnstone.*) *Advantages of good companionship*.—I would remind you that for climbers of the Alps the only way of safety is to fasten each other together with a rope, and for you, too, a great way of safety is to join yourself to some one else. Ask your companion if he will allow you to draw a little strength from him. He will most likely tell you in his next breath that that is just what he is wanting himself, and you two together will be stronger than if you had been alone. The young man who lives in lonely lodgings and never speaks to any one has a very poor chance of standing temptation. Christianity is a social thing; that is one reason why Christ instituted the Christian Church and the Sacraments, that there might be a bond of union between all His followers. (*Henry Drummond.*)

Ver. 64. **The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy: teach me Thy statutes.**—*Man and the earth*.—I. MAN REALIZING THE ABOUNDING OF GOD'S MERCY ON THE EARTH. II. MAN IMPLORING GOD'S COUNSELS ON THE EARTH. "Teach me Thy statutes." These statutes are required in order to guide men—1. To a right appreciation of His goodness. 2. To a right use of His goodness. (*Homilist.*) *God's bountihood in Nature*.—I. IT FILLS THE EARTH. Goodness streaming from the heavens, flowing in the atmosphere, budding on the earth, sparkling in the river, and bounding in the ocean. II. IT ENTAILS MORAL OBLIGATION. "Teach me Thy statutes." 1. A knowledge of the Divine statutes. Unless we know them they cannot regulate us. 2. An instruction in the Divine statutes. We must have God to interpret them to the mind and heart. (*Ibid.*) *A God-filled world*.—The psalmist looks all around and everywhere sees the signature of a loving Divine hand. The earth is full to brimming of Thy mercy. It takes faith to see that; it takes a deeper and a firmer hold of the thought of a present God than most men have to feel that. For the most of us the world has got to be very empty of God now. We hear rather the creaking of the wheels of a great machine, or see the workings of a blind impersonal force. But I believe that all that is precious and good in the growth of knowledge since the old days when this psalmist wrote may be joyfully accepted by us, and deep down below it we may see the larger truth of the living purpose and will of God Himself. And I know no reason why nineteenth-century men, full to the finger-tips of modern scientific thought, may not say as heartily as the old psalmist, "The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 65-67. **Thou hast dealt with Thy servant, O Lord.**—*A good man*.—I. THE TESTIMONY of a good man. 1. Concerning God. His kind treatment and faithful promise. 2. Concerning affliction. II. THE PRAYER of a good man for the highest instruction. III. THE EXPERIENCE of a good man. (*Homilist.*) *Good judgment*.—I. DAVID'S JUDGMENT EXPRESSED. 1. God had dealt with him. 2. God

had dealt well with him. Adding up all our varied experiences, we can truly say that all things have worked together for our good. What strange compounds many of our lives are! The evening and the morning have made the day from the creation; and we have had darkness and brightness; but, putting the whole together, the result has been more than well. 3. God has dealt well with us as His servants. (1) He has given us blessed work to do. To serve God is to reign. (2) He has given us provision. (3) He has given us encouragement. (4) He has given us earnestness of the pay which we shall receive at the end of our day's toil. 4. He has dealt with us according to His word. The print of providence exactly answers to the type of the promise. II. GOOD JUDGMENT DESIRED (ver. 66). David felt that his judgment had been greatly at fault, so that he had made great mistakes with regard to God; and now that he had come to a more correct judgment, he offered this prayer: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge." This is what all Christians need,—better judgment—more sound judgment. 1. May God help us, for the future, first, to judge His providence better! 2. Next, judge your sufferings better, and learn to believe that it is good for you that you have been afflicted. May our judgments not be, as they sometimes have been, desponding, dark, dreary! 3. Then we shall be able to have good judgment in matters of doctrine. 4. We also need good judgment concerning our temptations. 5. And as to the many false spirits that are gone forth into the world. III. JUDGMENT POSSESSED (ver. 67). He seems to say, "Lord, I am very foolish, yet I have had wit enough given me, by Thy Spirit, to believe that Thy commandments are the best that can be, so I wish to keep them, and to believe that Thy commandments are the best guide to me in life, and therefore I desire to follow them." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 66. **Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Thy commandments.**—*Excellence of the law:*—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BELIEVING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. 1. That we are persuaded of their reality and existence. 2. That we are convinced of their excellence and absolute perfection. 3. That we receive them as of perpetual and everlasting obligation. 4. A holy dread of their rigour and severity. 5. Prayer to God for strength to obey them. II. THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF SUCH A FAITH. 1. God's commands are a part of Divine revelation, and therefore the proper objects of faith. Being the word of God, they must be received as such. 2. A supposed faith in God's promises, and not in His commands, will prove only a delusion. 3. Faith is necessary in order to acceptable obedience. (B. Beddome, M.A.)

Ver. 67. **Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word.**—*The fruits of sanctified affliction:*—1. Your afflictions, if sanctified, will lead you to searchings of heart. Many sins, long forgotten, are now recalled to remembrance. Then, retiring into the secret recesses of the spirit, where latent evils are concealed, you view yourselves in a true light, and form the right estimate of your characters. 2. Will dispose you to justify God even under the most trying dispensations. When you reflect on all that God hath done for you, and on your own sinfulness and ingratitude, you will perceive abundant cause to condemn yourselves, and to justify God. 3. Will greatly enhance your estimate of Christ and His salvation. In all His offices, characters, and relations He is most precious to you. 4. Will lead you to a more perfect understanding of the Scriptures. 5. Will work in you patience and submission to the Divine will. "Tribulation worketh patience." 6. Will enhance a spirit of sympathy with others similarly situated. 7. Will enable you to form a correct estimate of the things of the world. 8. Will induce in you a more unreserved consecration to the service of Christ. 9. Will excite in you more ardent desires for that glorious condition of existence where sorrow will be unknown. (T. Swan.)

Ver. 68. **Thou art good and doest good.**—*God good in being and good in action:*—I. God good in BEING. "Thou art good." Good in the sense of kindness and in the sense of moral perfection,—the primal Font of all happiness in the universe, and the immutable Standard of all excellence. 1. Essentially good. His goodness is not a quality of Himself, it is Himself. 2. Immutably good. Because Himself absolutely unalterable, His goodness is immutable. II. God good in ACTION. "And doest good." This follows of necessity, a good being must do good. (Homilist.) *The goodness of God:*—I. DESCRIBE IT. 1. It is absolutely

pure, and free from everything of a selfish or sinful nature. 2. Permanent and immutable as His existence. 3. Universal. II. SHOW THAT IT MOVES HIM TO DO GOOD. 1. The goodness of God must have moved Him to form, before the foundation of the world, the best possible method of doing the greatest possible good. His goodness must have moved Him to employ His wisdom in the best possible manner. 2. It must have moved Him to bring into existence the best possible system of intelligent creatures. 3. It continually moves Him to exert His power and wisdom in governing all His creatures and all His works in the wisest and best manner. 4. It must move Him to make the intelligent universe as holy and happy as possible, through the interminable ages of eternity. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The goodness of God is discoverable by the light of nature. Actions speak louder than words. 2. Then all the objections that ever have been made, or ever can be made, against any part of His conduct, are objections against His goodness, which must be altogether unreasonable and absurd. 3. Then no creature in the universe ever has had, or ever will have, any just cause to murmur or complain under the dispensations of Providence. 4. Then it is owing to the knowledge, and not to the ignorance of sinners, that they hate God. 5. Then He will display His goodness in the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent. 6. Then those who are finally happy will for ever approve of the Divine conduct towards the finally miserable. 7. Then while sinners remain impenitent, they have no grounds to rely upon His mere goodness to save them. (N. Emmons, D.D.) *The goodness of God*:—I. AS SUBSISTING IN HIMSELF. 1. It constitutes the perfection of His nature. Godhead and goodness are convertible terms. 2. It is original and undervied. 3. It harmonizes with all the perfections of His nature. 4. It is impressed with the immutability of His will. II. ITS DISPLAY. 1. The rich provision which God has made for the happiness of man. 2. The mysterious price by which man is redeemed. 3. The modes employed for the recovery of man. 4. The glorious result of all this in time and in eternity. (T. Lessey.) *Pain and pity*:—We will not deny that evil is evil, we will make no hard pretence that pain is anything but painful; but leaving that insoluble problem, we may rest, at any rate, in the conviction that pain and misery are the accidents—to a great extent the avoidable accidents—of life, not its end and object; that happiness and blessing so far preponderate over them that every one of us may sincerely thank God for His creation. 1. First, as regards ourselves, pain and sickness are chiefly due to the working of laws which have this obviously beneficent nature that they are meant to warn us against things inherently vile, hateful to God, and destructive to our own nature. Physical anguish and moral remorse, often in the individual, and always in the race, are nothing in the world but a part of the stream of sin taken a little lower down in its course. Man himself, if he would but keep the Ten Commandments, if he would but live in temperance, soberness, and chastity, might, to an immense extent, sweep his own life clean of foul diseases. 2. But even as regards ourselves, pain and sorrow are not only salutary warnings against impurity and excess, but, when rightly borne, they uplift us in every other respect. They help us to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible," they make us yearn for unrealized ideals beyond our small moods and our vulgar comforts; they turn us from the near and the present to the distant and the future; they enable us to pass the death-doom on our mean and shivering egotisms. Take even the most innocent of all our sorrows—the aching anguish of bereavement. When we have lost those whom we have loved, has it not been to thousands simply as a golden chain between their hearts and God? 3. I turn to the lessons which pain and sorrow have for us as regards the world in general. I do not hesitate again to say that they are the stern saviours of society, that they have enriched humanity with its noblest types of character, that they have been as the storms which lash into fury the lazy elements lest they should stagnate in pestilence. (1) For, first of all, they save society from itself. "A dissolute society," says a thoughtful writer, "is the most tragical spectacle which history has ever to present; a nest of disease, of jealousy, of ruin, of despair, whose last hope is to be washed off the world and to disappear." Such societies must die sooner or later by their own gangrene, by their own corruption, because the infection of evil, spreading into unbounded selfishness, ever intensifying and reproducing passions which defeat their own aim, can never end in anything except moral desolation. They go too far, such societies; they overreach themselves; they culminate at last in some hideous crime which awakens the flame of a moral indignation in which all their social shams and gorguous glut-

tonies become as scum in the avenging flame. Nor do pain and sorrow only help the deliverers of the oppressed. They tend further to enrich the blood and uplift the ideals of the world. It is the pity for them which kindles the passion of the prophet standing undaunted before angry kings and mocking peoples, and the supremacy of the martyr who wields God's lightning while he stands in his shirt of flame. (*Dean Farrar.*)

Vers. 69-71. The proud have forged a lie against me.—The slanderer, the corrupt, the pious:—I. THE TONGUE OF THE SLANDERER. Slander is—1. Malicious. Its inspiration is envy, jealousy, or revenge. 2. Mischievous. It often lacerates a man's heart, and destroys his good name, which may be dearer than life. "He that steals my purse," etc. 3. Cowardly. The man who confronts another, strikes him with fist or sword, shows some bravery. But he who injures a man by slander is a miserable sneak. II. THE HEART OF THE CORRUPT. "As fat as grease"—insensible to moral motives. All the moral nerves of the soul are numbened by sin. III. THE AVOWAL OF THE PIOUS. The avowal—1. Of a good resolution. 2. Of a blessed experience. Affliction evermore serves the good. (*Homiliat.*)

Ver. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes.—The uses of affliction:—I. Afflictions promote virtue, and goodness of heart, as THEY TEND TO COMPOSE OUR MINDS TO A SEDATE AND THOUGHTFUL DISPOSITION AND HABIT. II. AFFLICTIONS TEND TO RESTRAIN OUR APPETITES AND PASSIONS WITHIN REASONABLE BOUNDS. III. Afflictions, by means of a sedate and considerate habit, which they produce and confirm, TEND TO STRENGTHEN OUR MINDS WITH FORTITUDE AND CONSTANCY. IV. Afflictions TEND TO SOFTEN OUR HEARTS INTO TENDER SYMPATHY AND KIND AFFECTION TOWARDS OUR FELLOW-CREATURES. (*J. Drysdale, D.D.*) **Good to be afflicted:—**It is not good for some people to have been afflicted at all, and yet it is not the fault of the affliction; it is the fault of the persons afflicted. It might have produced in them a splendid character if all had been right to begin with; but, inasmuch as all was wrong, that very process which should have ripened them into sweetness has hastened them to rottenness. I hope, however, that I may say of many here present, or that they can say of themselves, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." The inquiry is,—How has it been good? 1. It has been good in connection with many other good things. We are so constituted that we cannot bear very much prosperity. Some men might have been rich, but God knew they could not bear it, and so He has never suffered them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. Others might have been famous, but they would have been ruined by pride, and so the Lord in tender mercy has withheld from them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, denying them this apparent advantage for their real good. Where God favours any man with prosperity He will send a corresponding amount of affliction to go with it, and deprive it of its injurious tendencies. 2. It is good to have been afflicted as a cure for evils existent within our nature. David says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Thy Word." That is the case with many of God's servants. They were prone to one peculiar temptation, and though they may not have seen it, the chastening hand of God was aimed at that special weakness of their character. The Lord would have us aware of this, and therefore He often sends trial to reveal the hidden evil. 3. Affliction is also useful to God's people as an actual producer of good things in them. Some virtues cannot be produced in us apart from affliction. One of them is patience. If a man has no trial, how is he to be patient? A veteran warrior is the child of battles, and a patient Christian is the offspring of adversity. There is a very sweet grace called sympathy, which is seldom found in persons who have had no trouble. We are told that our dear Lord and Master Himself learned sympathy by being tempted in all points like as we are. He had to feel our infirmities, or else He could not have been touched with a fellow feeling towards us. It is surely so with us. 4. It is good for me to have been afflicted because affliction is a wonderful quickener. We are very apt to go to sleep; but affliction often wakes us up. The whole of some men's religion is a kind of sleep-walking. There is not that vigour in it, there is not that earnestness in it, that there ought to be. They want to be waked up by something startling. Our trials and afflictions are intended to do that. 5. Again, according to our text, it is good for us to have been afflicted by way of instruction. Trial is our school where God teaches us on the

blackboard. This school-house has no windows to let in the cheerful light. It is very dark, and so we cannot look out and get distracted by external objects; but God's grace shines like a candle within, and by that light we see what else we had never seen. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The advantages of afflictions*.—I. THEY AWAKEN US TO SERIOUS THOUGHT. When, by reverse of fortune, we are deprived of the means of pleasures in which we had too profusely indulged; when the companions of our happier years forsake us; when pain and disease unfit us for tasting our wonted comforts, and forewarn us of death; on a sudden, the enchantment is broken; our conduct, to which we had not hitherto attended, rises in review before us; virtue and vice are exhibited in a light in which we had not viewed them before, and our souls, awakened from the dream of dissipation, commune seriously with themselves. II. THEY SERVE TO MODERATE OUR ATTACHMENT TO WORLDLY OBJECTS. III. THEY SERVE TO EXERCISE AND DISPLAY OUR VIRTUES. It is the storm that tries the strength of the vessel. IV. THEY HAVE A NATURAL TENDENCY TO IMPROVE OUR PIOUS AFFECTIONS. When the fabric of our felicity falls, we perceive whose hand it was that supported it, and whose hand it is that alone can rear it anew. We feel our dependence on that Providence which, before, we had neglected to acknowledge, and seek, in communion with God, the consolation which our sufferings require. V. THEY HAVE A TENDENCY TO ENLIVEN OUR HOPE OF IMMORTALITY. The doctrine of a future existence is no longer regarded as a subject of cold speculation; it addresses itself to the tenderest feelings that can arise in the human breast; your minds are prepared to yield to the evidence by which it is confirmed, and you cherish it as your support under afflictions which admit of no other consolation. (*W. Moodie, D.D.*) *The uses of affliction*.—I. It affords opportunity for reflection, without which we can never properly know what we are or what we want. II. IT TENDS TO CREATE IN US HUMILITY. III. IT IS THE MEANS OF LEADING US TO REPENTANCE. IV. IT TEACHES US TO PUT OUR TRUST IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST. V. IT TEACHES US RESIGNATION. VI. IT IMPROVES OUR CHARITY. (*R. Mant, M.A.*) *The benefits of affliction*.—I. It tries and calls forth the exercise of faith. 2. It enables us to exercise patience. 3. It tends to produce humility. 4. It makes us dependent and prayerful. 5. It tends to secure our obedience. 6. It teaches us to value our mercies. 7. It tends to make heaven very desirable. (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *Affliction beneficial*.—I. IN WHATEVER FORM AFFLICTION COMES, IT IS DESIGNED BY GOD TO DO US GOOD. An old writer says: "Afflictions are used by God, as thorns are by husbandmen, to stop the gaps, and to keep us from breaking out of God's ways." II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH AFFLICTION SHOULD BE RECEIVED. Trials must not be received thoughtlessly and as a matter of course; their cause and their purpose must be carefully studied. The grace of submission must be earnestly sought, that there may be no murmuring, much less rebellion, but patient endurance and resignation to the Divine will. Unwavering trust in God must be exercised. There must also be a willingness to learn His lessons, a teachableness of disposition, an earnest desire to endeavour to extract from our affliction all the profit which it is designed to bring. III. THE BENEFITS RESULTING FROM AFFLICTION IF RECEIVED IN A RIGHT SPIRIT. 1. By sorrow the heart is made tender and susceptible to the influences of the Holy Spirit. Religion is welcomed by the bleeding heart as the choicest and most effectual balm. 2. Affliction rightly endured increases our love for God's Word and obedience to His law. 3. Few motives to prayer are more powerful and effectual than those furnished by affliction. 4. Afflictions afford the best possible sphere for the exhibition and for the growth of the graces of the Spirit. How can we know we have faith unless our faith be tested? Hope, like a bright star, is best seen on a dark night; and love is most conspicuous when it clings in spite of perplexity and pain. 5. The benefits of affliction are not confined to the immediate sufferers. If rightly endured by us, others are benefited, both by our example and by the tender sympathy which we are led to feel for them in their distresses. (*A. O. Smith, B.A.*)

Ver. 72. *The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.—The Bible better than money*.—I. BECAUSE IT GIVES US BETTER FOOD. It is well designated the "word of life," because by it the life of God is implanted in the human spirit and by it preserved. Christ is "our life," and the support of "our life"; and the Bible is full of Christ. II. BECAUSE IT GIVES US BETTER RAIMENT. It offers you the "robe of righteousness," and "the robe of joy":—robes that adorn, protect, exalt, and endure. III. BECAUSE IT GIVES US BETTER

FRIENDS. A true friend is the dearest treasure of earth. Money can give you friends; but they are seldom true. And even the richest friends that money can buy for you are not to be compared with the poorest friends the Bible can give, the true men of earth, the angels and archangels of heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect," "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," and the praises thereof, these are the friends the Bible offers you. IV. BECAUSE IT GIVES US BETTER HOMES. Money can give you very fine houses. But it cannot give you "a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." The Bible can. (*J. Dunlop.*) *God's Word better than wealth*:—I. IT SECURES A HIGHER CULTURE. It gives a freedom and a force to the intellect, a depth and a purity to the sympathies, a sensibility to the conscience, an invincibility to the purpose, a refinement to the tastes, a penetration to the eye, and a pinion to the imagination, that no other appliances on this earth can furnish. II. IT INVESTS WITH A HIGHER POWER. Wealth cannot impart magnanimity, fortitude, courage; but the Word of God does to the highest degree. It enables the soul to glory in tribulation, and to welcome death with rapture. III. IT OPENS UP HIGHER ENJOYMENTS. Wealth cannot give the enjoyment of an approving conscience, a loving spirit, an ever-brightening future, and the friendship of the everlasting Father. IV. IT CONNECTS WITH A HIGHER WORLD. The gold and silver of all the earth can form no connection between us and the celestial state, can procure us no admission into the heavenly world. "Naked came we into the world," etc. But the Word of God abides in us, goes with us as our light and our sanctuary. (*Homilist.*) *The preciousness of the Divine Word*:—I. THE TRUE NATURE OF THE WORD OF GOD. 1. Its authority. It is a "law." As such it is a rule of conduct; solemnly obligatory; and supported by rewards and punishments. 2. Its divinity. The law of God's "mouth." Not of human but of Divine origin. The revelation of God's mind to man (2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 21). It possesses striking evidences of divinity. (1) Its great and sublime doctrines. (2) Its antiquity and preservation. (3) Its renovating influence, sanctifying power, etc. (John xvii. 17). II. ITS INESTIMABLE WORTH. 1. In many things it resembles gold and silver. (1) On account of its preciousness. Gold and silver most precious of metals. Word of God intrinsically so (Ps. cxxxviii. 2). (2) In gold and silver there is much value in small compass. So the Word of God. Of more worth than all the books in the universe. Every word precious, etc. (3) For their purity. Every word of God is pure. The standard of purity (Prov. xxx. 5). (4) For their splendour. So the Word of God is luminous, resplendent. (5) For their solidity and weight. Word of God is solid, weighty; nothing trivial or light. (6) For their unconsumable essence. Fire does not destroy, etc. It purifies, and removes only the dross. (7) For their usefulness. 2. But it is better than gold and silver. (1) Better in itself. Heavenly and spiritual in its nature. (2) Better in its object and design. Destined for the soul. (3) Better in its effects. Spiritual and eternal advantages. (4) Better in point of essentiality. (5) Better in point of certainty. Word of God sure. Thieves cannot rob us. (6) Better in point of durability. The Word of God as incorruptible as the great Original from whence it proceeded. APPLICATION—1. Bless God for His precious Word. Next to Jesus and the Holy Spirit His greatest gift to man. 2. Prize and revere it. Set your hearts upon it. 3. Seek to be greatly enriched with it. Covet much of it, etc. Lay it up. Dig for it. 4. Use it. Apply it to your diversity of condition. It is profitable for all seasons and circumstances. 5. What shall be the end of those who neglect the Gospel of Christ? (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The value of the Word of God*:—This is not an utterance in depreciation of gold and silver; precisely the reverse. It sets a high value upon them; and when sentimental pietists declare that they despise money and esteem gold as good for nothing, very many sensible people set it down as so much empty rant and nonsense. Gold is eminently useful in building a house and fitting it up with beauty and splendour, in providing food and raiment, and enabling a man to travel and secure all sorts of legitimate temporal enjoyments; but it makes him no wiser, no purer, no holier—it does not necessarily develop these qualities, or increase his faith, or fortify him against moral and spiritual evil, or expand his love to God and man; it often does the very reverse; while the outcome of God's law is always useful and good. Gold and silver are undeniably serviceable in many other directions which it were wrong and sinful not to recognize. The progressive amelioration of the condition of our race by which this age is characterized beyond all others is instrumentally due in a large measure to the wise and generous use made of earthly treasures, in promoting religious and scien-

tific education, and, above all, in scattering broadcast over the whole world the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So far as money is used for such purposes as these its utility and value can scarcely be overestimated. Yet we must place it in the category of "the things which are temporal." But in seeking to form a just estimate of the value of the Word, let us view it—I. IN RELATION TO INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT. The great purifying currents of thought that have elevated our race have been formed and directed by the Bible. This alone should be decisive. Without attempting to sketch the history of its brilliant achievements, it may be said in a word that the nations which do not possess or follow the Book move upon a far lower plane intellectually, morally, and spiritually than those which have it. Paganism, in its highest forms, has been an utter failure. Pagan lands have been, and are now, non-progressive and impure, the abodes of mental stagnation, festering vice and horrid cruelties, while Bible lands are fruitful in all manner of useful discoveries. They lead the van of the world's mental and material progress. They revolutionize the commerce of nations. Their railways and steamships unite the ends of the earth and place its products and luxuries within the reach of all. II. IN RELATION TO MORAL CULTURE. It is not necessary to disparage ethical systems of heathen philosophers and others as if they contained no truth. Some of them contained a great deal. But looking over them from the days of Aristotle and Socrates to the time of the latest pagan writer, it may be said of them all that they lacked the great fundamental principle which is the backbone of Christian ethics, namely, an infallible standard by which to judge of right and wrong. This was their radical defect, and what renders worthless or positively injurious many systems of modern times. Men look in vain for the standard of right in self-interest, in utility, in feelings of benevolence, in pleasurable emotions, or in the dicta of unenlightened conscience—these are all shifting and uncertain, and, therefore, unfit to serve this purpose. But the Bible reveals an immutable and infallible standard. By general principles and specific precepts, by a comprehensive summary in the Ten Commandments, by the checkered and wonder-laden history of the chosen people, by the writings of inspired prophets and apostles, and by the incomparable lessons of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His spotless life as the incarnate God, the whole duty of man is enforced. Thus broadly and comprehensively viewed in relation to the moral government and culture of the world, who can doubt that God's Word is "better than thousands of gold and silver"? III. AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION TO MAN. We may safely say that as a means of grace it surpasses all others. (D. H. MacVicar, D.D.)

Ver. 73. *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.*—*The right attitude of man in relation to God:*—I. RECOGNIZING GOD AS THE AUTHOR OF HIS EXISTENCE. "Thy hands." I am not the creature of chance or of necessity, the product of the blind forces of nature. I recognize Thy hands, the hands of infinite skill and goodness. He made us. 1. Then, to study our constitutions is to study Him. 2. Then His claims upon our activities are absolute. No one has a right to us but Himself. We are His. II. LOOKING TO GOD AS THE EDUCATOR OF HIS SPIRIT. Thou hast commandments concerning us—laws that should rule all the powers with which Thou hast endowed us. I am ignorant of them, enlighten me, I beseech Thee. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Thou hast given me a capacity for moral knowledge; but that knowledge I have not. I am in the dark. Kindle within me that light that will enable me to go the way Thou wouldst have me go. I have a wonderful nature that I know not how to use. "Give me understanding." III. IMPLORING GOD AS THE PERFECTOR OF HIS BEING. He knew that God made him for the purpose, and that that purpose could only be realized by correct moral information, a practical obedience to His will. And hence he prays, "Give me understanding." 1. This plea is rational. It is from the less to the greater. Thou hast made me for Thyself. I want to be Thine by my own willing and devoted service. Thou madest me without my choice or consent. I entreat Thee to give me that, to make my being a blessing to myself and an honour to Thee. 2. It is a powerful plea. It is the cry of a child in distress to a tender parent. It is more than this—it is the cry of a frail, ignorant, dying creature to the loving and almighty Author of its being. I should not have been, had it not been for Thee. Oh, grant me what I ask, and make my being blessed. 3. It is a loyal plea. What I ask for is, not the gratification of my own selfish wishes, but that "I may learn Thy commandments"—learn them—practically learn them. (Homilist.) *The Creator-Guide:*—Long ago a laconic

moralist gave this summary of wisdom, "Live as you were meant to live." This sentence recognizes the fact that there is a purpose the discovery of which is man's first anxiety and the accomplishment of which is man's supreme aim. Now, our Bible tells us that we have to do God's will, to serve God, to glorify God, to do good, to do right, to find and to keep in the truth. I think the significance of these phrases will appear if we consider some workmanship of man in relation to its maker's purpose. At South Kensington there is a clock made above 500 years ago under the hammer of a Glastonbury monk. It has measured out the moments of fifteen generations of men. That piece of mechanism has done and is still doing its maker's will. It has served its maker's purpose. It fulfils his praiseworthy intention and so praises him. Every stroke of its pendulum is to the glory of the Glastonbury smith. It keeps (so to say) its maker's commandments. What he meant it to do it has done well and truly. Think of this clockwork of the brain, this delicate mechanism of thought and feeling. Year in, year out, the restless wheels of desire and feeling, of thought and passion, play into one another and mark results on the solemn dial of life. Matters may be so mismanaged as to put the machinery into a whirl of wild confusion. It is, on the other hand, possible to secure such inward adjustment, such balance, such regulative control, such true impulse, as to make the soul a splendid harmony and the life a utility which men acknowledge with reverence and benediction. With God's work, as with man's, the essential thing is to be true to the Maker's purpose. There is a commandment—a Divine intention to which every one must be true. "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding of Thy will and commandment." Somewhere, at the outset of human story, God did give this knowledge to His creatures. Along the line of the Jewish people that knowledge came in a pure stream—pure compared with its deep pollution as it ran through other histories. Man's necessary life-knowledge has two branches. If for the general understanding of religion it is essential to throw the soul directly upon God, much more is that necessary for particular understanding of our individual perplexities. Take the case of the captain of a ship. Education and experience have given him general knowledge of the capabilities of ships, of the ways of sailors, of navigation, of coast-lines, storms and signals. These are the mariner's alphabet, and correspond to the Christian's general knowledge of God and life of the Saviour and the soul. But imagine the ship's captain on a voyage to a new port, in a new ship, with a fresh sort of cargo and a strange crew. His ship gets into storms, or among icebergs. There are break-downs and accidents to ship and tackling. Besides his general sailor lore the captain obviously requires presence of mind, tact, resource, the gift to see what needs to be done, and what can be done in every new emergency. Such readiness for the event corresponds to the Christian's application of religious truth to the perplexities of his personal career. About the generalities of religion we are fairly informed. We know what is right and what is wrong. We understand the perils of temptation and we know the grace of God. We know the ways of the world, and we know the truths of Holy Scripture. All this is our miscellaneous sailing-lore. But every day we make a new voyage and venture, in which sudden accidents may happen. Storm or collision may come. We may find ourselves confronted by new circumstances, and we want the quickly-acting instinct of Christian temper so as to be able to say "none of these things move me." Can we meet difficulty with patience? Can we take failure with hopefulness? Can we be meek and yet strong, pleasant and yet good, gentle and yet firm? Can we so pass through things temporal as to fail not of things that are eternal? For all this we need more than general knowledge of Divine truth; we require that the power of Christ shall rest upon us. Give me understanding, that for each act and for each step I may know Thy commandment. Nor is this the end of the matter. There are emergencies and perplexities which form a class by themselves. We come to places when it is hard to know which is right—the way on the right hand or the way on the left hand. Infallibility does not belong even to the man whose soul is nearest to God. Insurance against ever making a wrong decision, or taking a wrong step is not gained by the most Christian sincerity and faith. Through all his campaigns the Duke of Wellington never made a serious mistake. Sometimes good men show similar wisdom in the conduct of life's stern warfare, but there is no guarantee for this clear and precise practical judgment. Often you must "Do the sum to prove it." Do it carefully. Do it honestly. Do it for the most part on your knees. The rest is with God. "They cry unto the Lord in their trouble

and He delivereth them out of all their distresses." "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." Keep near to the source of light and direction, not merely in the acts and offices of devotion but in all the sincere aims of daily conduct. (S. Gregory.) *God our Maker*:—Thomas Carlyle was once present when a conversation was started between some friends on the subject of evolution. Having quietly listened for a time, the Chelsea sage seized the opportunity of a pause to remark, with considerable solemnity and emphasis, "Gentlemen, you seem well pleased to trace your descent from a tadpole, and an ape, but I would say with David, 'Lord, Thou hast made me a little lower than the angels.'" (J. H. Hitchens, D.D.)

Vers. 74-79. **They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Thy Word.**—*The good man*:—I. THE SPIRITUAL INTEREST OF THE GOOD IN EACH OTHER (ver. 74). In what, concerning each other, are they most profoundly interested? Their ripe moral condition. "Because I have hoped in Thy Word." Hope in Thy Word implies—1. That Thy Word has truth. 2. That Thy Word has good. We only hope for the good. Good men rejoice in each other, not merely because of secular or intellectual advancement, but because of spiritual soundness and progress. II. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE GOOD IN GOD (ver. 75). 1. Confidence in the rectitude of the Divine procedure. I know it, not merely from the declarations of Thy Word, the testimonies of the good, but from my own experience. I know that all is right. 2. Confidence in the Divine kindness in affliction. "In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," etc. III. THE APPEAL OF THE GOOD TO HIM. 1. Here is a prayer for comfort in affliction (ver. 76). 2. A prayer for the preservation from dangers (ver. 77). I am not only in sorrow and require comfort, but in danger and require protection. 3. A prayer for the humiliation of enemies (ver. 78). Convince them of the wrongness of their conduct towards me. 4. A prayer for the sympathy of the good (ver. 79). IV. THE JOY OF THE GOOD IN LIFE. "For Thy law is my delight." "I will meditate in Thy precepts." The law of God stands for His ideas, His purposes, His sympathies, His plans, as revealed in nature and in the writings of inspired men. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 75. **I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.**—*Divine rectitude and fidelity*:—I. THE TRUTHS DECLARED. 1. In all the afflictive events of life, we are to recognize, not only a directing and an overruling Providence in general, but also the application of its provisions and dispensations to individuals. 2. All God's providential dispensations, not excepting the most painful ones, are in accordance with perfect rectitude. 3. The dispensations of Providence in application to those whom God designs to bless, are the operations of Divine love. II. THE CERTAINTY EXPRESSED. We know also that God's judgments are right, and that His afflictive dispensations are but the awful visitations of love. But how? 1. From the Bible. The doctrine that there is a comprehensive, minute, all-wise Providence, and that all providential dispensations towards the people of God, however afflictive, are expressions of faithful love, and in close connection and harmony with the designs of the Cross of Christ, is conveyed in every part of the Word of God. 2. From the revealed character of God. He is just, and wise, and good. It is our bliss to be assured of this. To His natural perfections of eternity, intelligence, power, and immensity is added every moral attribute in infinite perfection. What He is in Himself, that He is in His doings. III. THE STATE OF MIND MANIFESTED. 1. Here is expressed a proper sense of the nature, in themselves, of the painful events which befall us. They are viewed as "judgments," and felt to be afflictions. 2. Here is manifested the absence of all disposition to murmur, repine, and rebel against the appointments of God. The language indicates a heart, as well as a tongue, free from hard thoughts of God. 3. This language is expressive of the deepest submission to the will of God. 4. Here is expressed confidence in God, that some gracious design is comprehended in His painful visitations, and that they will terminate in some merciful result. It is faith ascending her watch tower, putting herself in the posture of expectation, and looking out for the blessing, though she does not know from what quarter, at what time, or in what form the blessing will come, yet still believing it will come. (J. A. James.) *Man's relation to God's rule*:—Every man's religion takes colouring and character from his conceptions of God. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right." This is the utterance of a sure

faith, a faith which has all the certainty of knowledge. And elsewhere we meet it oftentimes, as (Ps. xxiii. 4.) His felt conviction of the Divine presence and the Divine love inspired him with courage, and cheered him with light in the darkest day of his earthly experience. And this position commends itself at once to the highest and clearest reason, and to the deepest affections of man. It is through faith in the perfect and paternal God that the wearied spirit of man finds rest. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right." This is the utterance of a devout soul, faithful and active within its own sphere. What a contrast in spirit it presents to that of the lives which so many live! How many men and women pass their days in an unconscious protest against the Divine providence. Everything to them is a bar, a hindrance, a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence. Nor can cure come to this direful malady of spirit until the thought of God's sovereign rule becomes a fixed conviction in the soul and a ground principle of life. This kills that selfishness which, by magnifying our individual importance beyond all proper proportions, becomes the prolific root of discontent. Disappointments come to man and cherished hopes fade. What then? Is hope gone—following health or wealth in their flight? Is trust buried in the tomb? No, for we know that God reigneth, always supreme in darkness as in light, in tribulation as in joy. We know that though clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and mercy are the habitations of His throne. A very noticeable fact in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is His recognition of the trials of the human lot. One of His earliest utterances was a blessing on the mourners and a promise of comfort. He was Himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Thus He becomes to man the highest revelation of the religion which God requires. And when the most trying crisis of His life was upon Him—when the cross was in view, and the agony of His soul was at its height; yet did He, out of His living trust in God, nevertheless say, "Not My will, O Father, but Thine be done." This is Christ's testimony to the great and consolatory truth set forth in our text: that whatever comes to pass in the Divine order of events is right; God rules in and over all affairs and events, and His is the rule of infinite wisdom, infinite justice, and infinite love. (*John Corder.*)

Ver. 77. **Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.**—*Mercy to live well.*—He prayed before for mercy; now again he prayeth for mercy. The children of God have such an earnest desire of mercy, that whatever sense thereof they get, they still cry for more; and sure it is in this life they can never be satisfied. Nevertheless, happy are they who hunger and thirst, for hereafter they shall be satisfied. But if we mark more narrowly, we shall find that David here seeks another sort of mercy than he sought before. For first, he sought mercy to forgive his sins: then he sought mercy to comfort him in his troubles; now he seeks mercy to live and sin no more. Alas, many seek the first mercy of remission, and the second mercy of consolation in trouble, who are altogether careless of the third mercy, to live well. It is a great mercy of God to amend thy life; where this is not, let no man think he hath received either of the former. It is a great mercy of God which not only pardons evil that is done, but strengthens us also to further good that we have not done; and this is the mercy which here David seeks. (*Bp. Cowper.*)

Ver. 80. **Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes.**—*A sound heart.*—A heathen prayed for a "sound mind in a sound body." A sound body is, of all earthly blessings, the most priceless. But a sound heart is a far greater blessing. A sound heart, like the Æolian harp, can catch music from the tempest, or, like the bee, gather honey from weeds and briars. I. A sound heart **THROBS IN UNISON WITH THE MORAL LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE.** Those laws are the laws of benevolence and truth. II. A sound heart is a **UNITED heart.** It has no fissures, no rents, no distractions, it is one whole. III. A sound heart is a **STRONG heart.** It does not sink under trial, or quail under danger. "O happy heart," says Quarles, "where piety affecteth, where humility subjecteth, where repentance correcteth, where obedience dissecteth, where perseverance perfecteth, where power protecteth, where devotion projecteth, where charity connecteth." (*Homilist.*) *Right-heartedness.*—Some follow religion merely for safety from penalty, some merely for its excitement, and others for gain; but the psalmist desires to be "right" just because it is right, and does not make ashamed. I. **THE PRAYER.** "Let my heart be sound." 1. It is a definite prayer. Holiness means wholeness—sound

in faith, in charity, in patience. 2. It is a personal prayer. "Let my heart." II. THE OCCASION for this prayer. 1. After the excitements of conversion. 2. In a time of temptation. 3. When engaged in self-examination. 4. In times of persecution. 5. In times of work and witnessing for the Saviour. 6. In affliction. III. A STRONG REASON for this prayer. "That I be not ashamed." 1. That I be not ashamed of the profession I have made. 2. That I be not ashamed before men, in the ship, in the shop, at the polling booth; that I may live respected and die lamented. 3. That I may not be ashamed before God at His coming, but joyfully hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," etc. (*D. Brochie.*)

Vers. 81-88. **My soul fainteth for Thy salvation: but I hope in Thy Word.**—*Painful soul moods and their antidotes*.—I. PAINFUL MOODS OF SOUL. 1. Painful yearning (vers. 81-83). (1) The general objects of this yearning. (a) A sense of security. (b) A sense of comfort. (2) The distress of this yearning. (a) Weakening (Heb. xii. 8) (b) Anxious (ver. 82). "Hope deferred," etc. (c) Consuming (ver. 83). 2. Anxious questioning (ver. 84). (1) The shortness of life. "How many are the days of Thy servant?" This means how few, how brief. Why should this life be so short in a world where there are such wonderful results to achieve, and with a being who has immeasurable faculties to develop? (2) The advent of retribution. 3. A sense of injustice (ver. 85). His persecutors were—(1) Crafty. (2) Wicked. (3) Cruel. II. ANTIDOTES. 1. Firm confidence in the Divine Word (vers. 81, 83, 87). 2. A spiritual quickening of soul (ver. 88). (*Homilist.*) *The Word of God a support*.—As a man binds a tender sapling to a stake, that the wind may not wrench it; or throws out an anchor into the boiling sea, that the ship may be held by it; so must we bind our wavering hearts to the support of the Word of God, and stay the storm-tossed ship of our souls with the anchor of hope, that they may not sink.

Ver. 83. **For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.**—*The wineskin in the smoke*.—Ewald and Delitzsch read, "Although I am become as a wineskin hung in the smoke, yet do I not forget Thy statutes." As a possible alternative read, "For I am become as a wineskin in the smoke, because I do not forget Thy statutes." The allusion is to the fidelity of a good man under severe pressures of trial and affliction. Though under these pressures he shrinks and wastes, and blackens like a wineskin hung in the smoke of the chimney fire, he still remembers the Divine statutes; he still holds fast his faith in God and duty. Or the allusion is to the secret and reward of this fidelity. For it was a custom of the ancients (*Rosenmüller*) to hang wineskins in the smoke of a fire for very much the same reason that we sometimes stand a claret bottle on the hearth, in order to mellow the wine by a gradual and moderate warmth, and to bring it to an earlier perfection. In that custom the psalmist finds an illustration of the meaning, and of the mercy of the afflictions to which he has been exposed. They have been sent to act on him like the warm smoke on the wine, to refine, mellow, and ripen his character; and because, under them all, he has refused to part with his faith in God and duty, because he has been true to God and God's statutes, they have had their intended and proper effect upon him. 1. What was the character of the man who uses this quaint and homely figure? He lived in one of the latest periods of Hebrew literature; when the Jews were groaning under the tyranny of foreign, i. e. of Gentile, rulers, who hated "the Hebrew superstition" almost as much as the Hebrew obstinacy; and thus we get a valuable glimpse into the larger outward conditions of his life, which every section of the psalm verifies and confirms. He evidently loved the Word of God so dearly that he was never weary of meditating on its different aspects of law and promise, comfort and judgment. His love of God's Word, his confidence in God, had been profoundly tried. The time was out of joint. The wicked were in power, and strained their power to injure and abase him. It was his very righteousness, his deference to God's authority rather than theirs, his devotion to God's will, which provoked their hostility. And yet no comfort came to him through prayer; there was no comfort, save from the Word, which he would not let go. Note one special quality in this man. He is not only a poet, and a man well versed in affairs; he is a poet of a quaint, a peculiar turn, who loves to set himself difficult feats, and takes a singular pleasure in achieving them. He is one who can express a very sincere and even passionate love in an elaborate artifice. We have all known a few such men as this. They have a remarkable power over as many as love them. 2. It

is this psalmist's constant loyalty of soul, his profound and steadfast devotion to God, God's will, and God's Word, which we most need to bear in mind. It is his good fidelity which entitles him to teach, and enables him to comfort us. 8. Turn the verse round, and let it suggest the reason of his indomitable faith, his brave and cheerful confidence under the sharpest pressures of trial. Read "because I do not forget Thy statutes." Remember what has been said of the customs of the ancient vintners, and you will see the figure of the text suggests to those who do not forget God's statutes, that trials are a discipline which refines, mellows, ripens their character, brings them to an earlier perfection than they could otherwise reach, and fits them more rapidly for the service of God and man. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *A picture of a sad life*:—I. Here is a SHRIVELLED life. The empty leathern bottles, hung up in the unchimneyed houses of the East, get shrivelled in the heat. There are human lives—I. Shrivelled in their thoughts. There is nothing broad or elastic in their conceptions, their whole mental natures run into a few miserable smoky dogmas. 2. Shrivelled in their sympathies. Narrow thinkings and selfish habits contract the soul that should expand into a seraph into a miserable grub. II. Here is an UNLOVELY life. A shrivelled leathern bottle, black with smoke, has nothing in it to admire, nothing to charm the eye or even to invite the touch. Unlovely lives are by no means uncommon. III. Here is a USELESS life. So long as the bottle is hung up, shrivelled and black in the smoky apartment, it is of no service whatever. What millions there are of every generation who have been of no service to the universe. (*Homilist.*) *A bottle in the smoke*:—I. GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE THEIR TRIALS. 1. Sometimes these trials arise from poverty. It is the poverty of the Arab that puts his bottle in the smoke; so the poverty of Christians exposes them to much trouble, and inasmuch as God's people are for the most part poor, for that reason must they always be for the most part in affliction. 2. Our trials frequently result from our comforts. Christian men! you have extraordinary fires, which others have never kindled; expect them to have extraordinary smoke. You have the presence of Christ; but then you will have the smoke of fear lest you should lose it. You have the joy of assurance; but you have also the smoke of doubt, which blows into your eyes and well nigh blinds you. You have your trials, and your trials arise from your comforts. The more comfort you have, the more fire you have, the more sorrows shall you have, and the more smoke. 3. The poor bottle in the smoke keeps there for a long time till it gets black; it is not just one puff of smoke that comes upon it; the smoke is always going up, always girding the poor bottle; it lives in an atmosphere of smoke. So some of us hang up like bottles in the smoke for months, or for a whole year. No sooner do you get out of one trouble than you tumble into another. Well, that was the condition of David; he was not just sometimes in trial, but it seemed as if trials came to him every day. Well, if this is your case, fear not; you are not alone in your trials; but you see the truth of what is uttered here: you are become like bottles in the smoke. II. CHRISTIAN MEN FEEL THEIR TROUBLES. They are in the smoke; and they are like bottles in the smoke. There are some things that you might hang up in the smoke for many a day, and they would never be much changed, because they are so black now that they could never be made any blacker, and so shrivelled now that they never could become any worse. But the poor skin bottle shrivels up in the heat, gets blacker, and shows at once the effect of the smoke; it is not an unfeeling thing, like a stone, but it is at once affected. Now, some men think that grace makes a man unable to feel suffering; I have heard people insinuate that the martyrs did not endure much pain when they were being burned to death; but this is a mistake, Christian men are not like stones; they are like bottles in the smoke. In fact, if there be any difference, a Christian man feels his trials more than another, because he traces them to God. III. CHRISTIANS, THOUGH THEY HAVE TROUBLES, AND FEEL THEIR TROUBLES, DO NOT IN THEIR TROUBLES FORGET GOD'S STATUTES. What are God's statutes? God has two kinds of statutes, both of them engraved in eternal brass. The first are the statutes of His commands; and of these He has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail till all be fulfilled." These statutes are like the statutes of the Medes and Persians; they are binding upon all His people. Well, the psalmist said, "In the midst of my trials I have not swerved from Thy statutes; I have not attempted to violate Thy commands; I have not in any way moved from the strict path of integrity; and in the midst of all my persecutions I have gone straight on, never once forgetting God's statutes or commands." And then again: there are statutes

of promise which are equally firm, each of them as immortal as God who uttered them. David did not forget these; for he said of them, "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage"; and he could not have sung about them if he had forgotten them. Why was it David still held fast by God's statutes? First of all, David was not a bottle in the fire, or else he would have forgotten them. Our trials are smoke, but not fire; they are very uncomfortable, but they do not consume us. Another reason why, when David was in the smoke, he did not forget God's statutes was this, that Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him, and the statutes were in the smoke with him too. God's statutes have been in the fire, as well as God's people. Both the promise and the precept are in the furnace; and if I hang up in the smoke, like a bottle, I see hanging up by my side God's commands, covered with soot and smoke, subject to the same perils. Suppose I am persecuted: it is a comfort to know that men do not persecute me, but my Master's truth. Another reason why David did not forget the statutes was, they were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter. Smoke does not enter the interior of the bottle; it only affects the exterior. So it is with God's children: the smoke does not enter into their hearts; Christ is there, and grace is there, and Christ and grace are both unaffected by the smoke. Come up, clouds of smoke! curl upward till ye envelop me! Still will I hang on the Nail, Christ Jesus—that sure Nail, which never can be moved from its place—and I will feel, that "while the outward man decayeth, the inward man is renewed day by day"; and the statutes being there, I do not forget them. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 84. *How many are the days of Thy servant? when wilt Thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*—A suggestive question.—I. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE LENGTH OF MAN'S LIFE. To Him there are no accidental deaths, no premature graves. II. MAN'S IGNORANCE OF THE LENGTH OF HIS LIFE. This indicates—1. The goodness of God. Were man to know the exact time of his death, it would paralyze his energies and check his enjoyments. 2. The duty of man—to be always ready, awaiting his summons. III. THE TRYING ELEMENT IN MAN'S LIFE. The weight of years, the departure of old friends, the narrowing of the region of hope, the want of purpose not only reconcile him to his fate, but create in him a craving for the long rest of the long, long grave. "I do not wish to die," says Cicero, "but I care not if I were dead." A man's willingness to die is no proof of his religion. (Homilist.)

Ver. 87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Thy precepts.*—David's behaviour in trouble.—I. HOW HE BEHAVED IN EXTREME DISTRESS. 1. The precepts of God were the constant subject of his thoughts. 2. He was careful to walk in the way wherein he was directed by the Word of God to walk. 3. He patiently submitted to the will of God in all his persecutions and tribulations. 4. His patience was attended with meekness of spirit and behaviour towards the instruments of his calamities. 5. He maintained his uprightness under all the temptations of adversity and persecution. 6. He served God and his country in the best way that he could when he was restrained from serving them as he wished to do. II. WHAT HIS REASONS WERE FOR SO INVARIABLY ADHERING TO HIS DUTY. 1. He was fully persuaded that nothing happened or could happen to him without the permission of Divine providence. 2. It was of incomparably greater importance in his view to behave dutifully under trouble than to obtain deliverance from it. 3. He knew that his troubles would all come to a happy end. 4. He knew that his troubles would turn to a good account through the grace of God enabling him to make the proper improvement of them. (H. Belgrave, D.D.) *When obedience is difficult*.—One of Dickens's most enjoyable and helpful characters, Mark Tapley, always kept up his spirits, and the spirits of all those around him, but he was dissatisfied because his surroundings were so pleasant that there was no credit in being jolly among them. At last his circumstances changed, and his surroundings became doleful indeed; but he saw his chance to be jolly with some credit to himself, and manfully rose to the glorious opportunity. In a similar way we may say that obeying when obedience is easy does not count for much; the real test of obedience comes when it is hard to obey, when we are asked to do something that we do not want to do, something that all our nature shrinks from. If we obey then, and, moreover, if we obey cheerfully and even with gladness, we may know that the spirit of obedience is really in us. The essence of Christian life is obedience. It is the key to all

progress in character, to all growth in happiness, to all ownership in the Kingdom of Heaven. Any one that realizes this will actually long for opportunities of difficult obedience, as the athlete looks forward with ardour to the laborious practice, since it is the way, and the only way, to the olive wreath. (*J. B. Morgan.*)

Ver. 88. Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth.—*Grappling iron:*—I. HIS INTENSE DESIRE that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth. 1. This desire was founded in a high esteem of God's Word. He viewed the Divine revelation as coming directly from Jehovah's own mouth. Those who have this reverence for God's Word will long to cling to it; they will be afraid of misinterpreting it; and they will not venture to add any of their own words to it, lest they be called into judgment for such presumption. 2. This prayer of David's, springing from his great reverence for the revealed will of God, includes within it many points of virtue. (1) He means, no doubt, that he desired to be steadfast in the doctrine which the mouth of the Lord had spoken. This meaning of the prayer is worthy of solemn note in these evil days. (2) There is another meaning which will seem to some more practical, though, indeed, it is not so; for there is as much real practice about right thinking as about right acting; and for the understanding to be obedient to God is as vital a thing as for the actions of the life to be conformed to His will. We ought to be anxious to be obedient to God in all His precepts; and our prayer should daily be that we may be preserved in the keeping of the testimony of God's mouth. (3) David further desired that he might be preserved in perfect and unwavering confidence in the promises of God. The testimony of God's mouth is largely made up of exceeding great and precious promises. Oh, what rich and eternal things hath He promised to them that fear Him! II. HIS CONSEQUENT PRAYER. He did not pray immediately that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth, but he offered the next prayer to it, the one which leads up to it right surely. As a man that goeth up to his chamber doth not leap up all at once, but climbeth the stairs, so doth David rise to the keeping of the Lord's word by the prayer, "Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness." 1. This prayer is wisdom. He that saith, "I shall keep the testimony of God's mouth, for I am fully resolved to do it," had better salt that resolution with prayer, or it will rot like all things which come of the flesh. 2. This prayer was suggested, I do not doubt, by David's inward state. He says, "Quicken me." He means that he felt the power of death working in him. Before he is quite numbed he cries, "Quicken me." 3. It is a prayer which met David's condition. Carefully read the octave of verses with "Caph" at the head of them, and see how well it fits in at the end of each. Whatever your difficulty, whatever your doubt, whatever your sorrow, whatever your temptation, here is a prayer that meets every case: "Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness." 4. It is a prayer especially which answered to David's aim in presenting it. He prayed this prayer that he might be enabled to keep God's testimony. 5. He presented this prayer on the right ground. He pleads the mercy and love of God. 6. This is a prayer which has a promise attached to it. When I have a lock I am always glad to find a key which fits it. Here is the lock—"Lord, I feel as if I were dead"; and here is the key—"He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." That answers the supplication as a glove fits the hand. III. HIS HOLY EXAMPLE. 1. Offer the prayer of life when you feel that you are dead. Such a prayer will prove an antidote to the poison of death. 2. Living truth can only be held firmly by living men. Let Jesus reign in your soul, and then He will make you a priest and king unto Himself by His own divine power. 3. Regard God's lovingkindness as a source of life. Unhappily, too many have viewed it as an excuse for death. "Oh, yes," they say, "I am one of God's chosen; I need not trouble myself about holiness or activity. I shall be saved by sovereign grace." The man who dares to pervert truth is already a lost man; but he that knows the lovingkindness of the Lord says, "Quicken thou me, Lord. Such love as this I must translate into life: grant that to me to live may be love." Those words "love" and "live" are very near akin in their conformation; they are joined together in spiritual things, let no man put them asunder. 4. Let Divine aid, whenever we seek it or obtain it, lead us to the practical use of it in obedience. "Quicken me," and "so shall I keep." I put those words together in that fashion, for they are together. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 89-96. For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.—*My solace in affliction*.—I. Here we have strong consolation in CERTAIN FACTS WHICH HE REMEMBERED. Fly ye to the mountains when the enemy invades the land. Hide in the strongholds of your God. 1. The eternal existence of God, which is implied in the continuance of His faithfulness and power. "The Lord liveth" is the plea of souls harassed and haunted by foes without and fears within. Nothing happens to the Lord at haphazard. What can threaten His existence, thwart His purpose, weaken His power, diminish the tenderness of His heart, or distract the wisdom of His judgment? 2. The immutability of His Word. "Thy Word is settled in heaven." "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne," etc. His Word is settled in heaven and issued from heaven, the seat of His government, and it cannot be altered on earth, this distant colony of His empire. We refer to God's Word, therefore, in grievous difficulties with great confidence, because we know that every statement it contains is reliable. 3. The faithfulness of the fulfilment of that Word. "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations." Those men who have trusted God's Word in any generation have always found it true. 4. The perpetuity of the Word in nature. "Thou hast established the earth," etc. 5. The perpetuity of the Word in experience (ver. 92). II. THE DELIGHTS WHICH HE EXPERIENCED IN THE TIME OF HIS TROUBLE. It is in such seasons of acute distress, when this world has no palliative to offer, that God's Word can minister infinite delights to soothe the distractions and heal the sorrows of the heart. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The eternal order*.—I. THE SOURCE OF THE DIVINE ORDER. "Heaven." The heavens of creation declare the eternal order of the spiritual heavens. Be our views of the methods of creation what they may, it runs in the channels of the eternal order. Reflect upon it thus, as manifested in creation, moral government, redemption—in the infinitely great and the infinitely little. II. ITS STABILITY. Thy Word is "settled" in heaven. It is not established upon the floods, by and by there shall be "no sea"; it is not founded upon the hills, by and by "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed"; it is not dependent upon the astronomical heavens, for by and by heaven and earth shall itself pass away; it is settled in Heaven, whose light, strength, and stability is God. Much should be said of the breadth and universality of the eternal order. III. ITS PERMANENCE (vers. 90, 91). The eternal order implies infinite prevision, conscious purpose, consistency of aim, absoluteness of authority, harmony of design, beyond the possibility of chance or change to affect; it is inclusive of all operations, interests, duties, and possibilities; a grand plan, of which Jesus Christ is the Administrator, the Bible, for us men, the completed Revelation and Clue; the Blood the Seal; the Holy Spirit the Agent; and Glory the Consummation. 1. Sin is violation of, and opposition to, the eternal Order. It is the way to certain destruction. 2. Salvation is the voluntary falling in, by faith in Christ and a life of holiness, with the eternal Order. "Thy statutes are my songs." 3. The practical effect of the contemplation of the eternal Order should be a faith which fears no foe. (Joseph Morris.) *God's Word fixed in Heaven*.—The great problem in the construction of large lighthouses upon high and necessarily exposed points is, how best to prevent oscillation or swaying of the structure in times of prevailing wind or storm. It may be readily perceived that any variation, however slight, in the direction of the rays of light from the lamps when the lighthouse is in use, as at night, would make very material difference to the mariner far out at sea. Ships guiding their course in the path of the lighthouse beams would be very liable to be thrust from the line of safety altogether, and thus there would be created the danger of serious disaster, if indeed not actually causing loss to life and property. But no such danger confronts the Christian mariner out upon life's sea, for God's guiding light, the lighthouse of the Scriptures, is "fixed in heaven." (G. V. Reichell.)

Ver. 91. All are Thy servants.—*All things are Thy servants*.—The psalmist finds God's Word in nature, in the whole physical universe. To him the universal order spoke of One who ordered all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Behind all forces and laws he saw a Hand which still governed them, and a Heart which could still feel for those who suffered under the iron necessities of nature. Having found God in the outer world of nature he finds Him also in the inner world of providence. As life can only spring from life, so he believed that our life could only have come from the Living One. And human life is guided through its whole course, from generation to generation, and amid all the changes

of time, by the true and faithful will in which it had its origin. If this is too large an inference to draw from the words, "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations," it is amply warranted by these other words, "All things are Thy servants," and the application of them which the psalmist makes to his own conditions and prospects. What is most difficult for us to grasp is the practical conclusion at which the psalmist arrives. We find much in nature which is friendly; we also find much that seems cruel and inimical to us. The evidence is not all on one side; and hence our verdict often hangs in doubt. It would be an unspeakable comfort to us to believe that all things serve God, and therefore serve us; but how can we believe it in the teeth of the cruel and sorrowful facts with which experience daily confronts us? If it was not impossible for him to believe in the truth and goodness of God, even when God hid Himself from him in clouds so dense and dark as these, it should not be impossible for us to know God better than he did, and have much more reason to trust Him. What else can we do? As we stand before the frowning mysteries of time and change, only one alternative is before us. Either we must understand them all ourselves, or hope to understand them, or we must confide in One who does understand them, though we do not. Therefore our only hope of rest and peace lies in trusting Him from whom nothing is hid, in believing that, because all things serve Him, all must serve us. Is such a faith impossible, or even unreasonable? Not if we believe in God at all, and in the Word of God. Faith is inevitable to those who know as little as we do. The only question is, what we shall believe, in whom we shall put our trust. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

Vers. 92, 93. Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.—*God's Word*.—I. A DELIGHT IN GOD'S WORD YIELDS SUPPORT IN AFFLICTIONS (ver. 92). It is impossible to delight in God's Word, containing as it does rich promises, and the revelation of a glorious future, without having resignation, fortitude, hope, etc. II. A QUICKENING BY GOD'S WORD YIELDS IMPERISHABLE MEMORIES. 1. God's Word effects a moral quickening. It is the sunbeam, the rain, the resurrection trumpet. 2. The greatest event in the history of souls is moral quickening. It is a birth, a resurrection, etc. 3. The greatest event is always the most memorable. (*Homilist.*) *God's law the delight of His people in distress*.—I. WHAT THERE IS IN THE WORD OF GOD WHICH TENDS TO THE DELIGHT OF HIS PEOPLE IN DISTRESS. 1. The most comfortable discoveries. (1) That God stands in the most endearing relations to His people. He is their Shepherd, Father, Friend, God. (2) That the way was made for the settling of these endeared relations in which God stands to His people by the sufferings and death of His own Son. (3) That God is hereupon become the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ready freely to give out all the blessings which Christ hath purchased at the dearest rate. (4) That a way of access is now open, whereby the children of God may come to Him, their Father, upon all occasions, in hope of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help them in time of need. (5) That the Spirit of grace is come from heaven to take up His abode in the people of God, and to be their Guide thither. (6) That the eternal state of rewards is laid open to their faith. 2. The most comfortable promises, fitted to yield delight from their nature, their number, and their extent. (1) How sweet is the promise of the pardon of sin and acceptance with God when read with application. (2) All happiness is summed up in the promise of heaven at last, and so can't but be big with the truest delight now. (3) The promise of God's presence by the way, that all things shall work together for His people's good. 3. The most comfortable are examples of God's compassion and grace in appearing for His people; as in the case of David, Job, and the three Hebrew worthies that were cast into the fiery furnace, and brought out unharmed. 4. The most comfortable provisions, and these suitable to the various characters which His saints are to bear, and the states they are in while they are in this world. (1) As they are pilgrims and strangers, its precepts and directions mark out their way; showing them the narrow path in which they are to walk; and its warnings and threatenings discover the snares they are to avoid, that they may be safe. (2) As probationers for eternity we are acquainted with our work, and where our strength lies for the doing it. II. THE PERSONS TO WHOSE DELIGHT IT ACTUALLY CONDUCE. They are the children of God, and none else. 1. They only are spiritually enlightened to discern the great and comfortable things contained in the Word of God. 2. They have the highest value for it. 3. They have their hearts and ways

sued to it. III. HOW IS IT THAT IT DOES THIS? 1. As believed, considered, and applied by the saints. 2. As impressed and set home by the Spirit. IV. WHEN MAY A CHILD OF GOD FIND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD? 1. In the times of great and sore affliction which they fall into while they live. It acquaints them—(1) That these have been the lot of some of God's choicest favourites in their way to heaven. (2) That afflictions are consistent with God's special love to His people, and their covenant relation to Him. (3) That afflictions are not only consistent with the love of God, but often the instances of it (Heb. xii. 6, 7). (4) That though afflictions are deserved by sin, they are laid upon the people of God with a design to cure it (Isa. xxvii. 9). (5) That though for wise ends God brings them under the rod, He considers their frame, and remembers that they are but dust, and will not increase the trial, either as to degree, or continuance, beyond what He will enable them to bear. (6) That under times of affliction God has chosen to let out His love more freely to His people than at other seasons. And who would not be reconciled to the rod to know and taste more of His promise to the Church (Hosea ii. 14)? 2. It is fitted to delight them when they are called to die; and to do this as teaching them—(1) That as dying God will be with them. (2) That immediately after death they shall be with Him. V. THE NATURE OF THE DELIGHT OR CONSOLATION DERIVED FROM THE WORD. 1. It is truly divine, and the consolation of God. It has the Word of God for its ground, and the Spirit of God for its author. 2. It is real and solid (Ps. cxix. 14, 54). 3. It is rational and justifiable. 4. It is holy. 5. It is sometimes vigorous and strong. 6. It is the foretaste of heaven, and is working upward to meet that fulness of joy which there is in God's presence. APPLICATION—1. Is there so much in the Word of God to delight the soul? O what a dark disconsolate place would this earth be without it. 2. Get into the number of the children of God, who are the only ones prepared to take the comfort of His Word. 3. Under all your troubles run to the Word of God for relief; and in conversing with it, pray for the Spirit to enlighten your minds, sanctify your hearts, fit you to take comfort in it, and so to work in you the comfort He hath fitted you for. 4. And as ever you would have solid consolation—(1) Value and labour after grace and holiness as the ground of it. Be as earnest for grace as you are for comfort and peace. (2) Expect the comfort you need in God's way by humbling yourselves and turning to God in case of sin, and by attending His ordinances and the institutions of His house. (3) Wait for comfort in God's time, and presume not to prescribe to Him, but continue to pray and look up for it. (*D. Wilcox.*)

Ver. 94. **I am Thine, save me; for I have sought Thy precepts.**—*God the Owner and Saviour of man*.—I. OWNER. 1. All men are His by necessity—(1) Absolutely. (2) Indefeasibly. (3) For ever. 2. All good men are His by consecration. This surrender is man's primary duty, the one act necessary to give moral worth and acceptance to all acts in life. II. SAVIOUR. "Save me"—1. From practically ignoring Thy claims. 2. From acting inconsistently with Thy claims. (*Homilist.*) *The believer's plea*.—I. THE RELATION TO GOD WHICH IS CLAIMED IN THE TEXT. 1. Its origin. 2. Its dignity and blessedness. 3. The duties involved in it. (1) Loyalty. (2) Diligence. (3) Obedience. (4) Love. 4. The graces exemplified in pleading it. (1) Humility. (2) Faith. (3) The spirit of adoption. (4) Complete and implicit dependence. (5) Love and devotion. 5. The evidence by which this relation is supported:—"I have sought Thy precepts." II. THE PLEA WHICH THE PSALMIST FOUNDS UPON HIS RELATION TO GOD. "Save me." It is a brief petition, but it comprehends every blessing. It is the craving after spiritual freedom; the longing to be delivered from the bondage of corruption and the body of death, the panting to be transformed, renewed and sanctified. (*C. F. Childs, M.A.*)

Ver. 96. **I have seen an end of all perfection; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.**—*A sad moral discovery*.—I. THE NATURE of this discovery. "An end of all perfection." Material nature is perfect in all its departments and forms; but in human history no perfection is found. It is not found in the thoughts, affections, purposes, or actions of men. It is not found in men individually or collectively. Complete moral perfection is extinct. 1. This fact should humble us in the dust. The only property in man is character; and if his character is bad, man has nothing therefore of which to be proud. His own vileness should keep him

in the dust. 2. This fact should startle us into effort. In moral imperfection there is guilt, ruin, hell. How to get rid of it is the great question, and should be the great object of life. For this all should labour supremely. II. THE MEANS of this discovery. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Broad! 1. Because it embraces everything pertaining to man. Not only his outward actions and audible utterances, but the deepest and most secret feelings of his heart. 2. It embraces everything pertaining to every man. It takes in individuals, families, communities, Churches, and nations. In the light of this law moral imperfection is then everywhere. (*Homilist.*) *An end of perfection*:—I. THE SORROWFUL CONFESSION—"I have seen an end of all perfection." 1. There are severe limits to human knowledge. The wisest tell us their path leads to a point at which there is "no thoroughfare." They encounter "the Unknowable." All they know is, that there is more to be known. 2. There are severe limits to human enjoyment. The most attractive programme of pleasure palls. The gay monarch offers a fabulous sum for a "new pleasure." Restless pleasure-seekers outpace even the devil's ingenuity, for even he cannot make the programme hold out. 3. There are severe limits to human examples of excellence. We select our hero, and he enjoys our brief worship. But we find a flaw, and the homage fails. You need only know a man well enough to detect his weakness. A modern celebrity was asked if he believed in perfection: said he, "No! I have seen too many perfect people." II. THE JOYFUL REJOINDER—"But Thy commandment is exceeding broad." 1. The "commandment" broadens beyond the limits of human knowledge. It reveals God—His counsels—eternity and its destinies. It presents us with a science of the unseen, and a redemption to which there is no human analogy. 2. The "commandment" is exceeding broad in the extent of the enjoyment it unfolds. It presents an infinite range of delights to man's restless soul. It unseals infinite sources of pleasure. It teaches us to "joy in God." It introduces a new, subtler, more refined and inexhaustible quality of happiness. We have Christ's "joy fulfilled in" ourselves. We "enter into the joy of our Lord." It ushers us into that Presence for ever, where there is "fulness of joy." 3. It is "exceeding broad" in its provision for human attainment—its ideal. The Old Testament standard reaches the infinite word godly. The New Testament sets before us the example of Him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). Man's soul can never be satisfied without a definite aim; yet at the same time an infinite aim. Here the conditions meet—"The stature of a man in Christ Jesus." Application—And this "commandment" is nigh thee!—now! (*Walter Hawkins.*) *An end of all perfection*:—The psalmist in this verse speaks of a twofold experience in the form of an antithesis. All life is an antithesis. We touch the transient and the everlasting, the finite and the boundless, the explored and unexplored, at every turn. I. HE SPEAKS OF THE TRANSIENT AND FINITE. He had observed that there was a great deal of perfection—many good and perfect gifts—in the world. 1. In nature. The revolving seasons, the flowers that bloom, the fruit that ripens, and the sun that shines, are each beautiful in its time. But every summer has its winter, every flower dies, all fruit decays, and every day has its night. Transiency and limitation are written upon everything. There must be a constant replenishing, or the universe would be bankrupt. The same forces are preserved and resuscitated by new combinations, and directed to new uses. The conservation of force is a means by which God upholds nature, else it would collapse. 2. In human history. The rise and fall of empires—the might of the sword—the power of governments—the sway of knowledge—the charm of fame—the influence of wealth—are all transient. It is this "end" that perplexes men. 3. In religious externalities. Many symbols and ceremonials have come and gone. They have lost their meaning in realities. The pillars of cloud and of fire have vanished: the manna has ceased. The tabernacle, the temple, and their ritual have passed away. Even religious structures like the temple, which, of all buildings, supply the strongest resistance to the wear and tear of time, fall into decay and ruin. 4. In individual and social life. Man exhausts everything. As we advance in life all attainment dwarfs in the presence of new ideals. The ideal of the Hebrew, through the revelation of God, was very high. Contrast the self-complacency of the Greek with the consciousness of non-attainment on the part of the holiest Hebrews. Where there is no conception of holiness there can be no adequate conception of infirmity and sin, and even of non-attainment. So far, however, the psalmist has not said all; nor even the half. It were a sad tale were that all. "But" is the remedial point in the

verse. II. THE PSALMIST SPEAKS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AND PERMANENT—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad." 1. It was comprehensive. It applied to men's thoughts and motives, as well as their words and deeds. It touched life and emphasized responsibility at every point. It left no void space, no gap or chink for the guilty to escape. It presented the divine ideal of perfection. 2. It was permanent. Our Lord teaches us that heaven and earth shall pass away; but that not a jot or tittle of the law shall pass. Hence the necessity of the Incarnation and the Atonement. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Our supreme hope is to be like Him. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself as He is pure." He is "changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord," and thus becomes "perfect in Christ Jesus." (D. Davies.) *An end of all perfection*:—"I have seen an end of all perfection." The man who has set his whole heart on things earthly,—no matter whether successful or unsuccessful,—comes to this at last. We should not care so much for words like these, if we regarded them only as the bitter judgment of one whose plans for life had been thwarted and blighted: we should then esteem them as the jaundiced conclusion of one who disparaged what he could not attain to: it would be a case in point to the ancient fable of the creature that cried down the fruit it could not reach. But the same estimate of this life has been reached by the earnest believer. He too has told us that all that is required that a human being should in this world see "an end of all perfection," is that such a one should live in this world long enough to let hasty impressions die away; and to arrive at those "second thoughts" of it which are proverbially "best." Yet while the case is so, that believer and unbeliever alike may express an estimate of the life in the selfsame words, there is this great difference between the two. To the man who has "set his affection on things on the earth," it is unmingled bitterness to find that they will not suffice: he has nothing else to look to: if they fail him, then all is lost. But the believer's treasure is not in this world: it is laid up where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where no thief can break through and steal: he has laid up for himself treasure in heaven: and that grandest possession of humanity, a part in the crucified Saviour, a soul renewed by the blessed Spirit, is a thing whose worth cannot fluctuate nor decay: always and everywhere the one thing needful. I. The psalmist said these words truly, and we may say them truly, as to THE HAPPINESS THIS WORLD CAN YIELD. The psalmist did not say, and no more do we, that in this world there is no happiness at all. What is said is that there is no perfection of happiness: no life which is evenly joyous or evenly cheerful. The heavy, bitter blow falls now and then; and there are manifold drawbacks from the pleasantest earthly lot; a thousand little anxieties, vexations,—well, there is no better word, worries: things which, if they do not absolutely embitter the cup of existence, certainly deprive it of all right to be called the perfection of worldly good. II. We may say these words with truth, in regard to THE EXCELLENCE OF THE PEOPLE WE KNOW. III. We have learned to little purpose, if we have not done the same in regard to OURSELVES: our own good purposes, our own devout feelings, our own faith, and hope, and charity. It is a lame life we lead: it is but a very rough approximation to the right line. In some kind of way we keep to religious rule; but we need not even talk of perfection who know that we come short in everything we do. (A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.) *The temporal and the eternal*:—Those of you who have visited Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster Abbey must have noticed in the south-east corner the tomb of Dean Stanley and that of his wife, Lady Augusta. There are many words engraven on the stone beneath Dean Stanley's tomb, and at the foot of them are the words of our text (P. B. Version). The words may well be taken as an epitome of the Dean's life. He saw an end of all perfection, he saw that all things human pass away, but he held on to the great eternal truths of religion, knowing that God's commandment, like God's love, is exceeding broad. I. THE TEMPORAL. "I see that all things come to an end." We live in a world of change; nothing is lasting, nothing is permanent down here. The little life of man, the little work of man sooner or later comes to an end. "I see that all things come to an end." The beautiful summer-time which delights us all changes at last into the long dreary winter. Nature changes, "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." There are changes in public life as well as in private life; changes abroad and changes at home; changes in our own individual lives. The boy changes into the young man; school life is over. The young man changes into the man in his prime; youth is over. And old age creeps on, then cometh the end.

Whether it be beauty, or wit, or learning, or pleasure, or honour, or position, or riches, experience will soon show us the end of all these things. II. The writer turns from the temporal to the **ETERNAL**. He tries to fix our minds on the one Supreme Being who never passes away. "I am the Lord, I change not." "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." The great Rock of Ages remains unalterably the same. 1. God's love is exceeding broad. 2. His forgiveness. 3. His mercy. 4. His power to save. 5. His Church. 6. Heaven. We may differ in opinion down here, we cannot all think alike on earth, but there will be perfect unity there, for heaven, like God's commandment, is exceeding broad. (*A. E. W. Lait.*)

Perfection only in God's law:—I. THE IMPERFECTION THAT IS ASCRIBED TO ALL CREATED OBJECTS. 1. Everything pertaining to the present world, its riches, honours, and enjoyments so earnestly coveted by carnal minds, will be found greatly deficient in their promised good when weighed in a just and equal balance. Experience proves them incapable of affording satisfaction; they first allure, and then deceive, and raise our expectations only for the purpose of producing disappointment. 2. There is nothing perfect in the Church of God, collectively considered, though it is composed of the excellent of the earth, in all ages and parts of the world. The tares and the wheat grow together until harvest. 3. The same imperfection which marks the general body attaches to the character of individual believers in various degrees; for as is the root, so are the branches. 4. As the psalmist had seen an end of all perfection in others, so also in himself; and this is what the best of men have seen in their own characters as well as he. There is neither intellectual nor moral perfection to be found on earth. II. THE PERFECTION THAT IS ASCRIBED TO THE DIVINE LAW. 1. It includes the whole of our duty towards God, ourselves, and our neighbour. 2. It extends to all persons and to characters of every description. 3. Its dominion reaches to the inward as well as to the outward man, the heart as well as the life. It rules over the understanding, for obedience is founded in knowledge; the will, which must be bowed to the will of God; the affections, which are required to be set supremely on Him. 4. It comprehends the manner of our obedience, as well as the matter of it, and shows that nothing can be acceptable but what proceeds from a right principle. Love is the fulfilling of the law, both as to its spirit and design. 5. Its authority is perpetual, reaching forward to eternity. It is a perfect transcript of the Divine mind, and is necessarily as unchangeable as its great original (*Ps. cxix. 89, 152*). 6. It is exceeding broad with respect to its sanctions, or the rewards which it promises and the punishments it inflicts. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Human limitation and Divine breadth:—The psalmist's words imply what Jesus and His apostles taught with far greater fulness, not only that while man changes, God changes not, but that man may rise out of change in boundless progress by active obedience to the commandment, that is, by living and practical communion with the Divine will. **The breadth of God's commandment:**—The true relation of the two parts of this verse to each other seems to be that of contrast. Here is something called "perfection" existing among men in a great variety of forms. "But," says the psalmist, "according to my experience and observation, these are altogether too superficial, and too precarious, and too short-lived to make men happy, and the very best of them, the idealisms of human life, as we have seen, can never be attained. But 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad,' and that will do, unless men hinder, what nothing else will do." "Thy commandment is exceeding broad;" we say all when we say that it is as broad as the Divine nature, and that is limitless and eternal; beyond all bounds, above all heights, beneath all depths. "As the man is, so is his strength." As God is, so is His commandment, word, will, and way. And what does it tell me? It tells me that these earthly and human "perfections," which can never be realized, even the partial realizations of which so soon begin to fade and fall into ruin, are yet, if I will, the symbol to my faith of that which will not deceive, will not fail, and that all will come to me through this very law or commandment which is "exceeding broad," because it is Gospel. It seems to shut the door of hope, only that it may fling it more widely open. It seems to lock and bar the prison gates, only that they may be burst asunder by a conquering Redeemer, and that the very walls of the prison-house may be thrown to the ground, while the prisoners are called into largeness and eternal liberty. Then they begin to find the commandment of God, in this better, sweeter sense, "exceeding broad." It is the high but fair standard to which they conform; it is, at the same time, the power that upholds and strengthens while such conformity is sought. It is an education, a

development, a joy that never palls; a prospect that is never darkened, although our eyes are not always open to see it. It is high above us and away beyond us, yet it is always bending down to help us, and never casts an unfriendly look, and never speaks in a harsh tone. It is the very soul of consideration, and tenderness, and grace. It seems to speak to us as though it were a God, and says, "Cast all your cares on me. I am broad enough, and strong enough to bear them all. I am for God in this world, I—His Gospel commandment, with law, and love, and light in it—I am the will of God and His uplifting power, and all whom I bless I lead onwards to more and more, to better and better, never lowering the standard, never suspending the education, never suffering a limit to be put to it. Ever teaching my subjects that the law of life they have in me is a law of breadth, liberty, enlargement, until the scantiness and the failures of earth are exchanged for the fulnesses and the realizations of heaven." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The breadth of God's commandment*:—There is an ancient tradition that Abraham, as he stood on the hills above Damascus, was converted to the true faith in one God, from the worship of the heavenly bodies, by observing that the stars, the moon, and the sun, however bright and glorious, at last sank, and were succeeded by others. "I like not," he said, "those that set;" and so turned to the one unchangeable Lord and Maker of all. This, but in a higher and more precise form, is the force of the psalmist's argument. He prefers—and we ought to prefer—the commandment, the revelation of God, not only because it lasts longer than anything else, but because it includes, and comprehends, and absorbs into itself all that there is good in everything else. 1. "I see that all things come to an end." So we may say of all human institutions and customs, especially when we have gone through many lands, and seen many forms of opinion and worship. 2. "I see that there is a boundary beyond which they cannot pass"—I see that the institutions of the West come to an end almost abruptly when they reach the extremity of Europe: I see that the institutions of the East come to an end no less abruptly when they reach the extremity of Asia. We have followed each to their utmost limit; they cannot pass farther. But there is one thing which is broad enough to embrace them both and cross them both, namely, the commandment of God. 3. "I see that all earthly pleasures and enjoyments, one after another, have their natural ending." Not only wicked and selfish pleasures, which last only for the moment of their gratification, but innocent, just, good enjoyments, of necessity come to an end, or pass into something else. "But the commandment of God is exceeding broad." God's commandment widens, opens, and expands with new interests, enjoyments, affections, hopes, at every successive step we take, till we find ourselves at last in that Presence where there is indeed fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore. 4. "I see that all human greatness comes to an end." Every station in life, however great or prosperous, has its drawbacks, its checks, its limits. But moral or Christian greatness is "exceeding broad." The basis on which it is built up is as broad and firm as the conscience and heart of man, as the grace and goodness of God. Even the most far-reaching intellect and its effects come to an end at last. Look at those greatest of all monuments of the mind of man—books. How rapidly they come to an end! One Book alone has outlasted many generations, in all nations equally, and that is the Bible; and this is because of its "exceeding breadth"—because it embraces every variety and element of thought, and every phase of society; above all, because it embodies in every part the moral commandment of God, which endures for ever in heaven, and which speaks not to one condition of life only, but to all. 5. "I see that all human characters come to an end." How often do we see those who are good and wise up to a certain point, but beyond that we come, as it were, to a precipice—they break down, as we say; we wonder that, being so good as they are, they are not better; that, being as wise as they are, they are not wiser. One Character there is which is so "exceeding broad" as to grasp and overlap all others. This is the true sign of the Divinity of the character of Christ. 6. "I see that human life comes to an end." Our earthly life, the earthly life of those whom we have known and loved, is cut short by that dark abyss into which we cannot penetrate, and over which our thoughts can hardly pass. But God's commandment, and the fulfilment of God's commandments, is "exceeding broad"; it is broad enough to span even that wide and deep river which parts this life and the next. For it is this which makes this life and the next life one. Knowledge, prophecies, gifts of all kinds pass away, but the love of God and the love of man never fail. 7. Yes, "I see

that all things come to an end." I see that human systems, human pleasures, human greatness, human wisdom, human excellence, human life, come to an end. But the commandment, the revelation, of God never comes to an end, because God Himself is Infinite—God, whom we adore in His three infinite perfections. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The wisdom of religion*:—Thy law; that is, the rule of our duty natural and revealed; or, in a word, religion, which consists in the knowledge and practice of the laws of God, is of greater perfection than all other things which are so highly valued in this world; for the perfection of it is infinite, and of a vast influence and extent; it reacheth to the whole man, to the happiness of body and soul; to our whole duration, both in this world and the next; of this life, and of that which is to come. I. THE REASONABLENESS OF RELIGION, which is able to give a very good account of itself, because it settles the mind of man upon a firm basis, and keeps it from rolling in perpetual uncertainty; whereas atheism and infidelity wants a stable foundation; it centres nowhere but in the denial of God and religion, and yet substitutes no principle, no tenable and constituent scheme of things, in the place of them. II. THE WISDOM OF RELIGION. 1. True wisdom begins and is founded in religion, in the fear of God, and in the keeping of His commandments. 2. This is the perfection of wisdom; there is no wisdom without this, nor beyond it. (1) The first point of wisdom is to understand our true interest, and to be right in our main end; and in this religion will best instruct and direct us. And if we be right in our main end, and true to the interest of it, we cannot miscarry; but if a man mistake in this, he errs fatally, and his whole life is vanity and folly. (2) Another property of wisdom is to be steady and vigorous in the prosecution of our main end; to oblige us hereto religion gives us the most powerful arguments—the glorious happiness, and the dismal misery of another world. 3. The next point of wisdom is to make all things stoop and become subservient to our main end. And wherever religion bears away, it will make all other things subordinate to the salvation of our souls, and the interests of our everlasting happiness; as the men of this world make everything to submit and give way to their covetous, and ambitious, and sensual designs. 4. Another part of wisdom is to consider the future, and to look to the last end and issue of things. It is a common folly among men to be so intent upon the present as to have little or no regard to the future, to what will be hereafter. But religion gives us a clear prospect of a life after death, and overlooks time, and makes eternity always present to us, and minds us of making timely provision and preparation for it. 5. Again, another main point of wisdom is, to do as little as we can to be repented of, trusting rather to the wisdom of prevention than to that of remedy. Religion first teacheth men innocency, and not to offend; but in case we do (as in many things we offend all), it then directs us to repentance as the only remedy. 6. The last character of wisdom I shall mention is in all things to consult the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, without which nothing else can make us happy; and this obedience to the laws of God does naturally procure. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Finality and progress*:—One of the greatest fallacies with which we have to contend in modern times is the opinion that everything of the nature of finality in religion—everything of the nature of clear and settled conviction—is opposed to the progress of the world and the liberty of the individual. It is assumed by some that progress consists in a perpetual movement from one position to another, rather than the steady upward movement of a tree from its root or of a building from its fixed foundation. They think of progress as a leaving of the past continually behind us, and an advancing towards the future; and that, consequently, whatever claims to be fixed, immovable, and determinate, whatever says to the advancing waves of human power and ambition, "Thus far shalt thou come, but not farther," puts an arrest upon the progress of the world that ought not to be put, and fetters the legitimate action of the human spirit. Hence the outcry against creeds and dogmas of every kind as things to be entirely shaken off. It is said that they must all of them be of necessity transitional and temporary, because they are attempts to formulate a something—a something that is for ever beyond us, and is no sooner formulated than the mind has already travelled beyond its own conception. What I wish to point out is that we cannot escape finality in some shape or form if we are to think at all. We must have clear and settled convictions of some kind; but this finality of thought, when truly come to, is not in the least degree opposed to liberty or progress. It is indeed the very starting point and permanent ground of all that is true in the

progress of the world. The text appears to afford a very suitable basis for such a theme. The psalmist says, "I have seen an end of all perfection." There is the finality, the fixed and determinate position; but he also says, "Thy commandment is nevertheless exceeding broad"; there is the room for growth, for progress—there we have the free and indeterminate element. There is, indeed, a certain opposition at first sight between the two clauses of the text; but there is no real opposition. In the ground of the matter they are substantially and essentially one. Take the letters of the English alphabet. Here you have from twenty to thirty absolutely fixed signs—no more than that; and we are not at liberty to add to or to alter one of them. Here we have finality surely. And yet upon that fixed and limited basis all human thought and human speech are built. The Bible and Shakespeare, with all their subtle essence of thought and wonders of expression, are reducible to twenty-six letters. Why is it that no one says, "What an absurd thing it is to chain the genius of the world to twenty or thirty little signs that can be made upon a sheet of paper! How can those signs, invented, moreover, in remote antiquity, be adequate to the wants of the world to-day? Such finality is the enemy of progress." To talk in that way about the alphabet would indicate the madman, because the mastering of those twenty-six letters is the beginning of all our progress. And yet that is precisely how many talk in regard to the doctrines and facts of Christianity. They say that to fix anything here is to make progress impossible. What I say is that the twenty-six letters of the alphabet are no more the unalterable basis of all our learning than the essential doctrines of Christianity, as clearly formulated and tabulated as they can be, are the basis of all that is true in the spiritual history and progress of the world. The same thing may be said of any other branch of learning, say of arithmetic or of mathematics, with its rigid formularies and absolutely fixed signs. Out of the nine units of arithmetic the whole science of numbers is evolved. Those fixed factors that lie at the foundation of the whole, and out of which the whole arises, put no arrest upon the thinking mind at all. So far from that, the mind could not take one step without them, and it would be thrown into confusion if one of them were altered. What I plead for is that in this matter of finality and progress people should apply to religious truth the common sense they apply to other subjects; and they ought not to object that finality in religion puts an end to progress when they find in every other sphere that it is the very basis and spring of all the liberty we require. The Sabbath law and the Bible, the Church and its Sacraments, with its essential creed—with regard to all these important matters a certain amount of finality has undoubtedly been reached. They represent a certain number of ultimate facts; the essential explanation of which we unquestionably have in our possession. Those ultimate facts, those fixed and determinate conclusions about God and Christ, about life and death, about sin and salvation—those great facts do not stand in the way of the liberty of man or the most perfect freedom of thought. Instead of that, they are the foundation of the world's peace, and the perennial spring of all its progress. In a word, the more finality we have truly come to, so much the more liberty and progress we also may have. When a young person goes on from one stage of learning to another, from the letters of the alphabet to numbers, and circles, and squares, and from these, again, to all the definite and fixed forms of science and art, he is coming to finality at every step, he is fixing matters permanently in his mind, from stage to stage, all along the line. Is he thereby putting fetters upon himself? You know that it is not so. You know that he is advancing in the path of liberty and power. Those clear and settled ideas which he takes into his mind, from stage to stage, are but stepping-stones in the upward and onward path of his progress. "Eternal process moving on from state to state the spirit walks." And not only may he "wear all that weight of learning lightly as a flower," but the whole burden of existence is becoming lighter and lighter to him the more clearly he sees into the heart of the whole. Every clear idea, fixed and final as it is, that takes possession of his mind, is lifting him above the fact of which it is the idea—the otherwise hard and oppressive fact. It is thus that man rises superior to time and circumstances, misfortune and chance. Those clear and settled convictions as they arise within his mind one by one, like stars coming out in the midnight sky, and as they form themselves into a harmony of lights within the being—what are they but the mighty leverage by which the man himself is lifted up out of the bondage of darkness and spiritual death into the light and liberty of perfect truth, and by which he is enabled to breath at last the very

atmosphere of eternity? (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *God's perfect law our despair and our comfort*.—We may read the words in two ways. 1. "I have seen an end of all perfection; for Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Read in this way they suggest the animating thought that our haunting consciousness of imperfection springs from the bright and awful perfection of the law we are bent on obeying, of the Ideal we have set before us. It is not because we are worse than those who are without law, or who are a law unto themselves, that we are restless and dissatisfied with ourselves; but because we measure both ourselves and our fellows by the lofty standards of God's commandment. That commandment is so broad, that we cannot embrace it; it is so high, that we cannot attain to it; it is so perfect, that we cannot perfectly obey it. 2. But we may read the verse in another way, and still derive comfort and encouragement from it. We may say: "I have seen an end of all perfection in myself, and in the world; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad: that is perfect, though I am imperfect, and in its perfection I find the promise of my own." For shall God give a law for human life, and that law remain for ever unfulfilled? Impossible! "The gifts of God are without repentance"—irreversible, never to be lessened or withdrawn. His purpose is not to be made of none effect by our weaknesses and sins. In the law He has shown us what He would have us be. And shall we never become what He would have us to be? Can the law remain for ever without any life that corresponds to it and fulfils it? Nay, God will never take back the fair and perfect ideal of human life depicted in His law, never retract His purpose to raise the life of man till it touches and fulfils that ideal. And so the very law which is our despair is our comfort also, for if that be perfect we must become perfect; its perfection is the pledge of ours. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

Ver. 97. O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.—*Love to the Scriptures*.—I. THEY ARE INDUBITABLY AUTHENTICATED AND DIVINELY INSPIRED. 1. The concurrent testimony of Jew and Gentile, of friend and foe, borne through successive ages to the present time, ascertains their authenticity and truth. 2. Existing rites and festivals attest the truth of sacred history. 3. The veracity and accuracy of the inspired books received additional confirmation from the undesigned coincidences of expression in the writings of the sacred penmen, with the relations of facts and occurrences by others, or those narrated by themselves on other occasions. 4. But it is not mere accuracy for which we contend, but also for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. They were written under the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost. II. THEY ARE THE ONLY INFALLIBLE DEPOSITORIES OF ALL TRUE THEOLOGY AND MORALS. III. THEY HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED TO US WITHOUT ANY MATERIAL ALTERATIONS OR CORRUPTIONS. IV. THEY HAVE SURVIVED THE MOST RIGOROUS ATTEMPTS OF PAGANISM AND SUPERSTITION TO SUPPRESS OR DESTROY THEM. V. THE SCRIPTURES ARE EVERY WAY DESERVING OF INCESSANT AND DELIGHTFUL STUDY. 1. They develop the origin and destination of man. 2. They unveil the dispensations of Divine Providence. 3. They unfold the astonishing mysteries of redemption. 4. They contain the most sublime morality. 5. They reveal the solemnities of eternity. (*J. Townley, D.D.*) *Reasons for loving the Bible*.—I. ITS AUTHORSHIP. It is the Word of God: its contents were dictated by eternal wisdom; its laws are the laws of heaven; its teachings are the teachings of Jehovah. It is an embodiment of the eternal mind. God has adopted every method for instructing man. When teaching us about Himself, His milder character is painted in a thousand hues, delightfully blended. Instead of employing a pen, He ordered the sun to photograph His lovelier attributes upon the landscape; while His majesty stands out in bold relief in mountains whose snow-capped heads, towering in haughty grandeur, appear to prop up with their broad based pillar-like support, the spacious firmament. But His mind, in reference to man, is conveyed in the language of men, by inbreathing His thoughts and intentions into the minds of the sacred penmen, and then, by His Spirit's infallible unerringness, guiding the hand to write them. When James I. wrote a book for the edification of his son Charles, it was pompously called by that high-sounding title, "*Basilikon Doron*"—a royal gift. How much more may the Bible be called "*A royal gift*," since its Author is the King of kings—compared with whose kingliness the greatest and brightest of earthly crowns no more resembles royalty than a crown of thorns does one sparkling with diamonds! Not only is this Book a royal, but a parental, gift—the gift of our heavenly Father: a Book dedicated to, and designed for, the eternal benefit

of His children. Yes, it is our Father's legacy to us. II. ITS CONTENTS. The very first sentence of Scripture dispels a dark cloud of ignorance, which for ages enveloped the most learned and far-seeing sages of the Grecian schools. Even to that great emporium of learning, Athens, the world's origin was enchambered, looked up in some dark, mysterious recess, to which she herself could find no key. But in the very first sentence of the Bible we see the Omnipotent Jehovah emerging from the still quiet of eternal solitude, speaking His creative fiat, and a world is born. Not only do we learn our origin, but our destiny. This was one of the most perplexing enigmas which the ancients tried—but tried in vain—to solve. A dense mist hung heavily over the boundaries of the spirit world, which no optic glass of man's device could penetrate. The wisest and best of heathen philosophers could not follow man beyond the horizon of death. III. ITS STYLE. Here one finds the most majestic imagery, the sublimest figures, and the noblest strains of eloquence. Here is found poetry unparalleled for grandeur, pathos, and fire. "No songs," says Milton, "are like the songs of Zion." Here, in touching, melting passionateness, we are told the most affecting narratives; and here are pictures true to the very life, pencilled from the old world scenery. And though the book is comparatively small, what biographical encyclopædia ever contained so much useful history? IV. ITS POWER. V. ITS SUITABILITY FOR OUR NEEDS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. It is the guide of youth and the staff of old age. No other lamp sheds such a bright, cheering radiance, as this does, to relieve the gloom in the chamber of sickness. It is a garden of healing balm for the wounded spirit; and to those who are tempest-tossed it affords many a peaceful haven to take refuge in. And then, this is the only book which contains light enough to guide us through the valley of the shadow of death. Shining brightest in the dark, it is then more than ever a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. (*G. Terry.*) *The love of the law:*—Many have expressed their indebtedness to this long psalm for encouragement, inspiration, direction. It has been a rod and a staff to comfort them. It might seem at first that such expressions as abound in this psalm cannot be applied to the law as we understand the term. This is an ill-advised opinion, and marks some mental confusion, for in truth law is exceedingly interesting. I do not know of any men who are more enamoured of their profession than lawyers. But I mark that two things are connected with the pleasure which these men have in their calling. There are two terms which are constantly used. I ask what a young man is doing, and I am told that he is studying law. I ask the same question a few years later, and I am told he is practising law. These two things belong in the delight of the man of the law, and are essential to its permanence. It is not enough that one should have a collection of law-books, should occasionally read in them, should admire very many things which they contain; but he must make a patient study of the law, and faithfully apply its principles to the interests of men. Grant me these two things, and I will promise a true delight in the law of the Lord. The law of the Lord includes all the announcements of His will. It embraces the Ten Commandments and all the legislation of Moses. The teachings of the prophets belong in it, and the words of Christ Himself and of His apostles. The term is now to be used in a wider sense than when this unknown psalmist pronounced his eulogium upon the statutes and testimonies of the law. It is the entire will of God, as this is given for the government of our life. I. **WHY SHOULD WE LOVE THE LAW OF THE LORD?** 1. Because it is the Lord's law. It is His nature expressing itself. God is love, and law is love, guiding the men it loves. It is the revelation of His heart. Kings make laws: God reveals them. It is quietly given to us, not amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, but by voices long silent, in the pages of the Bible, in our conscience and reason. It is given in principles, not in regulations. It is given in outline, which we are to complete by such precepts as our life demands. 2. The law of the Lord is right. It is perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. It fosters the right; it secures honesty in business, integrity in government, charity in society. It enlarges our joy. The fullest declaration we have of it begins with the note of pleasure. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." So the Sermon on the Mount, more strict in its requirements than the Decalogue, opens with the Beatitudes. "Blessed and blessed," and from this beginning the Teacher gives His precepts that the kindness of His heart may be fully enjoyed by those who hear Him. The law gives security also. It is the rule of the best. It is the guidance of the wisest. You wish to sail in the ship which has the best

captain, and the one who is furnished with the best charts and compasses. In all our way through this world, with its confusion and its peril, we should love the law of the Lord which will guide us safely and in honour. 3. Again, the law of the Lord is the law of heaven. Its principles belong in all the worlds. The loftiest angel and the humblest man of all the redeemed observe this law with delight. The best proof that men are going to heaven is that they love the law of God before they reach its gate; that they delight to meditate in the law, to follow its commands, to live in its control. Unless this is true of us here, it can be little pleasure to anticipate the life in a world where the law of the Lord will surround us like the atmosphere, to be breathed in to-day and for ever. 4. Finally, we should love the law of the Lord because it is the law of Christ. It pervaded His life. "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." "I do always those things which please Him." II. If we approve this which has been said, and agree that we should truly love the law of the Lord, the question may still come to our minds, BY WHAT MEANS SHALL I LOVE IT? I cannot compel my affection, though I could readily bring myself to obey the statutes. Yet delight in the law would not be more difficult than obedience if we would take the steps which lead to it. 1. If we are to love the law of the Lord, it is essential that we should know it. It has those attractive qualities which will commend themselves to any honest mind. It comes to us as the heart of God, and our heart will respond to it if we are true. It is not by admiring it afar off, by passing it upon the street and becoming familiar with its appearance, by being courteous and showing it favours, but by knowing it as one knows his friend. You think you know the law of the Lord; but have you lived with it, taken it into your counsel, walked with it? 2. We find the love of the law by taking it from Christ. It is expressed in His life, it is spoken by His lips. The melody of a song depends greatly upon the voice of the singer. The law of the Lord has too often been spoken by human lips which had little grace upon them. Hear Christ teach the law. Mark the tone of His voice, the accent, the emphasis. See the radiance of His face. Mark the grace and truth which are upon Him, and the love of the law will spring readily in your heart. I wish that I could persuade you to try this. To do the will of God is a pleasant thing. Let us believe it, and live in the delight of it. 3. But if love delays to come, let us obey with all the heart we have, and all which rises at our summons; let us do the things which God would have us do. This will be right, and the beginning of right living, and the love will grow with the doing of His will till meditation will be delightful and obedience will be the freedom of a great joy. It is a good sign when a man loves the law of the Lord. One may be judged by what he loves. "There is something magnificent in having a country to love." There is something magnificent in having a God to love, and in having the heart to love Him. Happy man, that he can find solace in the statutes of God! Happy is he in his companions that they can enjoy the singing of his testimonies! Thus they charm away the weariness of the march, still their minds for the night, gather hope for the morning. (A. McKenzie, D.D.)

Vers. 99, 100. **I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation.**—*Inward virtues to the truth of the Gospel.*—1. By obeying the commands of Scripture we learn that these commands really come from God; by trying we make proof; by doing we come to know. Now, how comes this to pass? It happens in several ways. (1) The Bible tells us to be meek, humble, single-hearted, and teachable. Now, these are qualities of mind necessary for arriving at the truth in any subject, and in religious matters as well as others. On the other hand, impatient, proud, self-confident, obstinate men, are generally wrong in the opinions they form of persons and things. Prejudice and self-conceit blind the eyes and mislead the judgment, whatever be the subject inquired into. (2) Those who are trained carefully according to the precepts of Scripture gain an elevation, a delicacy, refinement, and sanctity of mind, which is most necessary for judging fairly of the truth of Scripture. The pure in heart shall see God; whereas the proud provoke His anger, and the carnal are His abhorrence. (3) Those who try to obey God will evidently gain a knowledge of themselves at least; and this is the first and principal step towards knowing God. 2. The Bible, then, seems to say, "God is not a hard master to require belief, without affording grounds for believing; only follow your own sense of right, and you will gain from that very obedience to your Maker, which

natural conscience enjoins, a conviction of the truth and power of that Redeemer whom a supernatural message has revealed; do but examine your thoughts and doings; do but attempt what you know to be God's will, and you will most assuredly be led on into all the truth: you will recognize the force, meaning, and awful graciousness of the Gospel Creed; you will bear witness to the truth of one doctrine, by your own past experience of yourselves; of another, by seeing that it is suited to your necessity; of a third, by finding it fulfilled upon your obeying it. As the prophet says (Mal. iii. 10). (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*)

The intellectual power of revelation.—I. THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE. II. THE INFERIORITY OF MERE INTELLECTUAL ATTAINMENTS. The meanest student of Scripture is wiser than the most learned professor of scientific knowledge. He is wiser—1. Scientifically. Boasted science is all chaff; after all, it comes back to the Scripture. 2. Morally. No system of ethics is perfect but the Scripture system. 3. Practically. No other writers can tell of what is beyond and what is the course to be pursued in relation thereto. III. THE POWER AVAILABLE TO ALL. Meditation on God's testimonies. Meditation includes—1. Reading. This is the first step. 2. Digesting. Dwelling on, feeding upon, making them part of our intellectual selves. 3. Carrying out in action. The real test of all consists in development and the outward proof of the inward principle. (*Homilist.*) *The only path to the highest wisdom*.—I. MEDITATION ON THE DIVINE. It is by meditation alone that men become philosophers and artists; by it they penetrate the veil of phenomena, descry and grasp the eternal principles that govern the universe. By it alone we can get mental nourishment. From the impressions that are made upon us, the observations we make, and the thoughts that flash through us from the works we read. It is the digestive faculty of the soul. As the best food taken into the stomach is not only useless, but injurious to the system if not digested, so the richest information rather encumbers than strengthens the soul if not reflected upon. But the subject of meditation must be Divine in order to reach the highest wisdom. "Thy testimonies." Meditations upon human history, speculation, or enterprise, will conduct to a certain kind of wisdom, but not to the highest wisdom—the wisdom that cometh from on high. II. PRACTISING the Divine. "I keep Thy precepts." It is only as a man translates his ideas into actions that they become part of himself. The greatest ideas of God are comparatively worthless unless embodied in life. In temporal matters the highest philosophy helps on the world just as its theories are reduced to practice. "Genuine work alone," says Carlyle, "what thou workest faithfully, that is eternal as the Almighty Founder and World Builder Himself." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 108. *How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*—*The best Christmas fare*.—I like this way of describing the reception of God's Word as a matter of eating, for a man cannot eat God's Word without living. There is a reality about the faith which eats; there is a something there most sure, which contains the elements of salvation, for tasting is a spiritual sense which implies nearness. This idea of tasting God's Word contains the thought of receptiveness. A man may hear a thing and, as we say, it goes in at one ear and out at the other; but that which a man gets into his mouth till he tastes it, and it is sweet to his palate, well, he has received that. Tasting is also a personal matter. There is no possibility of my eating for you. I. I call your attention to AN EXCLAMATION. The text contains two notes of exclamation or admiration. It is evidently the utterance of one who is somewhat surprised, one who has a thought which he cannot adequately express. The thought is also one which gives much delight to the writer, for he exclaims, "How sweet," etc. 1. It is a matter of wonder to many to find the Gospel so sweet when the soul first tastes it. 2. This may also be the exclamation of a soul cheered by still tasting the Gospel. 3. I reckon that this language of exclamation and admiration will also come from the most advanced saint, increasing in knowledge of the Gospel, the believer who has studied the Word of God most earnestly, and who has had the deepest experience in it. Other books are soon done with, but the Bible is never fully understood. II. Take the text as a STATEMENT, a cool statement of matters of fact. He never speaks more than the truth even when he is most emphatic, so that I am sure that David means to tell us here that God's words were sweet to him. 1. They were unutterably sweet: "How sweet!" but he does not tell us how sweet they were. There is no describing the flavours of a royal banquet, there is no picturing to a man who has not the sense of smell

the fragrance of a delicious perfume; and you must personally know the sweetness of the Word of God, for to us it is positively unutterable. 2. This much, however, the psalmist does utter: he tells us that God's words are surpassingly sweet, for, says he, "They are sweeter than honey." 3. He also says that all God's words are thus unutterably sweet to him. 4. And at all times. III. A REPETITION. "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste!" Well, that is all right, David; we understand you. "Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Is not that saying the same thing twice over? Yes, and intentionally so, because God's Word is sweet to His people in many ways, and many times over. 1. As I have already said to you, it is very sweet in its reception. When we first take it into our heart, and feed upon it, it is very precious; but, spiritually, men are something like ruminating animals, they have the power of feeding again, and again, and again, on that which they have once received. 2. But do you not think that the repetition in the text means something else, namely, that while, first of all, Christ's Word is very sweet to our taste, there is another sweetness when we get it into our mouth, not so much for our own eating, as speaking of it to others? There is great sweetness about the declaration of God's words. 3. There is a very special sweetness about preaching Christ, in the public proclamation of His Word. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Scripture as honey*:—I. Honey is EXCEEDINGLY SWEET to the taste (Judg. xiv. 18). II. Honey, if it be added or put into other things that are bitter, will TAKE AWAY IN A GREAT MEASURE THEIR BITTERNESS. So when the soul is under affliction, temptation, persecution, for Christ's sake, if God be pleased to add some of the sweet promises of the Word—how wonderfully is the bitter abated. III. But notwithstanding that honey is so sweet and pleasant, yet THERE ARE SOME MEN WHO DO NOT CARE FOR IT. Sinners are so glutted with the filthy trash of this world that they loathe the honeycomb. IV. Naturalists affirm that honey is of a HEALING NATURE, and serves for a great number of uses. V. Honey is also of a PURIFYING EFFICACY. (Anon.)

Ver. 105. **Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.**—*The Divine lamp*:—God's Word as a lamp is—I. EVER NEEDFUL. Man needs a guide through life. His mental eyes are dim, and the road is drear, intricate, and dark. II. ALWAYS AVAILABLE. It suits every path in life. The path of the young and aged, the celibate and the married, the rich and the poor, the merchant, statesman, and philosopher, etc. III. ALL-SUFFICIENT. It throws light on every conceivable step in life, and the light is clear and sufficient. None need stumble anywhere who hold it before them. IV. INEXTINGUISHABLE. It burns as brightly in the hands of the youngest disciple to-day as it did in the hands of the old patriarchs. It is a quenchless light. The advancing intelligence of humanity will never supersede its necessity or dim its lustre. (Homilist.) *God's guiding light for heavenward travellers*:—I. It directs the intending traveller to the STARTING-POINT—to the point whence he must set out on his heavenward journey. It takes him to the Cross, it bids him look to Jesus, and then to set out with holy resolution for the celestial city. II. It warns the traveller—having now commenced his journey—of the PERILS THAT WILL DESEET HIS PATH. III. It shows the traveller how he may safely ADVANCE ALONG HIS JOURNEY STEP BY STEP. It is not only "a light to the path," showing which is the right way, but a "lamp to the feet," showing whether the traveller is keeping in that path. This step-by-step help it furnishes by laying down general principles to be faithfully and conscientiously applied by the Christian (Rom. xii. 1). By plying him with motives, the force of which, if he is a Christian, he must feel (1 Cor. vi. 20), in all the details of his life, and by giving specific precepts, as notably is done in the closing portions of some of the epistles (Eph. iv., etc.). IV. It assures the traveller that the HOPED-FOR TERMINATION WILL BE REACHED. It is important there should be light on the traveller's starting-point; of equal importance that there should be light on the goal at which he hopes to arrive. If this be shrouded in darkness he will lack the stimulus of expectation to hold on his way. He will be ready to halt by reason of the discouragements and difficulties he meets with. (J. F. Poulter, B.A.) *The lamp of the Word*:—I. EVERY MAN HAS A PATH OF HIS OWN. God has undoubtedly fashioned our hearts alike; that is, there are certain broad resemblances which every heart bears to every other heart. There are also equally well-known and accurately marked differences. Each man possesses the same elements, so to

speak, but has them in different proportions. Contend as we may, our natural bias, our education, our position, the general and trivial events of our lot, do help to make our paths, which seem outwardly parallel, like two lines running side by side, yet as two lines still, separate and distinct. II. Our paths are manifestly divergent; yet in one respect we find them alike: **THEY ARE OFTEN SHROUDED IN GLOOM.** 1. The very lamp itself sometimes perplexes. "The Word of the Lord tries" us: its principles, its promises, even its facts. 2. Perplexity arises from duty. We feel great difficulty in coming to any decision; not because we are reluctant to obey, but because we cannot quite see which has the first and superior claim. 3. Perplexity comes from bereavement, and comes to all of us, sooner or later, from this source. We find it hard, in the first paroxysm of sorrow, to see anything but harshness in our loss. We think of others we could have better spared. III. In all our darkness **GOD'S WORD SUPPLIES THE TRUE ILLUMINATION.** "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." This light is pre-eminent. God has not left us without other aids to lessen the darkness. Reason is a light kindled by Jehovah Himself. Companions are as lights. But this light of God's Word stands before all other lights. Reason helps; this helps reason. Companions help; this helps companions. When we are ready to receive them, there are no words that they can utter so cheering and so full of comfort as the words of God. (*J. J. Goadby.*) **Human life:**—Three thoughts are here suggested concerning human life. I. It is a **WALK.** "My path." In this walk—1. There is no pausing. "Every beating pulse we tell leaves but the number less." 2. There is no returning. Every step takes us into the new and unknown. II. It is a walk **REQUIRING LIGHT.** The path of our life is not only very intricate, but, morally, very dark. Black clouds of ignorance, sensuality, and superstition obstruct the rays of sun and stars. III. It is a walk **FOR WHICH LIGHT IS PROVIDED.** (*Homilist.*) **Religion the constant guide and friend of man:**—Wouldst thou then make religion the guide of thy life, wouldst thou have her truly to be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy path? 1. Combine her with all thy occupations. Ask her often, ask her particularly on every critical and doubtful occasion, and ask her always in the sincere intention of following her precepts: how thou shouldst regard and prosecute thy affairs, in what dispositions thou shouldst conduct them, what views thou shouldst have in them, how thou shouldst begin and finish them, what thou shouldst do and omit at every time, in every place, according to the particular emergency? 2. Let her be thy constant companion in society, thy counsellor in thy intercourse with others. Ask her how thou shouldst regard, judge of, treat mankind, thy brethren, how thou shouldst be disposed and behave towards them. 3. Let her be thy friend and companion in solitude. There hearken the more attentively and sedately to her suggestions, her doctrines, her encouragements, her consolations, her demands. There grow more and more familiar with her and ever enjoy more completely the happiness of this familiarity. Accompanied by her, solitude will never be a burden, never seem tiresome or tedious to thee. Informed and entertained by her, the solemn hours of silence will be thy most delightful hours of recreation. 4. Let her be the partner in all thy joys and pleasures. She would by no means oppose or disturb thy joys and thy pleasures. 5. Let her be also thy friend and comforter in affliction. (*G. J. Zollikofer.*) **My lamp:**—In the text the Word of God is compared to a lamp or lantern such as that which is carried on dark nights in country places in all lands. I. Like a lighted lantern on a dark lonely journey it is a **PLEASANT COMPANION.** A lamp cannot, indeed, talk with us, or even listen to our voices, but its cheerful light, close by us, and going on continually with us, takes away our loneliness, and we feel that "a light is pleasant company." II. **THE WORD OF GOD IS A PROTECTION AGAINST DANGER.** III. The principal value of a lamp is that it **SHOWS US THE WAY:** and it is in this respect especially that the truth of God is most precious to us. (*R. Brewin.*) **The Bible a lamp:**—There are many kinds of lamps, all of them having different uses and yet all of them intended to give light, but in very different places. Let us look at a few of them. 1. There are beacon lamps. Out upon the coast, here and there, all along there are these lamps. They are lighted as soon as it grows dark. As the ship comes up the channel, these lights, all of them different, show the captain of the ship where he is, and he knows by their help how to steer the ship so as to get to port in safety. God's Word does all this. It shows men the true way, and keeps them from wreck and death. I have heard of men putting strange lights on the rocks, so as to

mislead the sailors, and then the doomed ship has come ashore and been lost. Now there are spiritual wreckers, who want to have you and what you have got. These wreckers have false lights, the word, not of God, but of man. Shall I show you two or three of these false lights? When a boy or girl does not wish to go away from school or chapel these wretches will sneer, "I would not be tied to my mother's apron string!" But what says the beacon? See it how it flashes. "Forsake not the law of thy mother." Another of these false lights is, "It's only once." "Just this once, I won't ask you any more." Ah! you are in peril if you listen to this. Look to the beacon. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not!" There is yet another of these false lights I will show you. When you are hearing the preacher, and are beginning to think you had better be a Christian while young, the wreckers will show their false light: "Plenty of time yet." But what says the beacon? "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." 2. Did you ever hear of what are called hurricane lamps? There is a kind of lamp so made that you might carry it in the wildest of storms, and the strongest wind could not blow it out. Now, the Word of God is a hurricane lamp—it will not blow out. Oh! how Satan has tried in times of persecution; but you know when the Word of God gets into a man's heart there it sticks. You may, some of you, before you die, be persecuted for your religion. You may have to smart for being lovers of God, but don't be afraid. The Bible was made, like the hurricane lamp, to stand the storm. Not so with the schemes and plans of evil, they shall all be put out. 3. The Bible is an invalid's lamp. When people are ill, and have to lay awake all the night in pain, they don't want to be left in the dark; and yet, they don't want any glaring light. They want a cheerful, yet soft light, and there are parts of the Bible just suited, such as "The Lord is my Shepherd." "Let not your hearts be troubled." "Come out of great tribulation." "I will give to him that is athirst." "Neither shall there be any more pain." 4. The Bible is a signal lamp. You have noticed the signals at night, when you have been in the train. There they are, white, green, red. Do you know what white means? "Come on!" Yes, that is it; and the Bible says to those who are doing right, "Come on, you are on the right track; come on. All is well. Go ahead!" But what does the green light say? "Caution!" "Slowly!" "Beware!" Yes; when the driver sees that he knows that it will be wise for him to slacken speed, and look about him. And so says the Word of God, when it sees that there is need for caution. When a man is wanting to be rich, and there is some danger that he may be tempted to make money at the risk of his soul, then the lamp signals: "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "They that will be rich fall into temptation." But can you tell me what the red light means? "Stop!" "Danger!" "Shut off the steam!" Yes, all of these. Oh! how the Bible calls out to men. If people would but mind the red light of Scripture we should have a great deal less of sin and sorrow. (*T. Champness.*) *The wonderful lamp*.—I. WHAT SORT OF A LAMP IS THE BIBLE? 1. It sheds wonderful light. (1) The length of time during which it has been shining. When Adam sinned, he brought darkness on the world. The first promise which God gave him about the Saviour who was afterwards to come was like kindling one little thread in the wick of this lamp. And then, as other parts of the Bible were written, the lamp burned brighter and brighter, till Jesus came and the New Testament was finished. And now for near two thousand years this lamp has been fully lighted and burning all the time. (2) The distance to which it shines. All the way from heaven to earth. (3) The power with which it shines. No tempest that ever beat, no wind that ever blew, no atmosphere, however foul, can put it out. 2. It yields wonderful comfort. (1) Under the trials of life. (2) In the prospect of death. 3. It affords wonderful safety. This world is like a great coal-mine, and all its inhabitants are like miners. The sins that abound here are like this dangerous gas, and, when they come in contact with our evil passions, violent explosions are often produced, and great damage is done. We need a safety-lamp to show us where the dangers lie, and help us to escape from them. And just such a lamp we have. The Bible is a safety-lamp which God has invented for this very purpose. It will always warn us when danger is nigh, and show us how we may escape it. II. WHAT SHOULD THOSE WHO HAVE THIS LAMP DO WITH IT? 1. Use it themselves. 2. Send it to others. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *Lantern lessons*.—I. THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US. It shows us our lost state, how far we have wandered from God, how sad our condition is, and that we shall

surely perish unless we find the way of life. It shows us JORUS. II. THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US WITH SAFETY. What pitfalls, what temptations, what snafos and covert assaults of the wicked one it keeps God's people from! III. THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US WITH COMFORT. (*J. B. Johnstone.*) *The lighted lamp*:—I. FOR THE DARK. The Gospel was first brought to our land about the year 600 by a missionary named Paulinus. Eadwine was then king. His wise men gathered to consider the new faith. To many of them its charm lay in the light it throws on the darkness covering men's lives—the darkness of the future as of the past. To be without light is among the greatest of calamities; to get light after darkness the sweetest of blessings. II. FOR OUR USE. 1. This lamp is for the feet. Our museums abound with beautiful lamps taken from ancient tombs. Such-like is an unused Bible by the side of a dead soul. A lamp he has, but sees not, neither does he walk in its light. But all the light the Bible gives is meant to guide you. 2. As it is a light for the feet, you must hold it low. It is not for the head merely, to fill you with curious notions: it is for the feet, to guide you in your actions. The motto of the early Church was, "Hearts on high," and they might have truly added, "Light and eyes low." 3. You must use it always. Never live without its light. III. FOR A TIME ONLY. It is a thing of the night, not of the day. (*J. Wells.*) *The Bible the best parlour light*:—In parlours all aflash with gaslight, and gleaming mirrors, and blazing chandelier, and candelabra, there may be Egyptian darkness; while in some plain room, which a frugal hand has spread with hospitality and refinement, this one lamp may cast a glow that makes it a fit place for heavenly coronations. God's lamp hung in the parlour would chill no joy, would rend no harmony, would check no innocent laughter. On the contrary, it would bring out brighter colours in the picture; it would expose new gracefulness in the curtain; it would unroll new wreaths from the carpet; it would strike new music from the harp; it would throw new polish into the manners; it would kindle with light borrowed from the very throne of God all the refinements of society. Oh that the Christ who was born in a barn would come to our parlour! We need His hand to sift the parlour music. We need His taste to assort the parlour literature. We need His voice to conduct the parlour conversation. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The Bible the best street lamp*:—When night comes down on the city, crime goes forth to its worst achievements. Not only to show honest citizens where to walk, but to hinder the burglar, and assassin, and highwayman, and pickpocket, we must have artificial lights all over the city. I remember what consternation there was in Philadelphia when one night the gasworks were out of order and the whole city sat in darkness. Between eleven o'clock at night and three o'clock in the morning, in the dark and unlighted places of the town, crime has its holiday. If the lamplighter ceased his work for the week the town would rot. But there is a darkness beyond all power of gaslight. What is the use of police-station, and almshouse, and watchman's club, if there be no moral and religious influence to sanction the law, and to purify the executive, and to hang over legal enactment the fear of God and an enlightened public opinion. The first want of such a city as that is the street lamp of the Bible. (*Ibid.*) *The Bible the best store lamp*:—What is the reason so many who started in merchandise, with good principles, and fair prospects, and honourable intentions, have become gamblers, and defrauders, and knaves, and desperadoes, and liars, and thieves? They did not have the right kind of a store lamp. Why is it, in our day, merchandise is smitten with uncertainty, and three-fourths of the businesses of our great cities is only one huge species of gambling? And why are ten thousand of our business men ridden with a nightmare enough to crush Hercules and Prometheus? It is the want of a right kind of store lamp. Oh, what thrones have fallen, what monuments have crumbled, what fleets have sunk, what statues have been defaced, what barbarisms have been created, what civilization retarded, what nations damned, all for the want of the right kind of a store lamp! (*Ibid.*) *The Bible the best church lamp*:—Glorious church lamp, this Bible. Luther found it in the cloister at Erfurt, and he lifted it, until the monasteries and cathedrals of Germany, and Italy, and France, and England, and the world saw its illumination. It throws its light on the pulpit, making a bulwark of truth; on the baptismal cup, until its waters glitter like the crystals of heaven. It strikes penitence into the prayers and gladness into the thanksgiving. It changes into a church John Bunyan's prison, and Covenanters' cave, and Calvin's castle, and Huss's stake, and Hugh

M'Kail's scaffold of martyrdom, Zwinglius carried it into Switzerland, and John Wycliffe into England, and John Knox into Scotland, and Jehudi Ashman into Africa. (*Ibid.*) *Light to get home by*:—In the stress and vicissitudes of our earthly pilgrimage we know it as a lamp for our own difficult way: "Thy Word a lamp unto my feet." This recalls Charles Kingsley's phrase. On a dark, misty night he was cheerful, for, said he, "there is light enough to get home." That is all we really need—light enough to get home—and, if we follow His Word, that at least we shall not miss. We need not too wistfully and anxiously anticipate long futures, but live and walk from day to day in the light vouchsafed. (*W. R. Nicoll.*)

Ver. 106. **I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments.**—*The psalmist's solemn resolution*:—I. THE OBJECT OF THE PSALMIST'S PURPOSE WAS TO KEEP THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS OF GOD. This implies—1. Labouring to get a true knowledge thereof; to understand aright what God has been pleased in His wisdom and goodness to reveal to us. 2. Receiving the truths thereof in the love of them, and submitting to all that God has declared, as being worthy to be received by us. 3. Treasuring them up in our minds, and there labouring to preserve them, as we would something valuable which we were afraid of losing. 4. Living under the influence of them; not being carried down by the torrent of the times; not making custom the rule and model of our conduct. II. THE NATURE of the psalmist's purpose: that is, IN WHAT SPIRIT OR TEMPER OF MIND such a purpose may be supposed to have been formed. 1. The psalmist meant to express his serious purpose. 2. It was not a hasty but a deliberate purpose. 3. The determination before us is not the language of self-confidence, but a proper humble purpose and resolution. 4: This resolution has nothing in it of the spirit of procrastination and putting off: there is no mention made of any future time when he would devote himself to this work. (*S. Knight, M.A.*) *The power of virtuous resolutions*:—Solemn resolutions and vows have always been considered as powerful means of enabling men to abstain from vice and to practise virtue. Philosophers, as well as divines, have acknowledged their influence, and recommended it to their disciples, to form them with care. False religions, as well as the true religion, enjoin them, in order to determine their votaries to steadiness in those practices which they inculcate upon them. What then is the nature of that influence and power which may justly be ascribed to virtuous resolutions? I. A RESOLUTION OF VIRTUE LAYS US UNDER AN OBLIGATION TO BE VIRTUOUS. It binds the soul with a bond (Num. xxx. 2). To depart from evil and do good is the proper business of man. To resolve upon it is our highest wisdom; it is necessary to our present peace and to our future happiness. In proportion to its importance is the baseness and the ignominy of inconstancy in pursuing this course after we have resolved upon it. II. A VIRTUOUS RESOLUTION IMPELS US TO VIRTUE BY RENDERING IT AN OBJECT AND AIM TO US. This sets it in our eye as what must be practised, as what must not be on any account neglected, as the centre in which all our thoughts, and views, and exertions must ultimately terminate: this gives the whole soul a prevailing and habitual bias to it, and predisposes us to resist every temptation to vice, and to embrace every opportunity for virtue. III. A VIRTUOUS RESOLUTION CONTRIBUTES TO OUR PRACTISING VIRTUE BY RENDERING THE PRACTICE OF IT AGREEABLE TO US. This is the natural consequence of that habitual bias which resolution impresses on the soul. When a temptation occurs, it excites the vicious passion to which it is addressed; this passion produces an aversion to the virtue which opposes it; but the general determination to all virtue, which resolution has impressed, combats this aversion, reconciles us to the restraint of inclination, renders it an easy yoke, to which we submit with cheerfulness, and which we persist in bearing with alacrity and joy. IV. A VIRTUOUS RESOLUTION HAS GREAT INFLUENCE ON OUR IMPROVEMENT BY PUTTING US ON THE DILIGENT USE OF ALL THE MEANS NECESSARY FOR FULFILLING THE RESOLUTION. The means of holiness are clearly revealed: careful study of the Divine law, fervent prayer for the Divine assistance, circumspect vigilance against evil, unwearied diligence in every good action which opportunity permits; these are the direct and immediate instruments of virtuous improvement. V. VIRTUOUS RESOLUTION INSTIGATES US TO VIRTUE BY SUGGESTING THE MOTIVES TO IT, KEEPING THEM IN OUR VIEW, AND FIXING OUR ATTENTION ON THEM. Duty, honour, utility; enjoyment in life, and comfort in the hour of death; present peace and eternal happiness; conscience, gratitude,

hope, and fear; all conspire in urging us to holiness. Before their combined force all the most specious pleas of vice must vanish. Lessons: 1. Since virtuous resolutions are such powerful instruments of virtuous practice and improvement, we ought to form them with the greatest sincerity, firmness, and care. 2. Having sincerely resolved to practise universal holiness, let us diligently and faithfully fulfil the resolution. 3. We may learn to judge whether or not our virtuous resolutions be properly formed and properly maintained. If they fortify your sense of obligation; if they keep you habitually attached to holiness as the one thing needful; if they strenuously resist the corrupt propensities of the soul; if they prompt you to use the means of improvement with uniform diligence; if they render you forward to recollect and to dwell upon the motives to virtue; they have not been formed in vain. (*A. Gerard, D.D.*)

Ver. 107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto Thy Word.—A common condition and an indispensable blessing:—I. A CONDITION THAT IS COMMON TO MAN. How varied the afflictions of men, personal and social, physical and mental—disease, poverty, bereavement, oppression, etc. Our human afflictions may be divided into two classes. 1. The penal. All the sufferings of wicked men come on them as righteous punishment. 2. Disciplinary. To the genuine disciples of Christ afflictions are the chastisements of the Father. II. A BLESSING THAT IS INDISPENSABLE TO MAN. The quickening of the spiritual nature, the soul. 1. In faith. Faith in God. 2. In love. Supreme love to the supremely good. 3. In hope. Hope for a complete transformation into the image of his God. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 108. Accept, I beseech Thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me Thy judgments.—An aspiration of piety:—This short prayer cries out for two things. I. FOR DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF TRUE WORSHIP. "Accept, I beseech Thee," etc. 1. Worship is an offering. It is the soul offering its highest devotions. 2. Worship is an offering proclaimed "of my mouth." The soul rings out aloud in speech and song its devotion. 3. Worship is an offering of "freewill." No constraint; it goes out as the aroma from the rose, as the beam from the sun. II. FOR DIVINE INSTRUCTION. "Teach me Thy judgments," or laws. 1. Knowledge of the laws of God is the most important of all knowledge. 2. This most important knowledge can only be imparted by God. (*Homilist.*) *God's acceptance of our sufferings:*—It is a great grace that the Lord should accept anything from us, if we consider these three things. First, who the Lord is. Next, what we are. Thirdly, what it is we have to give unto Him. As for the Lord, He is all-sufficient, and stands in need of nothing we can give Him. As for us, we are poor creatures living by His liberality; yea, begging from all the rest of His creatures; from the sun and moon; from the air, the water, and the earth; from fowls and fishes; yea, from the worms; some give us light; some meat, some cloth; and are such beggars as we meet to give to a King? And thirdly, if we well consider, what is it that we give? Have we anything to give but that which we have received from Him? (*Bp. Cowper.*) *Sincere offerings:*—There is nothing so small but if it come from a good heart God will accept it: the widow's mite; a cupful of cold water; yea, and the praise of our lips. although it have no other external oblation joined with it; but, where men may do more and will not, it is an argument their heart is not sincerely affected toward Him, and their praises are not welcome to Him. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 109–112. My soul is continually in my hand.—*Religion:*—Religion is here presented in three aspects. I. As a deeply FELT NEED IN THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF DEATH. "My soul is continually in my hand." That is, my life is in constant danger: death confronts me. II. As a spirit of PERSEVERING FAITHFULNESS THROUGH ALL TRIALS. 1. It is a persevering spirit. "Yet I do not forget Thy law." 2. It holds on through all trials. "The wicked have laid a snare for me, still I erred not." 3. It holds on through all trials to the end. "Even unto the end." III. As a PRECIOUS INHERITANCE AND A PERMANENT JOY. 1. Genuine religion is an inheritance. "A heritage for ever." It is the only intrinsic, inalienable inheritance. 2. Genuine religion is a permanent joy. "For they are the rejoicing of my heart." True goodness never fails to flood the soul with joy. It is indeed a well of water. (*Homilist.*) *Man's bodily life:*—Let "soul" here stand for man's bodily life, and then we have two thoughts suggested. I. It is something

OUTSIDE OF HIMSELF. The human frame, with its complicated parts and various organs is no more the man than the house is the resident, the costume the wearer, the harp the lyrist. We carry it in our "hand." II. It is sometimes THAT HE MUST SURRENDER. This implies—1. A sense of temporariness. 2. A sense of obligation. We should always be ready to present our bodies, as well as our souls and spirits, a sacrifice unto God. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 110. **The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Thy precepts.**—*The snares laid for a good man:*—I. HERE IS A PARTICULAR PROOF OF THE WORLD'S HATRED TO THE GODLY—THEY HAVE LAID SNARES FOR ME. 1. The instigation to this injurious practice. Unquestionably it originates in the enmity of the heart against God. For it is this, in the persons and character of the pious, which the impious dislike. They are also instigated by Satan, the common enemy of the people of God. Besides these excitements, there are others of a somewhat subordinate character. Not unfrequently the wicked are actuated with envy, when they see the righteous exalted to stations of honour and influence; this is illustrated by the case of Haman. It sometimes happens, too, that the righteous have offended the profligate in reproving them for their sins, and this has roused their enmity, as was the case with Herodias. 2. The various forms in which this practice appears. Sometimes it is by specious temptations to sin. Thus, the Scribes and Sadducees endeavoured to entangle Christ in His talk. There have been instances, too, where wicked rulers have laid a snare for the righteous (Dan. vi. 7, 8). The wicked have aimed at corrupting the principles of the pious by offering to bribe them with the honours and riches of the world. They have thus resembled their father the devil, who took our Saviour up into the mountain, etc. 3. The agents in these temptations—they are called, "the wicked." And are not these acts flagrantly wicked? For they are contrary to the law of our creation. They are chargeable with double guilt—not that of their own sin only, but that of those who by the snares they have laid for their feet have been entangled and brought into bondage. 4. The effects of their ensnaring machinations. In many cases, alas, they are successful, for they have caught the righteous in their net, and tormented them by their persecutions even unto death. But their moral success has to be far more deplored. Many a youth, ere his understanding has been established in the first principles of truth, has been led away by their errors, the "cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." But, happily, there are many instances in which their artifices are altogether unsuccessful. "Yet," said David, "I erred not from Thy precepts." II. **THE MEANS OF HIS PRESERVATION.** Instead of being seduced by the smiling enticement of some, or terrified by the frowns and oppressions of others, he had not departed from the path of duty laid down for him in that Word which was the rule of his life. 1. A pious man cannot but be conscious of his determination to adhere to the path of duty, and of the degree of that adherence. 2. A subject of genuine godliness may sometimes hold up his own example to imitation (Phil. iii. 12–14, 17). 3. A possessor of piety may and ought to acknowledge his obligations to preserving grace. Can you say, "I know whom I have believed"? Then how much you are indebted to your Lord. Raise your memorial pillar on this spot and write upon it, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." 4. One principal means of this preservation was the Word of God. (*Evangelical Preacher.*)

Vers. 111, 112. **Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.**—*The Christian's privilege, joy, and life:*—I. **THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE.** "Thy testimonies." The blessings here offered are—forgiveness of sin; reconciliation with God, and communion with Him; peace of conscience; the guidance of God's Holy Spirit through life. II. **THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY** is the evidence of his privilege: he lays claim to the spiritual blessings of which the Gospel testifies, because they are the very joy of his heart. III. **THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE** (ver. 112). When we speak of "claiming God's testimonies" as our "heritage," it is evident that we look upon the Bible as a book of promises: when, as in the present case, we speak of "fulfilling God's statutes," then we regard the same book as a book of rules for the conduct of life. Now the servant of God regards it in both these points of view. 1. His diligence and care. 2. His perseverance. "Alway, even unto the end." (*J. S. Pratt.*) *The Bible the book for all time:*—I. **SHOWN BY THE PAST GROWTH.** In every century this Book has been assailed by critics of various kinds. The various forms of criticism

have often helped men and have helped the Church to a better understanding of their own book. But the critics have gone while the books are here. May we not say of the Bible what was said about the Church to the King of France, when Henry IV. threatened to persecute the French Protestants? "Sire, it is the part of the Church, on whose behalf I speak, to endure blows and not to give them; but let me remind your majesty that the Church is an anvil that has worn out a great many hammers." May we not say of the Bible that it is an anvil that has worn out a great many hammers? and I venture to think it will wear out a great many more.

II. **SHOWN BY THE FUTURE GROWTH.** There is nothing in the Bible provincial in tone, merely local in character, and restrictive in its application. There is a Divine system in the Book, just as there is in nature. If you wander through the woods when the wild flowers are out, it seems as if they were growing at random, in no order; yet botanists will tell you that there is among them a Divine order in the class and genera of these flowers that seem so wild. And when you look up to the sky on some starlight night it seems as if there were but points of light scattered at random over the face of the sky, and yet we know that there is such Divine order in the starry firmament that you can predict the times of planets and follow the course of nature with the utmost accuracy. And so there is in this Book a Divine system, but very different from our mechanical system, which men very soon outgrow. We know very well that, though men change and times alter, it will always be true that the pure in heart shall see God: it will always be true that self-sacrifice is a nobler thing than self-indulgence, whether a man lives under a republic or under a limited monarchy; it will always be true that integrity and uprightness are nobler than selfish meanness and trickery. The very qualities upon which this Book lays stress are fundamental to the noblest human nature, and cannot be affected by any change of time which the centuries may bring.

III. **SHOWN BY THE UNALTERABLE FACT.** The main fact in this Book is one which time cannot alter; it is the great fact of the life and character of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person.

IV. **SHOWN BY THE UNCHANGING NEED.** The tragic quality of life, the burden of weary hearts, the trials of the way—all these continue. Manhood is ennobled by the old virtues, stained with the old sin and burdened with the old sorrows, and so long as that is true they will want some one on whom to lean the weary, burdened heart—some one who can say to them, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer; thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." (*John Brown, D.D.*) *The believer's heritage of joy*:—I. **MAKE A MAP OF THIS ESTATE.** 1. A heritage of truth in the testimonies of God. 2. God's covenant is our heritage. 3. The greatest testimony of God in all the world is Jesus Christ; and we are complete in Him, He is all and in all to us. II. **TAKE POSSESSION OF THE ESTATE.** 1. By a deliberate choice. 2. By faith—a personal grip. 3. By holy diligence. III. **CONSIDER THE HOLDING.** 1. It is a perpetual holding. It is not dependent upon any one life; it is dependent upon three lives, and those three lives are the life of the Father, the life of the Son, and the life of the Holy Ghost; and they are all eternal, and so shall the joy and the wealth of every believer be. We have taken this inheritance for ever. 2. Sometimes we possess certain things which are ours, completely ours, but then they are not ours for ever, because they fade; but our inheritance will never fade or pass away. 3. There is no way of taking this heritage except taking it for ever. That conversion which is not radical and thorough is of no use. IV. **ENJOY THE POSSESSION.** First, David had taken God's testimonies to be his possession, for they had made him glad; and, secondly, that was the reason why he took them to be his possession, because they made him glad. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gate to the heritage*:—I. **AN INHERITANCE SUGGESTS THE PAST.** The heir, as he looks at the bundles of deeds and certificates, as he inspects the various tenements, and walks abroad over the acres of pasture and forest, or examines the vast mining or manufacturing establishments, sees in these the results of a long and laborious past. In like manner the testimonies of God point us back of ourselves. A mountain, with its orage, and peaks, and forests, may be a picturesque object to the eye, or a good standpoint for an outlook; but it will have a far deeper interest for us if we know with what throes the strata piled themselves up, what powers of the air cut the peaks into those fantastic shapes, if we can read the stories of earthquake, and fire, and deluge, and iceberg written upon those rocks. So, it is not enough that we receive and enjoy the testimonies of God. We do not truly inherit them if we fail to study them. Their value to us lies largely in

their history. If we sit down with the apostle's words, "all things are yours," and begin to examine our heritage, we shall be led irresistibly back to the past. For instance, what a heritage of years we shall find wrapped up in that sentence; years that have yielded their rich result to the present. How slowly God has suffered our heritage of experience, and tradition, and example to accumulate; how prodigal He has been of time. And, in the growth of these long, weary centuries, what a rich variety of testimonies God has accumulated. How many laws of conduct, for instance, have taken shape in the various situations in which the men of the Bible history have been placed; how many shining examples of distinct virtues—patience in Job, faith in Abraham, etc. And, once more, it is always an affecting thought to an affectionate son, that his father's estate was accumulated with toil, and self-denial, and suffering. It comes almost with the power of a reproach to his sensitive heart, that he is to inherit in comfort and tranquillity that which recalls so much struggle, and pain, and anxious thought. And this fact attaches in a peculiar sense to God's heritage of testimony. Beyond any other book, the Bible has evolved itself out of sorrow. That is the reason why it responds to the instincts of the race as no other book does or can. The heritage of God's testimony in the Word is a veritable battle-ground, its greenest and most fruitful fields moistened with blood, and covering the relics of the slain.

II. But let us look now at this heritage as it STANDS RELATED TO THE FUTURE. From the associations and memories of the past, the heir turns to study what capacity for development there is in the estate; to examine the investments and to see how they promise. He may be disappointed; he may find that a good part of the estate has become unproductive, and can never be made to yield what it did in his father's time, or he may find that it contains sources of wealth of which his father never dreamed. The psalmist, in thus inspecting the heritage of God's testimonies, is evidently well satisfied with the prospect, though he takes the longest possible outlook: "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever." And we may safely share his satisfaction. The man who chooses the Word of God as his moral inheritance may do so in full confidence that it will amply meet the demands of his whole future, and of the whole future of his race. No one can read the Bible long without seeing that it is prophetic; not only in the sense of occasionally predicting the future, but in that its facts imply other facts to follow; present sockets, into which future facts are to fit. Its utterances are folded in upon themselves like a flower. You see certain petals already exposed to the light; but you see within the circle of these something more which is to unfold in its season. This heritage of the Word grows richer with time. The preacher who thinks he has exhausted a text will find another sermon in it when he goes to it again. The man who goes through his Bible for the fiftieth time finds it richest in fresh treasures. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

Hereditary religion.—I. THE CLAIM ASSERTED BY DAVID—GOD'S TESTIMONIES HE ASSERTS TO BE HIS OWN HERITAGE. Speaking as a Jew, he declares with feelings of thanksgiving and triumph that he from his birth has had a rightful possession of God's revelations. Whilst other nations have been left in darkness, some never visited with the light of truth at all, others at best having to become proselytes, they, the Israelites, knew God from their mother's womb. Now, in examining into the cause of David's thankfulness, we are brought across the broad subject of ancestral religion. How far and on what grounds is it a matter of gratitude to God that we in this kingdom have not had to hear, late in life for the first time, the proclamation of the Name of the Lord, but have been born and bred in the midst and under the influence of Christian institutions? If we had not received it as a heritage we might never have enjoyed it at all. Which of us is certain that if he had met Christ face to face in the valleys of Judah we should not have despised Him? II. DAVID CLAIMS GOD'S TESTIMONIES AS HIS INHERITANCE, not for the brief period of this mortal life, but FOR EVER; as though implying that they would hereafter form the source of his joy and triumph. The Divine Word and testimonies are to remain for an inheritance of delight to the saints. What is this? Why, it is that the knowledge and contemplation of God and His attributes shall form the eternal occupation and pleasure of the blessed in heaven. For ever! aye, when our present tastes and feelings shall have long passed away, and we stand upon the shores of another land whose features we cannot surmise, and hear other sounds whose echo imagination cannot catch; when He that sitteth on the throne shall have made all things new, still, if among the saved, shall we throw ourselves upon the old revelations of God, and cleave to them as the noblest of the

things prepared for those that love Him, and so find the words of David, words of earth, still true when earth is no more: "Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever." (Bp. Woodford.) *The Divine Word*:—I. AS AN INHERITANCE. 1. It is the most enjoyable. 2. It is the most extensive. 3. It is the most enduring. II. AS AN inheritance ONLY PERSONALLY ATTAINED. Earthly inheritances often come to men irrespective of effort or choice. But he who would enjoy this inheritance must choose it and win it by his own struggles under God. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 112. **I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end.**—*The means of giving the heart a right inclination*:—The necessity of labouring for ourselves, and our entire dependence on the grace of God, are not incompatible; and so we find that the psalmist, while in one place, speaking by the Spirit, he makes this prayer to God, "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies," makes this declaration in another place, speaking by the same Spirit, "I have inclined," etc. I. USING THOSE MEANS BY WHICH THE GRACE OF GOD IS COMMUNICATED TO US. If succour is at hand to aid the infirmities of our nature, and we seek it not, then our helplessness is our own fault. II. PRESENTING TO IT SUCH CONSIDERATIONS AS ARE LIKELY TO WORK EFFECTUALLY UPON IT. "Communing with our own heart," as the psalmist speaks; reasoning with it, and pressing on its attention such truths as are fitted to influence it. 1. The nature of the Divine commands. They are holy, just, and good. 2. The claims which God has upon our obedience. III. THE FORMING OF GODLY RESOLUTIONS. The recollection of any specific engagement which we have made with an earthly friend will, if our hearts are at all right with him, prompt us with an earnest desire to fulfil the service to which we have pledged ourselves; and the like effect, we may assuredly expect, will result from the remembrance of our vows to God, if they have been seriously and sincerely made. IV. HOLDING INTERCOURSE WITH THOSE WHO ARE TRUS DISPOSED. The effects of fellowship on the human mind are great indeed, nor is it possible to keep ourselves out of the reach of its influence. We are so formed, that sympathy is the natural result of intercourse, and we insensibly acquire a similarity of tastes and habits with those with whom we often associate (Prov. xxvii. 17). If any man, therefore, wishes to have his heart inclined to God's statutes, he will avoid, as much as may be, communication with those who disregard them. He will choose as his daily companions, his familiar associates, his bosom friends, those who will be likely to turn his thoughts to God, and by their example, their conversation, and by their imperceptible influence on the mind, may incline his heart to keep His statutes. (*G. Bellett*.)

Ver. 113. **I hate vain thoughts: but Thy law do I love.**—*The hated and the loved*:—I. THE HATED. "I hate vain thoughts." The number of these is legion, the variety all but endless. Vain thoughts may include worthless thoughts on true subjects as well as on false. Vain thoughts are—1. Always worthless. They are empty, vapid, unsatisfactory, and unenduring. 2. Always criminal. Man is endowed with the thinking faculty in order to think accurately, righteously, and devoutly. 3. Always pernicious. Vain thoughts are the weeds, the fungi, the parasites, the mildew of the soul. II. THE LOVED. "Thy law do I love." Why should the Divine law be loved? 1. It is a revelation of the morally beautiful. It is the transcript of the mind, that which is the "beauty of holiness." 2. It is a guide to the truly happy. It is a map to guide to the heavenly inheritance, a compass directing to the celestial shore. (*Homilist*.) *A just hate and a just love*:—I. A just HATE. "Vain thoughts" are of two classes. 1. Thoughts on vain subjects. 2. Vain thoughts on true subjects. All such thoughts are evil in themselves and powerful for evil. Thought is the mightiest power in the world. Bad thoughts should be hated as devils; good ones cherished as angels. II. A just LOVE. The law should be loved—1. Because it is the expression of the highest moral beauty. It is the transcript of the Divine heart. 2. Because it is a means to the participation in the highest moral beauty. By obedience to the Divine law men come to share in the beauty of God, the beauty of holiness. Love and hate are really one in principle. We must always hate the opposite of what we love. (*Ibid.*) *On wandering thoughts in religious duties*:—I. THEIR NATURE. Wandering thoughts are the disorderly motions of the soul in the time of God's worship, by which the mind is diverted or disturbed in the performance of the duty. 1. The time: when engaged in the duties of religion. 2. What draws our

thoughts aside. (1) Sometimes things in themselves evil and sinful. (2) Sometimes things good in themselves, but evil because they are unseasonable. II. **THEIR CAUSES OR OCCASIONS.** 1. The depravity of our nature. 2. Allowance of sin. 3. Being over-careful and troubled about many things. 4. Slight thoughts of God and His service. III. **THEIR BAD EFFECTS.** 1. They render our duties vain and burdensome. 2. They hinder communion with God. 3. They induce us to think hardly of ourselves. 4. They bring guilt upon the soul, and lead to a curse instead of a blessing. IV. **DIRECTIONS FOR THEIR PREVENTION OR CURE.** 1. Wash your hearts from wickedness. 2. Endeavour to maintain an habitual spirituality of mind. 3. Attend to religious duties with earnest desires of the presence of God. 4. Depend not upon your own strength. 5. Use means to bring your heart into a suitable temper. 6. Set the Lord always before you. (S. Lavington.) *The government of the thoughts.*—I. **WHAT ARE VAIN THOUGHTS?** Not only all such as are in themselves useless and frivolous, but all such as, though not without their importance at their proper times, are allowed to encroach upon the time and attention due to others of equal or greater importance—all such as, by their connection with improper and hurtful inclinations, tend, when encouraged, to fix and strengthen them—all such as indicate the existence of unkind and unchristian feelings—all such as indispose us to the labours and duties of our stations—and lastly, all such as tend to make us undervalue the principles of a pure morality, or distrust the foundation of religious faith and obedience. II. **HOW MAY THEY BE AVOIDED OR CONTROLLED?** 1. The mind must have its attention directed, and its interest awakened to instructive and important subjects. 2. We must acquire a habit of confining our attention to the subjects and employments which we think deserving of our choice. 3. We should make a diligent use of all our opportunities for storing our minds with sound and practical knowledge. 4. We must avoid the sources of all impure or immoral fancies, whether we have reason to apprehend their existence in our usual books or our usual companions. 5. We should acquaint ourselves with the writings, and seek the society of those whom we may consider either as masters, or, at least, as anxious and successful learners, of the same art. 6. "The words of the pure," and "the lips of knowledge," if it be that knowledge which "maketh wise unto salvation," will second with powerful persuasion another direction that may be given for guarding against the influence of "vain thoughts." It is this—to rest on firm and deep foundations, and to build up for ourselves, with good and durable materials, a real conviction of religious truths. 7. A well-grounded and hearty belief in Christian truths, beside the awful consideration which it opposes to the encouragement of "vain thoughts," disposes the mind to an employment, the recommendation of which is another direction of the right government of the thoughts. That employment is, frequent meditation on the duties and interests which owe a principal part of their sanctions and importance to the doctrines and principles of religion. 8. Frequent, humble, and earnest prayer for deliverance from the evils which we wish to avoid, and assistance to persevere in the pursuit of those things which are "pure, lovely, and of good report"—prayer for that spirit of wisdom and godly fear, which will keep both our hate and our love directed to their proper objects. (A. R. Beard.) *On vain thoughts.*—I. **THE PECULIAR KIND OF THOUGHTS ALLUDED TO IN THE TEXT.** 1. All thoughts, the indulgence of which is positively sinful. (1) Some have reference to God. Fretful, discontented, and distrustful thoughts. (2) Others refer to our fellow-creatures. Suspicious, slanderous, and calumnious thoughts. (3) Others have reference to ourselves. Proud, ambitious, impure and lascivious thoughts. 2. All thoughts, the cultivation of which is likely to lead to no practical benefit. 3. All thoughts inappropriate to the seasons on which they are cherished. II. **THE EFFORT WHICH SHOULD BE MADE FOR SUPPRESSING VAIN THOUGHTS.** 1. Such thoughts are the natural and spontaneous choice of the human mind. 2. The powerful influence of the thoughts in regulating the dispositions and conduct. 3. Our responsibility to God for the right exercise of thought. III. **SOME MEANS WHICH MAY TEND TO COUNTERACT VAIN THOUGHTS.** 1. Seek the attainment of a renewed and sanctified heart. 2. Cultivate an habitual remembrance of the divine inspection of the thoughts. 3. Let the mind be occupied as fully as possible with thoughts of an appropriate and useful character. 4. Earnestly implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit to guide and control the thoughts. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Vers. 114-117. Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in Thy

Word.—*The Guardian and Support of souls*.—I. **THE GUARDIANSHIP OF GOD ENJOINED.** "Hiding-place" is a place of protection, a place where the enemy cannot discover you. "Shield" is an instrument of protection, that which prevents the arrow or the sword from touching the life. The two expressions mean safe guardianship. What a Guardian is God! 1. His guardianship does not circumscribe liberty. Not like the "hiding-place," it allows ample room for the development of all the powers, and satisfaction for all the desires. 2. His guardianship is sufficient for all purposes. It protects from all evils, material and spiritual, all enemies, human and satanic. With the enjoyment of this guardianship there is "hope in Thy Word." II. **DELIVERANCE FROM THE WICKED DESIRED.** "Depart from Me, ye evil-doers." 1. The expulsion of evil companions is at once the duty and the interest of all men. "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Come out from among them." 2. The expulsion of evil companions is necessary in order to obey God. "For I will keep the commandments of my God." III. **THE SUPPORT OF HEAVEN IMPORED.** "Uphold me," etc. The words imply—1. Consciousness of the ruin of a fall. "That I may live," implying, If I fall I die. A moral fall is soul death. 2. Consciousness of liability of a fall. "Hold Thou me up." I cannot stand without Thee. I totter on the verge of ruin, I am unable to support myself. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." (*Homilist.*) *God our hiding-place and shield*.—I. **THE RELATION WHICH GOD SUSTAINS TO THE CHRISTIAN.** 1. "My hiding-place." God is thus described as a refuge, as a place of security and retreat from the trials and agitations of the world without; just as a vessel may find a hiding-place in the calm and shelter of the haven, guarded and hidden by the rocks. There may be a pirate-ship upon the sea beyond, and a storm may be hurling its fury upon the waves, but within the shelter of the high rocks all is secure and undisturbed. 2. Again: under the figure of a "shield," the Almighty is represented as the Defender of His people. Both the figures convey a like meaning of protection; still their application will admit of, perhaps, a variety of difference. We may take the former case as implying refuge in the hour of sorrow and sadness; One to whom we can look in trust and hope at all times, and find in Him a source of peacefulness amid the din and anxieties of the world in which we live. In the latter case we seem to be brought from obscurity and retirement into the open battlefield of life, where the shafts of temptation are flying around us, where the sounds of struggle meet our ears, where latent feelings are awakened and passions roused. Into the "hiding-place" of God the soul retires as into her quiet home away from the noise and stir of life; behind the "shield" of God the soul takes her stand as behind her rampart when the hosts of the enemy are encamped round about her. II. **THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN HOPE**—"I hope in Thy Word." There is a twofold and mutual recognition conveyed in this passage. God recognizes man in his helplessness and dependency, and man recognizes God in the mercy, and compassion, and goodness of His character and relationship to His creatures. And thus the basis of Christian hope is to be found in the Divine testimony, conveyed in the writings of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and His apostles. This testimony has also its response in the human heart and life, and so produces its evidence in the actual experience of our common nature. What rule of faith so high—what standard of morals so perfect—what criterion by which we may judge of right and wrong so infallible as the Scriptures? We hesitate not to bring them to the bar of public opinion unbiased by prejudice, for the very freedom of that opinion shall witness in favour of their claims, and give evidence to their truthfulness and authority. They can bear the most powerful tests of human wisdom and judgment, and the more they are examined, the brighter, and broader, and deeper becomes their excellency. (*W. D. Horwood.*)

Ver. 115. **Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.**—"Go!" and they go:—"You go your way," he says in effect, "and I will go mine; I am for obedience, you are not for that, and you are asking the wrong man to be your companion. Away to your own sort!" I. HERE IS A DISMISSAL THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO HELP FOR IF WE WILL BE FAITHFUL TO GOD. So incongruous are evil companionships. Two attempting to walk together who as to destination and route are not agreed! Darkness assaying fellowship with light! How contrary the self-seeker to the child of God! What a great gulf between the worldling and the follower after holiness! Strange that association should be thought of. But there is a policy in it. There is a tempter. Ungodli-

ness is eager for recruits. To company with evil men is to walk into the snare. All worldly currents are against godliness, how soon the heart may be drawn from the living God, how mighty the influence of those with whom we voluntarily associate, how soon divine love may be robbed of its fervour, and tenderness of conscience become less. Evil men are the messengers and tools of Satan, and as a matter of course seek to make others like themselves. With what craft this is often done. II. HERE IS A DISMISSAL THAT WHEN IT IS MEANT IS ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD, AND SPEEDILY TAKES EFFECT. There are many ways of uttering that "Depart." There is the formal way, and the timid, apologetic way, and the half-hearted and wavering way. Evil-doers can always tell how much real force there is in that word. And when without any nonsense or faltering they are told to go, they go. Give it forth, not rudely, but with all the truth and strength of your soul. (B. E. Hawkins.)

Ver. 116. **Let me not be ashamed of my hope.**—*The Christian's sheet-anchor*:—

I. THAT WE MAY NOT AT LAST BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, IT MUST ORIGINATE IN A CHANGE OF THE TEMPER OF THE HEART. The carnal mind must be regenerated. Old things must pass away and all things become new. God must be loved and Christ received by faith. II. THAT WE MAY NOT AT LAST BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, IT MUST RENDER US HOLY. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Now Christ can, in no other sense, be in the believer, than as His doctrines form our creed, His temper reigns in our hearts, His example guides our steps, and His love engrosses our affections. III. THAT WE MAY NOT AT LAST BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, IT MUST BEAR EXAMINATION. "Prove your own selves." IV. THAT WE MAY NOT AT LAST BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, IT MUST LIVE WITHOUT AN EFFORT. We shall bend all our efforts to be holy and our hope will support itself. V. THE HOPE THAT MAKETH NOT ASHAMED IS ALWAYS INTERRUPTED BY SIN, while the hypocrite retains his hope unimpaired in the midst of transgression. VI. THAT WE MAY NOT BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, OTHERS MUST HAVE A HIGHER OPINION OF OUR PIETY THAN OURSELVES. VII. THAT WE MAY NOT, AT LAST, BE ASHAMED OF OUR HOPE, IT MUST PUT US UPON EARNEST ENDEAVOURS TO REACH THE OBJECT OF OUR HOPE. If heaven is the object of our hope, we shall endeavour to bring so much of heaven down to earth as possible. 1. The subject should urge us to examine ourselves, and render us willing to be examined. 2. The subject should render us submissive and thoughtful in every scene of life by which God tries our hope and proves our faith. 3. If our hope is such that we expect not to be ashamed of it at the last, let us not be ashamed of it now. 4. In that hope, of which we shall not at last be ashamed, we may now rejoice. "Which hope we have," says an apostle, "as an anchor of the soul," etc. 5. To so live as to sustain a high hope of heaven is the way to die in peace, with anticipated prospects of future blessedness. 6. To live with this high hope is to speak when we are dead. 7. This subject should show the ungodly how unprepared they are to die. What would be a preparation to die is a preparation to live. (D. A. Clark.) *A great good and a great evil*:— I. A GREAT GOOD. Hope always implies—1. A future. 2. A good in the future. 3. An attainable good. II. A GREAT EVIL. Shame. Some are ashamed of that which cannot be helped, ashamed of the poverty of their ancestry, the supposed uncomeliness of their person, or of the condition in which they have been placed in life. Some are ashamed of that in which they ought to rejoice, ashamed even of the Gospel. Some are ashamed of that of which they have been guilty. This is remorse, and remorse is misery. III. A GREAT EVIL RISING OUT OF A GREAT GOOD. We are ashamed of our hope—1. When the object has proved to be worthless. 2. When the object has proved to be unattainable. (Homilist.) *Christian hope*:—In the first clause there is the language of a man in great distress; nevertheless he is not in despair, for when you proceed to the second clause you find the psalmist speaking of his hope; he had not let go his hope. Though visited with so much calamity, and encircled with so much of peril, he still keeps down the rising fear, that after all he may be disappointed, and earnestly beseeches of God not to suffer him to be "ashamed of his hope." It is very beautiful and instructive to observe how hope thus triumphs over trouble. We may go further, and declare that hope is nurtured by trouble. The text may be thought to indicate this; for David evidently speaks as if, having been carried through his trouble, he was yet to find his hope in all the beauty of its vigour. Now, there is no better way of interpreting Scripture than that of using one part as a commentary on another. We wish to show you from our text that hope may

spring from tribulation; but this which is only hinted at by the psalmist is largely asserted by St. Paul, when he says, "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Here we have the steps which are missing in our text, and we may therefore supply them. We need hardly premise that the apostle speaks only of those who bear tribulation as Christians should bear it—who receive it as appointed of God, and desire to be improved by the fatherly chastisement. It is far enough from true, as a general proposition, that tribulation worketh patience; for how often do you observe in people of the world that they grow more fretful and irritable as their sorrows are multiplied; the chief effect of continued affliction being to sour the temper, and strengthen in them a habit of repining and murmuring. But let us take the case of those in whom a work of grace is going forward, who are striving to submit themselves to the operations of God's Spirit; and how true it is of them that "tribulation worketh patience!" The soul reasons with itself—"Is not God the best Judge of what is good for me? Shall I be unwilling to suffer, when the Captain of my salvation was 'made perfect through suffering?' So long as I withstand God, does it not prove that I need the chastening rod? Does it not provoke Him to chastise me yet again?" And thus is patience wrought out by tribulation; not by tribulation in itself, by the mere onset of trouble, but by tribulation bringing (as it will bring) the Christian to reflection and to prayer. Let us proceed to the second step in what we may call the apostle's commentary on the words of the psalmist, and let us see whether patience will not further work experience. The word "experience" properly denotes the putting something to the proof, making the sort of trial which is made of metals, by placing them in the fire, in order to the detecting and disentangling the dross. Hence the experience here mentioned by St. Paul must be the ascertaining the precise worth, veracity, and power of the consolations and promises of God. "Tribulation worketh patience," in that suffering brings the Christian into an attitude of submission and acquiescence; but when he has been schooled into resignation, and made to wait meekly on the Lord, he is not left without heavenly visitations. Amid the pains of sickness, the infirmities of age, the corroding of grief, what support is communicated! what strength! what joy! And from experience how natural, how easy the transition to hope. It is next alleged by St. Paul, which the psalmist held fast in the hour of his affliction, that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope. He in whom patience has wrought experience is one who, having put to the proof those Scriptural promises which have reference to circumstances such as those in which he has been placed, has found them made good, accomplished in himself, and thereby proved to be of God; but what now can be such a reason for expecting the fulfilment of promises which have respect to future things, as the having experienced the fulfilment of other promises, both made by the same Being, which have respect to present things? Surely he who has tried the chart and found it correct, so far as he had the power of trying it, has the best ground for confidence in that chart with regard to ports which he has never yet entered. With how immediate, then, and direct a succession does hope follow on experience! Experience is a book in which there should be daily entries, and to which there should be daily reference. If we do not register our mercies, or if we never recount them, they are not likely to throw light upon coming events. But what a precious volume is our experience, if we record it with accuracy, and then do not let it lie idly on the shelf! the dust on the covers attesting how little it is used! Answers to prayer, what encouragements to pray! Promises fulfilled, what arguments for expecting their fulfilment! Mercies bestowed, what grounds for confidence that mercies will not be withheld! But if patience lead to experience, shall not experience yield some richer fruit? Yes, verily, he who has "tasted that the Lord is gracious" is the last to doubt that the Lord will be gracious; he to whom promises have been fulfilled should be the last to suspect that promises may fail; and if every mercy received whilst patiently enduring may serve as a pledge, or earnest of future bestowment, oh! how true that as "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience," so doth experience generate hope! And, therefore, though David was in trouble—trouble which almost made him despair of life—he would not let go his hope; he had been in too many troubles beforetime for this; he had been too well disciplined; he had had too great experience of the faithfulness and lovingkindness of God; and if he, in his first prayer, exclaims, like one almost disheartened—"Uphold me according to Thy Word," in the next, like one who takes courage from the past, he gives

utterance to the bolder words—"let me not be ashamed of my hope." Christian "hope maketh not ashamed." It paints no vision which shall not be more than realized; it points to no inheritance which shall not be reached. How should it make ashamed, when it altogether rests itself upon Christ, who is not "ashamed to call us brethren"? This is the secret of its difference from every other hope; Christ is the source and the centre of our hope—Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in Him amen; and if Christ can deceive us, if Christ can fail His people in their extremity, if Christ can want either the will or the power to save those who commit themselves to Him, then, but not otherwise, may the believer be ashamed of his hope. (H. Melvill, B.D.)

Ver. 117. **Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.**—*The Christian's security*:—**I. THE MAN OF GOD PRESENTING HIMSELF BEFORE THE THRONE OF GRACE, WITH A HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS SENSE OF EXPOSURE TO DIFFICULTY AND DANGER, AND HIS SENSE OF HIS OWN HELPLESSNESS IN HIMSELF.** No man ever went to the Lord and said, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe," but the man who felt that he was exposed to danger, and that he was too weak to take care of himself. **II. THE CONDUCT OF A CHRISTIAN MAN UNDER ALL THAT FEELING OF EXPOSURE AND HELPLESSNESS.** He is not overpowered, he is not overwhelmed; but he goes to the Lord, and he says—"Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." **III. THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE OF HIS SECURITY WHEN THE LORD SUSTAINS HIM.** There is no doubt about it, no uncertainty in the matter, "I shall be safe." There is not a trial, or difficulty, or temptation for which a covenant supply has not been provided. (W. H. Krause, M.A.) *Prayer for Divine upholding and preservation*:—**I. A LIVELY CONCERN FOR HIS SPIRITUAL PRESERVATION.** **II. A SOLEMN APPREHENSION OF HIS CONTINUAL MORAL DANGER.** **III. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS ENTIRE WEAKNESS AND INABILITY TO UPHOLD HIMSELF.** **IV. A FIRM CONFIDENCE IN THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF DIVINE GRACE.** **V. A PRAYERFUL FRAME OF MIND, OR A SPIRIT OF SUPPLICATION.** If I believe that I am too weak to support myself, and if I am desirous of my safety, I shall naturally go to the strong for strength. If I behold a number of enemies for which I am no adequate match, I shall never engage with them alone, but rather inform the Captain of my salvation, who will come to my escape, who will go with me, and "teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," and make me "more than a conqueror." (W. Jay.) *My hourly prayer*:—**I. UPHOLDING—God's holding us up.** 1. It implies a danger. (1) The way is slippery. (2) We are not sure-footed. (3) There are cunning foes that seek to trip us up. (4) Nor is this all, though it is quite enough; for sometimes the difficulty of keeping our balance is not caused by the way itself, but by the height to which God may elevate us. Anything which leads to self-esteem leads to the utmost jeopardy. 2. How does God keep His people upright? (1) By angels. (2) By the ministry of the Word. (3) By chastisement. (4) By giving great aspirations, high ideals, noble desires. (5) By giving His people plenty to do. It is a grand way of keeping us right—never to let us have an idle ten minutes, nor a spare napkin to wrap a talent in. **II. TWO BLESSED THINGS THAT COME OUT OF THIS HOLDING UP.** 1. We shall be safe. (1) From all real harm. (2) From descending into grievous sin. (3) Enjoying great restfulness of heart. 2. Watchfulness attends such sacred safety, and is at once its fruit and its sign. A holy man—a man made holy by God's grace—has great respect to every command of God. (C. H. Spurgeon.) "*Hold Thou me up*":—There was once a very good clergyman who was extremely fond of this text, and he often repeated it to himself. As he was very clever and wise, he feared lest he should become proud and so offend God. So he obtained a wine-glass without a foot, and round the rim had these words written, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Then this singular glass was placed on his writing-table, where he could see it continually. Thus it was a kind of picture of himself, to remind him that without God he could do nothing good. The wine-glass, if held in its master's hand, would hold what was placed within it, and so become useful. But if ever it tried to stand on its own account, it would fall over, spill its contents, and perhaps be injured. **I. A LITTLE SLIP MAY CAUSE A GREAT FALL.** An express train in the west of England suddenly stopped all at once because a tiny pin had slipped out of its place. Be careful of little temptations and small sins. All the falls recorded in the Holy Scriptures came from trifling acts. Eve only ate a fruit, but she was expelled from the Garden of Eden. Moses only spoke a few angry words, and yet for them he was shut out of Canaan. A blunder committed in a moment

may cause a great deal of mischief, as men learned to their sorrow when the great warship "Victoria" went down. The brave admiral somehow forgot himself and gave a wrong order, but it caused the loss of a great ship, and also of a great many valuable lives. When we have overcome a sin or temptation, or performed a good action; when we are in company with those who are evil or thoughtless, and when we feel impatience or petulance rising up within us, we should utter this prayer, for we are then most assuredly in peril. II. Then never let us forget that we have a GREAT GOD TO TRUST IN. Mr. Wesley once heard a woman lamenting because she had broken her china crucifix. "Now," she sobbed out, "now I have no one but the great God to trust in." "But what a blessing she had the great God to trust in," said Mr. Wesley. Now, if you will look at your Bible, you will see a little word at the head of this section. Above the 113th verse is the word *Samech*. That word means a prop or pillar, and teaches us that God is the upholder of His people: He supports and sustains them. "I found it sweet and comfortable to lean on God," said Brainerd; and many others have felt the same. (*N. Wiseman.*) *Severed from God we fall*.—Samson, whom no earthly power could subdue during the twenty years that he was energized by the Spirit of God under his Nazarite vow, yet as soon as his locks were shorn was weak as another man. David, who, while he walked with God was the man after God's own heart, yet at length, when out of communion, could be guilty of the most appalling sins. We have no strength of our own to stand against temptation. The longest life, the most devoted service, is no security against a fall. I remember, when a young man, seeing, at a lecture on magnetism, a piece of soft iron brought on the platform and shown to be unable to hold up a needle. A coil of copper wire was then put round it, and connected with an unseen battery. Now it held, first nails, next chisels and other tools, till all the weights of the institution were brought, and it sustained them every one by the magnetic power. At a signal the wire was cut, and they all fell to the ground. It could no longer hold up the smallest thing. Its magnetic power was not in itself, but in its connection with the unseen battery. (*Signal.*) *I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually.*—*Having respect to God's commands*.—A holy man—a man made holy by God's grace—has great respect to every command of God. Before he moves he looks round him to see whether he shall transgress by his proposed movement. You have heard of the child whose mother said, "John, you have broken one of the commandments," and he answered, "Mother, those commandments are awfully easy to break." With such natures as ours sin is a very easy thing. You break the law before you know it; and unless a man has respect unto all the commandments he will soon be trespassing and getting into mischief. We ought in our daily life to walk as one that has to tread among eggs or delicate china. Heedless and Too-bold soon rush into sin; but the genuine believer feareth always. "You are very jealous of bow you act," said one to a saint of God. "Yes," he replied, "I serve a jealous God." "You are too precise," said another. "That is a crime," said he, "that God will never charge any of His children with." A conscience tender as the apple of an eye is what we want. To be alarmed even at the distant approach of sin is the safeguard of a child of God. Those who dally with vice will rue such dalliance when it cannot be undone. If somebody told me that there was a cobra at the far end of my room, I should look round me for the door: I think such venomous creatures are near enough if they remain in their native jungles; I do not desire their interesting society. So should it be with sin. We should flee from it at once, avoiding its first appearance, hating it in thought and word before it hatches into act, abhorring even the garment spotted by the flesh. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments.—*The trembling flesh*.—I. The psalmist, in this section, contemplates GOD'S WRATH AGAINST SINNERS (vers. 118, 119). Then apparently his thought goes on to his own case, and what is likely to be his own sentence. He is disturbed by the contemplation of that sharp judgment which he must undergo in the day when his soul shall go forth from the body. II. THE EXPRESSION WHICH HE USES IS A VERY REMARKABLE ONE. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee." When a man's body reveals his fright it has quite mastered him. III. IS NOT THIS A SERVILE FEAR, unbefitting the Christian who has given himself up to be our Lord's disciple? 1. There are, however, among professing Christians those who, by weakly continuing in some evil habit, have reduced themselves to the

condition of servility. 2. There are professing Christians who have no very especial besetting sin of the mortal type, who yet go on without fervour and without making any progress in the spiritual life. They know that they have many faults, small faults in the world's eyes, yet which, when tolerated, make the life thoroughly un-Christlike. They acquiesce in these. It does not make much difference what the defect of character may be, the grievous thing about it is that there is no faithful persistent effort to conquer it. Wherever there is found a soul like that it may well be permeated with servile fear as it contemplates the judgment, for that sort of offenders will not find mercy in the day of their sentence. 3. There are many more who ought to feel a servile fear of the wrath of God when they contemplate their lives seriously because they are not doing all that they can to put away their sins. IV. THOSE WHO ARE MOST IN EARNEST IN SEEKING TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE JUDGMENT OF THE LAST DAY ARE THE ONES WHO TREMBLE MOST AT THE THOUGHT OF THAT JUDGMENT. And with very earnest souls it ceases to be a servile fear because they trust themselves more and more unreservedly to the Divine mercy. The secret of perfect trust is perfect self-distrust. And there is nothing which helps more to a realization of one's unworthiness than the contemplation of the just judgment of God as He reveals it in Holy Writ. (*Arthur Ritchie.*)

Vers. 121-123. **I have done judgment and justice.**—*What every man should do, and what every man requires.*—I. What every man SHOULD DO. "I have done judgment and justice." The whole moral code of the universe may be reduced to two words—Be just. 1. Be just to self. Properly train your own faculties, discipline your own affections, regulate your own activities. 2. Be just to other creatures. Whether they be small or large, irrational or intelligent. The meanest insect as well as the greatest soul has claims on you. 3. Be just to the Creator. The kindest Being thank the most, the greatest Being reverence the most, the best Being adore the most. II. What every man REQUIRES. "Be surety for Thy servant for good;" or, as some read, "Interpose for Thy servant for good." There is a thing here which every man requires, viz. the merciful interposition of God. "Be surety"—interpose—"for Thy servant." Unless He, in mercy, intervenes on our behalf, we are ruined for ever. Every awakened soul hungers for this, it is the great hunger of the soul. "Mine eyes fail for Thy salvation." (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 124-126. **Deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy.**—In these words we have a prayer—I. For MERCIFUL TREATMENT. 1. Not according to Thy justice. This would involve our ruin. 2. Not according to the mercy of men. This would be worthless. But "according to Thy mercy." That mercy is all-compassionate, all-sufficient, and all-powerful. II. For MORAL INSTRUCTION. "Teach me Thy statutes." "Give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies." 1. God has given us statutes, laws for the regulation of our conduct. 2. These statutes are to be obeyed. Obedience to them is essential to our well-being. 3. These statutes, to be obeyed, must be understood. Hence the force of the prayer, "Give me understanding." III. For DIVINE INTERVENTION TO TERMINATE WICKEDNESS (ver. 126). There is a sense in which men cannot make void God's laws. They cannot annul them, they cannot modify them. They can neither remove or lessen their obligation. The only way in which they can make them "void" is by practically ignoring them; and this is an evil which God will put an end to. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 126-128. **It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law.**—*Time for Thee to work*—The psalmist was surrounded, as would appear, by widespread defection from God's law. But instead of trembling as if the sun were about to expire, he turns himself to God, and in fellowship with Him sees in all the antagonism but the premonition that He is about to act for the vindication of His own work. I. CALM CONFIDENCE THAT TIMES OF ANTAGONISM EVOKE GOD'S WORK FOR HIS WORD. It is ever His method to send His succour after the evil has been developed, and before it has triumphed. Had it come sooner, the priceless benefits of struggle, the new perceptions won in controversy of the many-sided meaning and value of His truth, the vigour from conflict, the wholesome sense of our weakness, had all been lost. Had it come later, it had come too late. So He times His help, in order that we may derive the greatest

possible benefit from both the trial and the aid. II. **EARNEST PRAYER WHICH BRINGS THAT DIVINE ENERGY.** The confidence that God will work underlies and gives energy to the prayer that God would work. The belief that a given thing is in the line of the Divine purpose is not a reason for saying, "We need not pray; God means to do it," but is a reason for saying on the contrary, "God means to do it; let us pray for it." And this prayer, based upon the confidence that it is His will, is the best service that any of us can render to the Gospel in troublous times. III. **LOVE TO GOD'S WORD MADE MORE FERVID BY ANTAGONISM.**

1. Such increase of affection because of gainsayers is the natural instinct of loyal and chivalrous love. If your mother's name were defiled, would not your heart bound to her defence? 2. Such increase of affection because of gainsayers is the fitting end and main blessing of the controversy which is being waged. We never fully hold our treasures till we have grasped them hard, lest they should be plucked from us. No truth is established till it has been denied and has survived.

3. Such increase of attachment to the Word of God because of gainsayers is the instinct of self-preservation. The present conditions of opinion demands us all to our foundations, and should teach us that nothing but firm adherence to God revealed in His Word, and to the world which reveals God, will prevent us, too, from drifting away to shoreless, solitary seas of doubt, barren as the foam, and changeful as the crumbling, restless wave. IV. **HEALTHY OPPOSITION TO THE WAYS WHICH MAKE VOID THE WORD OF THE LORD.** Let not the contradiction of many move you from your faith; let it lift your eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help. Let it kindle into fervent enthusiasm, which is calm sobriety, your love for that Word. Let it make decisive your rejection of all that opposes. Driftwood may swim with the stream; the ship that holds to her anchor swings the other way. Send that Word far and wide. It is its own best evidence.

(A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The present times*:—I. **WHAT ARE THOSE EVILS EXISTING IN OUR COUNTRY AND TIME WHICH SEEM TO RENDER THE PRESENT A SEASON THAT NEEDS GOD'S SPECIAL INTERPOSITION?** 1. The prevalence of infidelity. 2. Consider the taste for pleasure, which at the present day is continually increasing and pervading all ranks of society. 3. Nor must I forget that confederation which is undoubtedly going forward at the present time to rob us of our English Sabbath. 4. Is the Church in that spiritual state that any of us could wish? Has not the spirit of trade, by its intensity, by its rash speculations, by its absorbing power, by its money-loving spirit, eaten into and eaten out the heart of the vital piety of the Church? II. **THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE EVILS THAT I HAVE MENTIONED OUGHT TO HAVE UPON THE CHURCH'S MIND.** 1. Should it not produce a deep and heart-affecting concern over the prevalence of iniquity in the world, and the comparative lukewarmness of the Church? 2. With this must be connected the spirit of earnest, believing, prevailing prayer. 3. All this is to be an individual concern. (J. A. James.) *Time for the Lord to work*:—The Christian who is wholly satisfied with the outlook on the condition of society either possesses a faith of unusual and heroic fibre, or has but feebly mastered the moral phenomena around him. I. **A MELANCHOLY FACT.** "Men have made void Thy law."

1. By assailing its authority. (1) You assail the authority of law when you deny the Personality of its source, and this is the form in which the assault upon the authority of law has been conspicuously made in our days. I refer to that subtle and pathetic theory of the universe which finds in pantheism a sufficient explanation of all its phenomena, whether physical or moral. (2) But the authority of the law of God can be assailed in other ways, as, for example, by palliating the gravity of its transgressions. The fact of sin must lie at the foundation of any system of religion which has to assume the form and function of a redemption; and where sin is denied, or reduced to a hardly culpable minimum, then the redemptive idea seems disproportionate, exaggerated, and almost preposterous. (3) Another way in which men make void the law of God by assailing its authority is by restricting the area of its rule. To imagine that there can be a sphere in which the aims and activities of men can be released from the authority and sanction of God, is to suppose that there are spheres in which He ceases to be God, and to claim the homage of His creatures. 2. There is another method of making void the law of God, and that is by disparaging its sufficiency. And it is seen mainly in its relation to that law which is the highest revealed to man—the law of the Gospel, the perfect law of liberty, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. II. **THE URGENT APPEAL.** "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." Such challenge is the privilege of earnest men. It is the violence which takes heaven

by force. God does not resent it. He hears, invites, answers it. But when He arises to work we know not what will be the form of His operations. He worketh according to the counsel of His own will; and who knows but that when once He awakes, and puts on His strength, it may not be confined in its results to the immediate and exclusive quickening of the spiritual life of the Church, but may be associated with providential upheavals and convulsions, which will fill the heart of the world with astonishment and dismay. There have been times when God has worked, and the signs of His presence have been seen in terrible shakings of the nations, in the ploughing up from their foundations of hoary injustices, in the smiting of grinding tyrannies, and in the emancipation of peoples whose life had been a long and hopeless mow. There have been times, too, and many, when He has worked through the elements of nature—through blasting and mildew, through floods and famine, etc. But this working of God will also take other shapes. Will it not be seen in the inspiration of the Church with faith in its own creed, so far as that creed has the warrant of the Divine Word? Then we may expect a wondrous effusion of the Holy Spirit both upon His Church and the world which is still estranged from His law and love. Can that be the Gospel in its fullness and efficacy which is unmindful of the personality and the agency of that Spirit whose functions were to be so lofty, so searching, so beneficent, and so enduring? (E. Mellor, D.D.) *The Divine patience exhausted through the making void the law*.—It is of great importance that men be taught that there are limits even to the forbearance of God, and that it is possible so to presume on it as to exhaust it. "They have made void Thy law." They have reduced the Divine precepts to a dead letter, and refuse to receive them as a rule of life. But what effect will be produced on a truly righteous man by this extraordinary prevalence of iniquity? Will he be tempted, by the universal scorn which he sees thrown on God's law, to think slightly of it himself, and give it less of his reverence and attachment? On the contrary, this law becomes more precious in David's sight, in proportion as he felt that it was so despised and set aside that the time for God to work had arrived. The verses are connected by the word "therefore." "They have made void Thy law." What then? is that law less esteemed and less prized by myself? Quite the reverse; "they have made void Thy law; therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." This, then, is the second truth presented by our text—that there is greater reason than ever for our prizing God's law, if the times should be those in which that law is made void. It is obvious, in the first place, that, in days such as these, there is the very finest opportunity of giving honour to God. To love His commandments above gold, whilst others count them but dross, is to display a noble zeal for His glory, and to appear as the champions of His cause, when that cause is on the point of being universally deserted. The promise, moreover, runs, "Them that honour Me, I will honour"; and the season, therefore, in which the greatest honour may be given to God, is that also in which the most of future glory may be secured by the righteous. To adhere boldly to the cause of righteousness, when almost solitary in adherence, is to fight the battle when champions are most needed, and when, therefore, victory will be most triumphant. Let, then, saith the psalmist, the times be times of universal defection from godliness—I will gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, loyalty from their treason. Indeed, as I gaze on what is passing around me, I cannot but observe that Thy law, O God, is made void, and that it is therefore time for Thee to work. But I am not on this account shaken in attachment to Thy service. On the contrary, Thy law seems to me more precious than ever, for in now keeping Thy commandments I can give Thee greater glory, and find greater reward. What then? it may be that they have made void Thy law; but from my heart I can say, "therefore, on that very account, I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." But we have yet another mode in which to exhibit the connection between the verses. We have hitherto supposed the strengthened attachment which David expresses towards the law, to have been produced by the fact that this law was made void. But we now refer it to the fact that it was time for God to work. We consider, that is, that when the psalmist says, "therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold," the reason is to be found in the character of the times, in the season being one at which God must bring judgments on the earth. "Since Thy law is made void, it is time for Thee, Lord, to interfere in vengeance; and on this account, because wrath must be let loose, therefore I love Thy commandments above gold,

you, above fine gold." And if this be regarded as the connection between the verses, you will readily admit that there is abundant force in the reason of the psalmist. If there be one season at which, more than at another, the righteous feel the worth of revelation, and the blessedness of obeying its precepts, the season must be that of danger and trouble. Whether the danger and trouble be public or domestic; whether it be his country, or only his own household, over which calamity hangs; the man of piety finds a consolation in religion which makes him more than ever prize the revealed will of God. There is a beauty and energy in the Bible which nothing but affliction can bring out and display; and men know comparatively little of the preciousness of Scriptural promises, and the magnificence of Scriptural hopes, until placed in circumstances of difficulty and distress. "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." "They have forsaken Thy covenant," etc.; and the Judge of men must arise, and vindicate His insulted authority. But I know on whom the mark of deliverance will be set when the men with the slaughter-weapons are commanded to pass through the land. I know that where there is obedience to Thy law, there will be security from Thy wrath. And hence that law is more precious in my sight than it ever was before—"it is time for Thee to work; therefore I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work." There is much in myself which requires the processes of the refiner, much of the corruptible to be removed, much of the dross to be purged away. But if it be needful that I be cast into the furnace of affliction, I have Thy precepts to which to cling, Thy promises on which to rest. I find that Thy Word comforts me in the prospect; I know that it will sustain me in the endurance; and hence, because it is time for Thee to work, therefore is Thy word dearer to me "than the gold, yea, than the fine gold." (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The worker most wanted*:—At different periods in the world's history, in particular places and with respect to particular acts, transgression has been so common and flagrant, that there has been danger of the law of God being cancelled, and the law of sin everywhere written instead. Such times have needed special interpositions, which are tacitly asked for in the text. I. THE COMPLAINT. To make void God's law is to misinterpret it, to encumber it, to ignore it, to defy its penalties, or to deny its obligation. II. THE APPEAL. They have made void Thy law—"it is time for Thee, Lord, to work." There are three works possible here. The vindication of the law by punishment, the republication of the law, and the restoration of men to obedience. And which of these is the greatest? Punishment causes the law to be honoured in the punished, but not by them. The promulgation of the law puts it forward in work, but not necessarily in deed. The restoration to obedience honours it in spirit and in life. And while a man of God may live in times rendering the promulgation of law needful, and may see punishment desirable, the main desire of his heart will be that God will honour His law in the restoration of men to true obedience. (*S. Martin.*)

Vers. 127-131. **Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold.**—*God's Word*:—God's Word is here revealed in several aspects—I. AS A PRIZE. It is "above gold." 1. It is intrinsically more valuable than gold. It contains the mind of God. 2. It is relatively more valuable than gold. It procures greater blessings. II. AS A LAW, "All Thy precepts." As a law—1. It is to be righteous—"Concerning all things, to be righteous." 2. It is to be practical, "I hate every false way." III. AS A REVELATION. As a revelation it is—1. Wonderful, "Thy testimonies are wonderful." 2. Spiritually enlightening. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." It lights up the soul. IV. AS A NECESSITY (ver. 131). It is the air without which you cannot breathe, food without which you cannot live. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 129. **Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.**—*Wonder an element of religion*:—"The Scriptures," says an old bishop, "are wonderful with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce." What, then, is the Bible? The reply is this—the Bible is the history of sin; and so viewed, it stands forth, indeed, as a record surprisingly wonderful. It may be said that it is in a measure the history of righteousness also; but indeed the history of God's righteousness is the history of man's sin. There is a strange unity in the Bible thus viewed. It is not on the excellency of this or that portion, but upon their unity

and self-completeness, that we would base our assertion of the wonderfulness of the testimonies of God. Let us, then, assuming its wonderfulness, inquire how this should produce obedience. The whole of this psalm is occupied in setting forth the Divine law in every variety of aspect, and David's own appreciation of it; and it is observable that it is on the depth, the vastness, the wonderfulness of God's Word that he dwells. In the text he assigns, expressly, the motive of his own obedience. His language is not that of a deep thinker, who has examined and understood more thoroughly than his brethren; it is that of a child gazing upwards to the firmament, and impressed with an awe which it cannot explain; it is language not of reason, but of faith: not of understanding, but of astonishment, in which he sketches the impulse of his own obedience. His spirit, as he meditated upon God's law, beheld therein a mighty mystery, wide as the east from the west; and as he gazed, he saw in that law unsearchable doctrines, and dispensations not to be accounted for, and rules and regulations laid down but not explained; there was much which might be regarded as superfluous, much which man would have ordered otherwise; so, as he pondered, he marvelled; and then his heart grew at once humbled, yet elevated, by the mysterious web that was around him. Now, if it be true that wonder is closely connected with reverence, that in short the marvellous exerts in religion, as in other things, a great power over the soul of man, then we shall cease to be surprised that the Almighty has not spoken more clearly. Strip religion of whatever baffles the understanding, and you will have a system quite incapable of enlisting the heart in its cause. No deeds of high, unselfish heroism, such as those which have rendered everlastingly illustrious the names of apostles and confessors; no lives of self-denying exertion like those which adorn the annals of missionary enterprise will be produced by this religion of reason. "His Name shall be called Wonderful." By such title did the Hebrew prophet proclaim Him, around whose cradle all Christendom is about to gather. Wonderful in His nature, being both God and man; Wonderful in the ordinances of His kingdom; Wonderful in His continual presence with His people; Wonderful in the dispensations of His grace. Even, then, as Wonderful, let us bow down before Him; never seeking to rend, with unhallowed hand, the veil that is upon His face; never recoiling from His Word by reason of its marvellousness; never trying to bring Him down to us because we cannot rise up to Him. Yea, rather, in the wonderfulness of all that emanates from Him, let us recognize a propriety. Rightly viewed, the incomprehensibility of Christ is a bond to obedience. His statutes are wonderful, and therefore should our souls not resist, but keep them. (*Bp. Woodford.*) *The testimonies of God:—I. WHY ARE THE DIVINE LAWS HERE CALLED "TESTIMONIES"?* 1. Because they bear testimony to the goodness of God in condescending to guide men by His law. 2. Because they bear testimony to the holiness of God. 3. Because they bear testimony to the respect that God has for the happiness of His creatures. He has connected the highest pleasures with obedience. 4. Because they bear testimony to the wisdom and justice of God. They are adapted to the present imperfect state of man, going upon the principle, where little is given little will be required, and where much is given much will be required. *II. THE CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE TESTIMONIES. "THEY ARE WONDERFUL."* How? 1. In respect of the discoveries they make of God. Look to people without these testimonies. How ignorant of the Supreme! 2. In respect of the discoveries of God's providence. 3. In respect of the provision which the Scriptures discover for our repentance and pardon. 4. In respect of their universal application to us. 5. In respect of the assistance which they offer in the keeping of them. (1) A Divine Agent to strengthen, that is, the Holy Ghost. (2) Sublime motives to stimulate and encourage us. 6. In respect of their weight and importance. They determine the eternal conditions of men. *III. THE PRACTICAL REGARD WHICH A GOOD MAN HAS FOR THE DIVINE TESTIMONIES. "Therefore doth my soul keep them."* 1. As a precious treasure of knowledge. 2. As objects of affection and study. 3. As the rules—the guiding lights of my conduct. 4. As embodied in my daily life and practice. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *The admirable nature of the Divine oracles:—I. HIS PROFOUND ADMIRATION OF THE DIVINE ORACLES.* They are "wonderful" in their—1. Style and composition. (1) Wonderfully simple and plain. (2) Wonderfully grand and sublime. (3) Wonderfully concise and expressive. 2. Contents. (1) The most interesting records of facts. (2) The most astonishing displays of truth. (3) The most admirable and perfect rules of life. (4) The most animating promises. (5) The most tremendous threatenings. 3. Efficacy.

(1) Alarming the sinner. (2) Consoling the mourner. (3) Transforming the most degraded. (4) Supporting the believer through life and over death. II. THEIR PRACTICAL INFLUENCE. 1. He treasured them up in his memory. 2. He kept them in exercises of faith. 3. He held them in constant esteem, and embraced them with earnest affection. 4. He kept them in obedient practices. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The wonderful character of God's testimonies*:—1. They are wonderfully adapted to the purposes intended, and are fully adequate to all the wants and necessities of mankind. They are consonant to right reason, and adapted to promote our true interest; they confer upon us the highest benefits, and the loss of them would deprive us of the richest treasure. They secure the honour of God, and the rights of the creature. 2. They are wonderfully expressed; there is in them a mixture of the greatest majesty and simplicity. 3. They are wonderfully consistent and harmonious. The laws of men often militate one against another; but there is no discord or contrariety in the laws of God. They all bear the impress of infinite wisdom, purity and goodness. 4. They are wonderfully extensive. 5. They are wonderfully useful and important. 6. They have been wonderfully preserved. Conclusion: 1. If the Divine law be so wonderful, what must the Gospel be? (Ephes. iii. 1-10). 2. If the law and Gospel are so wonderful, what must their Author be? (Job xi. 7). 3. The reason why men treat the Divine law with contempt is because they are not acquainted with its excellence, and their eyes are not open to behold its dignity and glory (Hos. viii. 12). 4. If God's Word is so precious and important, let us manifest a suitable regard towards it. (B. Beddome, M.A.)

Ver. 130. **The entrance of Thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple.**—*The power of the Word*:—I. **THE ENTRANCE OF THE WORD.** 1. Generally "Thy Word," as used in the text, includes the whole of Divine revelation from its first announcement in Genesis of a Redeemer to the last vision of the Heavenly Sanctuary by the beloved John on the Isle of Patmos. 2. Specifically, the "entrance of Thy Word" is the gift of the Son of God (John i. 1-14). II. **THE EFFECT OF THE WORD.** 1. The Word gives us light doctrinally. (1) As to a satisfactory explanation of the world of nature and her laws. (2) As to the power and dignity of man. (3) As to the problem of evil. (4) As to the method of redemption. 2. The Word gives light practically as to the duty of nations and individuals. (1) By the ethical and judicial law which God's Word reveals. (2) By a better civilization which it ushers in under a new national spirit. 3. "The entrance of Thy Word" gives us light experimentally. (1) Reveals our moral condition, "dead in trespasses and sin." (2) As to our personal salvation and regeneration. Here we get the full light of God's promises. (3) As to Christian duties to God and our fellow-men. (A. A. Johnson, D.D.) *The light of God's Word*:—I. **THE LIGHT-GIVING QUALITY OF GOD'S WORD.** It is significant to find that the old saints found in the earlier revelation they received in the Old Testament precisely the same peerless power of holy illumination as we can testify to in the perfected message in Jesus Christ. There is nothing that more strikingly reveals the underlying unity and identity of the sacred Scriptures. The volume and momentum of the revelation have varied, but its essential power to quicken and enkindle the human soul has been steadfastly maintained from the first wonderful utterance of the Divine voice in its sacred pages. II. **THIS QUALITY FURNISHES A HIGH TEST OF ITS DIVINITY.** "The opening of Thy Word giveth light" means not only that God's Word gives light, but that this light divinely grows with the growing revelation or understanding of the Word. As the Word opens before the soul the Divine shines forth from it more clearly, and the glory of the present God becomes more wonderful. And the more we know of the Gospel of Christ, the more irresistibly Divine and beautiful will it prove itself to be. III. **THE WORD OF GOD IMPARTS THIS LIGHT BY THE DIVINEST MEANS.** The Word translated "giveth light" is the same Word which is used concerning God in ver. 135—"Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant." As His face shines upon us, He makes our hearts shine back upon Him and upon the world. He does not illuminate our path mechanically, but sets His light within us livingly. He does not use us as passive reflectors of His brightness, but as burning and shining lights. (J. Thomas, M.A.) *Revelation and conversion*:—Trees are known by their fruit, and books by their effect upon the mind. It is not the elegance of its diction but the excellence of its influence by which a book is to be estimated. I. **THE WORK OF THE WORD OF GOD IN CONVERSION.** Not apart from the Spirit,

but as it is used by the Spirit for divers ends, all needful to salvation. 1. To convince men of sin: they see what perfection is, that God demands it, and that they are far from it. 2. To drive men from false methods of seeking salvation, to bring them to self-despair, and to shut them up to God's method of saving them. 3. To reveal the way of salvation, by grace, through Christ, by faith. 4. To enable the soul to embrace Christ as its all in all. By setting forth promises and invitations, which are opened up to the understanding and sealed to the heart, etc. 5. To bring the heart nearer and nearer to God. Emotions of love, desires for holiness, devotion, self-searching, love to men, humility, etc.—these are all excited, sustained, and perfected in the heart by the Word of God. 6. To restore the soul when it has wandered. Renewing tenderness, hope, love, joy, etc., by its gentle reminders. 7. To perfect the nature. The highest flights of holy enjoyment are not above or beyond the Word. Nothing is purer or more elevated than Holy Scripture. The Word also slays all sin, promotes every virtue, prepares for every duty, etc.

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK DONE BY THE WORD. The operations of grace by the Word are altogether good and not evil; and they are timed and balanced with infinite discretion. The Word of the Lord works marvellously, perfectly, and surely. 1. It removes despair without quenching repentance. 2. Gives pardon, but does not create presumption. 3. Gives rest, but excites the soul to progress. 4. Breathes security, but engenders watchfulness. 5. Bestows strength and holiness, but begets no boasting. 6. Gives harmony to duties, emotions, hopes, and enjoyments. 7. Brings the man to live for God, before God, and with God; and yet makes him none the less fitted for the daily duties of life.

III. THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD. 1. We need not add to it if we would secure conversion in any special case, or on the largest scale. 2. We need not keep back any doctrine for fear of damping the flame of a true revival. 3. We need not extraordinary gifts with which to preach it: the Word will do its own work. 4. We have but to follow the Word to be converted. It fits a man's needs as a key fits a lock. 5. We have but to keep to it to become truly wise: wise as the aged, wise as necessity requires, wise as the age, wise as eternity demands, wise with the wisdom of Christ. (1) Cling to the Scripture. (2) Study the whole revelation of God. (3) Use it as your chief instrument in all holy service. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The light of truth:—I. THE WORDS OF GOD ARE A LIGHT. No effect can rise higher than its cause, and nothing can impart what it does not possess; that which gives light on its entrance into the human heart, must be light, or at least have the property of communicating light. The sun in the firmament diffuses its beams, but has no power of giving sight: a man who is born blind, or who has lost the faculty of seeing, is strictly in darkness, notwithstanding the existence of day. In like manner, the holy Scriptures are a light from Heaven; they spread the most essential knowledge, and are adapted to produce the most beneficial effects; but multitudes are not savingly benefited by them: their minds are still dark, and their hearts remain impenitent and unholy. II. SOMETHING HINDERS THE ADMISSION OF THIS LIGHT INTO THE HEART. 1. Principally it is sin; the love of sin: these are opposed to every dictate of heavenly truth, and counteract its salutary effects. 2. The influence of the world. 3. Unbelief. 4. Prejudice. III. THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE REMOVED. By whom and in what way is this change produced? "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." The Spirit applies the truth with almighty energy. By His agency the Word becomes effectual in them that believe, so that every obstacle is removed, every barrier subdued. IV. WHEN OBSTACLES ARE REMOVED, AND THE WORD OF TRUTH ENTERS, THE MOST BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ARE PRODUCED. 1. The right knowledge of ourselves. 2. The true knowledge of God. 3. The knowledge of Jesus Christ. 4. The way of salvation by the Cross of Christ is learnt. 5. It discovers to us the snares and dangers of the wilderness through which we pass; it informs us of the enemies we have to encounter, and the numerous evils to which we are exposed. 6. Its entrance in the heart helps us to form a just estimate of earthly things: it detects the emptiness and vanity of the present world, and all its concerns, and makes us acquainted with what is infinitely better—heavenly and eternal good. (T. Kidd.)

Value of God's Word:—I. A GREAT BLESSING. 1. Light is the chief means of knowledge. 2. Another effect of light is cheerfulness (Eccles. xi. 7). 3. Light is productive of healthy growth. II. THE MEANS OF ITS COMMUNICATION. What is the psalmist's idea? Is it the glory of the daybreak—the "opening" of the

earth, and air, and sky by the beams of the rising sun? Or the "opening" as of the seed-sprout, or the bud that unfolds its mysterious and beautiful pleats to the light of day? "The opening of Thy words," i. e. the hearing them and getting at their secret meaning, the blessed messages of love, of pardon, peace. Where are these "words" of God? All around us in His works and ways! (J. E. Flower, M.A.) *God's truth clear and simple*:—The powerlessness of philosophy consists in the fact that it is profound and obscure; the strength of Christianity that it is profound and clear. One of the most illustrious German thinkers said on his death-bed, "I carry one regret with me to the grave, that of having been understood by but one man in the world; and he has only half understood me." A system like that was not destined to live, and Hegelianism is already dead. But Jesus Christ made every truth to shine, and herein consisted His greatness. *The Scriptures for the common people*:—A priest observing to William Tyndale, "We are better without God's law than the Pope's," "I defy the Pope and all his laws," Tyndale replied; and added, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause the boy which driveth the plough to know more of Scripture than you do." (*Quarterly Review*.)

Vers. 131-133. **I opened my mouth, and parted, for I longed for Thy commandments.**—*Holy longings*:—Here we have David desiring, praying, pleading, and setting forth very clearly what he pants after. May you and I have the same burning desires; and at the same time may we clearly know what we are panting for, so that we may the more intelligently pursue it, and thus go the nearer way to obtain it! **I. LONGING ARDENTLY AFTER HOLINESS** (ver. 131). 1. The man of God longeth after the Lord's commandments. Many religious people long after the promises, and they do well; but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments. 2. The psalmist, having told us what he longed for, shows the strength of those desires; for he had been so eager in his pursuit of holiness that he had lost his breath. Are you ready to faint? Underneath are the everlasting arms. 3. See how resolved he was. Even though you open your mouth and pant with weariness, yet keep your face set like a flint towards holiness, and let your case be that of one who is "faint, yet pursuing." 4. Note that the follower after holiness seeks renewed strength. Why does he open his mouth and pant? Is it not to get more air, to fill his lungs again, to cool his blood, and to be ready to renew his running? 5. He was dissatisfied with his attainments. His opened mouth and panting heart betoken desires which are not as yet fulfilled. 6. Yet, let no tinge of discouragement mingle with your dissatisfaction: this man is hopeful of better things. He opens his mouth because he looks for something to fill it; he pants because he believes in water-brooks which will relieve his thirst. **II. PLEADING FERVENTLY FOR THE HOLINESS HE DESIRED** (ver. 132). 1. He believes in God's power to bless him, and hence he turns to Him, and cries, "Look Thou upon me." Great sinners may be grateful for a look, for it is more than they deserve. Great saints may rejoice in a look; for it means much when the eye which looks is the eye of Omnipotent Love. 2. He appeals to mercy. 3. He pleads as one who loves God. 4. He employs the grand plea of use and wont. 5. He joyfully accepts God's method. We kiss the rod, because the Father who uses it designs to kiss us. We assent to the processes of grace that we may enjoy the results of grace. It may so happen that if God sanctifies you, He may have to grind you very small: cheerfully yield yourself to the mill. If this is the way in which He deals with those that love His Name, do not desire any different treatment. **III. ENLARGING INTELLIGENTLY UPON THE FAVOUR HE SEEKS** (ver. 133). 1. Now, let us see how the psalmist puts it. His cry is for holiness, and he describes it as being ruled by the Word of God. "Order my steps in Thy Word." The different sects have differing ideas of holiness, but the reality of holiness is only one. It is this—"Order my steps in Thy Word." 2. He would have holiness in every step of his life. 3. He would have every step ordered. We can never attain to the right proportion of the virtues unless the Lord Himself arranges them in order for us. Do not tell me it is easy to be holy; you want not only the different graces, but all these in order due and measure fit. O Lord, help us! Order our steps. 4. He would have every step full of God: he would have each one ordered of the Lord. He would receive his strength, his motives, his guiding influences direct from the Lord. 5. He would be wholly delivered from the tyranny of sin. "Let not any iniquity," etc. I fear that many professors have never understood this prayer. One man is a

splendid man for a prayer-meeting, a fine man for a Bible-class; but at home he is a tyrant to his wife and children. Is not this a great evil under the sun? Another man is stern and honest, and he inveighs with all his might against every form of evil, but he is hard even to cruelty with all who are in his power. One is generous and fervent, but he likes a sly drop; another is good-natured and pleasant, but he puts it on in his bills at times, and his customers do not find the goods quite of the quality they pay for. Beware of pet sins. If you let a golden god rule you, you will perish as well as if you let a mud god rule you. Be this your constant cry—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." (O. H. Spurgeon.) *The satisfying power of Divine things*:—These words may be considered as expressing the very earnest longing of the psalmist for greater acquaintance with God in spiritual things; and then, in saying, "I opened my mouth, and panted," he merely asserts the vehemence of his desire. Or you may separate the clauses: you may regard the first as the utterance of a man utterly dissatisfied with the earth and earthly things, and the second as the expression of a consciousness that God, and God only, could meet the longings of his soul. "I opened my mouth, and panted." "Out of breath with chasing shadows, and hunting after baubles, I sit down exhausted, as far off as ever from the happiness which has been earnestly but fruitlessly sought. Whither, then, shall I turn? Thy commandments, O Lord, and these alone, can satisfy the desires of an immortal being like myself; and on these, therefore, henceforward shall my longings be turned." We shall regard the passage under this latter point of view. I. **THE INSUFFICIENCY OF CREATED THINGS TO SUPPLY THE WANTS OF THE SOUL.** Let the soul be set to the survey of any created good, and however enamoured of that good, its decision will be that its limits are discernible; and in making this decision its own capacities, unconsciously, it may be, but not the less surely, will enlarge so as to be greater than the good, and thus make hopeless the attempt at filling them therewith. The soul, in fact, grows with what it receives; and unless the horizon of a good be like the natural horizon, which recedes as fast as you approach, the soul will quickly pass the boundary line, and present again a void which craves to be filled. But this can be affirmed of no good save the Almighty Himself. God is that alone perfection of which I can see no end; with all others, the higher I ascend the more conscious am I that the horizon has a shore, however distant, and with the greater elasticity does my spirit spread itself, so as to embrace the expanse of wonders; but with God, the loftier my point of survey, the firmer my persuasion that the ocean is without a shore. II. **THE POWER THERE IS IN GOD'S COMMANDMENTS OF FILLING OUR CAPACITY FOR ENJOYMENT.** We suppose that, had it been left with ourselves to draw the comparison, we should not have represented this man, who was exhausted by a fruitless search after happiness, as longing after the commandments of God. We should have been inclined to fix on the favour of God, or on the joys which He communicates to His people, rather than, with David in our text, on His commandments, as affording that material of satisfaction which is so vainly sought in any earthly good. But let the matter be carefully examined, and we shall find that it is strictly for the commandment that the wearied soul ought to long. The whole law of God is summed up in one commandment, the commandment of love; but in what does man's happiness lie, if not in obedience to this commandment? We deny the possibility of satisfaction of soul, so long as there is nothing of reunion with God. The human soul has been torn away from God, and all that restlessness which it manifests, until again linked into friendship, is an irrepressible evidence of the disruption. In its ceaseless but unavailing endeavours to find a resting-place in finite good, there is an ever-powerful testimony that it has fatally wandered from its home; its fruitless searchings after happiness in the creature are the melancholy evidences of alienation from the Creator. Indeed, fraught as the soul is with the consciousness of immortality—a consciousness which, however for awhile overborne by the tumult of passion, starts up frequently in every man, and forces itself on his attention, it is not possible that there should be aught but disquietude, so long as there is no sense of being at peace with the Almighty. And thus, even if you consider not the peculiar nature of God's commandments, there would be enough in the fact that they are God's commandments, and therefore to be obeyed, if we would not be everlastingly and unutterably wretched, to certify us that in God's commandments must happiness be sought, and that therefore those commandments must be longed for by any one who has exhausted himself in a search after good. But we must go beyond this. We must give heed to the fact that the command-

ments are summed up in love. Think of a man who knew nothing of envy, who was altogether free from jealousy, nay, who had not only purged himself from those corroding passions, but who had so identified the interests of others with his own, that he felt what befell them as befalling himself; and this would be the man who would obey the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And can you imagine a happier individual? Can you ever take the measure of his happiness? But the love of man is not all which the commandments require; they require love of God; and this makes them adequate to our every capacity; for it is certain, first of all, that ere I can love God I must know myself reconciled to God. In loving God we throw from us the burden which, if unmoved, must press us down everlastingly into the depths of wretchedness; and we take hold of immortality, as purchased for us, and prepared, and reserved. We turn this earth, from a scene of jarring passions and petty rivalries, into one broad stage upon which to labour for the extension of the kingdom of Christ. We concentrate our affections on objects whose contemplation enlarges the soul, whilst their boundaries are unapproached by the mightiest expansion. If I love God I shall be continually travelling on His perfections, and continually discerning that I am as far off as ever from their limits. I shall be continually stretching the soul, that it may enclose what is Divine, and continually finding that what is Divine is too vast to be thus circumscribed. And therefore the command that I love God, oh! it is a command that I develop the immortality of the soul; that I employ my desires till they are as broad as my duration; that I prove myself too capacious for creation. Earth, and moon, and sun, and stars! He who made you all can alone occupy that spirit which, with this narrow framework of flesh as its centre, spreads its circumference wheresoever ye travel in your glorious wanderings. And if such be God's commandments, we may well set these commandments in contrast with every good from which those who are yet strangers to God would gather their happiness; and I can no longer wonder that a man worn out by the pursuit of earthly things, so that he exclaimed, "I opened my mouth, and panted," should turn to the law of the Most High as alone adequate to his capacities, and break into the utterance, "I longed for Thy commandments, O Lord." (H. Melvill, B.D.)

Vers. 132-135. **Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me.**—*Prayer for mercies vouchsafed to the good.*—I. DIRECTION IN THE RIGHT WAY. We are all travellers on an unknown road, and we want direction. Order my footsteps. II. DEFENCE AGAINST OUR FOES. The dominion of evil is the greatest curse. There is a danger of having this dominion established. God alone can prevent it. III. DELIVERANCE AGAINST MALIGNANT FOES. Man oppresses man everywhere. Who but God can deliver from the oppression under which humanity groans? IV. THE FAVOUR OF ALMIGHTY GOD (ver. 135). God's approval is man's heaven. (Homilist.) *A page from a royal diary.*—I. DAVID'S BRIEF PETITION. "Look Thou upon me." 1. His own eyes had failed him (ver. 123). 2. Man's eye had misjudged him (ver. 134). 3. He knew that God's eye perceives what His servant needs. 4. He leaves all with God. 5. God's look will be a sign of Divine favour. 6. God's look would prepare him for future obedience. II. DAVID'S HUMBLE CONFESSION. "Be merciful unto me." 1. His prayer grew out of this confession. 2. By this petition he evidently sought forgiveness. 3. Upon this ground alone he sought for the blessing he desired. III. DAVID'S TACIT PROFESSION. "As Thou usest to do," etc. David hardly dares to say that he does love God's Name, but he does practically say it by praying that God will treat him as He treats those who do love His Name. Some of those who love God best are not the loudest in proclaiming their love. The true child of God does love His Lord's Name. This includes—1. The person of God. 2. The character of God. 3. God's revelation. 4. The glory of God. IV. DAVID'S GRACIOUS ASPIRATION. 1. He would be dealt with as saints have always been dealt with. Well, you know what He used to do to those who loved His Name; He used to come and visit them. For instance, there were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These all had visits from the Lord, as did Moses, when God was in the burning bush. God not only used to visit those who loved His Name, but He used to instruct them. What teachings they had from Him! What revelations and manifestations of Himself! Lord, teach me as Thou usest to teach those who loved Thy Name! How patient also He was with them! They had many faults and failings, and they grieved His Holy Spirit; but He forgave them, and went on teaching them;

and when they fell and wandered from Him, He restored them, and brought them back again. Then you know the Lord was always faithful to those who loved His Name. When He made them a promise, He always kept it. But notice this also, the Lord used to whip them when they needed it; those who loved His Name were chastened. Asaph said, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Well, suppose you should have the same treatment, you can thank God that He is doing to you as He used to do to those who loved His Name. 2. I think also that, when using these words, David meant that he was quite willing that God should deal with him in His usual way, in His regular order. He did not want to have some special railway thrown up for him, in which he could ride first-class to glory; but he was willing to go the old way, the way the holy prophets went, and the saints, and martyrs, and confessors of God; that is to say, he did not want salvation without holiness, he did not want justification without sanctification, he did not want pardon without regeneration. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Fellowship with the righteous*.—I. THERE ARE SOME WHO LOVE GOD'S NAME. His Name means His perfections, His nature, His being, Himself; and they who love His Name mean those who love Himself. II. HIS MERCY IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THE GOODNESS THEY EXPERIENCE. III. THE LORD HAS BEEN ALWAYS ACCUSTOMED TO DEAL MERCIFULLY WITH THEM. He was merciful to them when He frowned, as well as when He smiled; when He denied, as well as when He indulged; when He took away, as well as when He gave. What use ought we to make of this? IV. HIS MERCY TOWARDS THEM SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO IMPORE MERCY FOR OURSELVES. Beggars naturally love to go to a door where others have been successful, especially where none have ever been sent empty away. This, indeed, is never the case among men. No earthly benefactor, however disposed, can afford universal relief. But we have everything to inspire our application at "a throne of grace." In what He has done through every age, we see His resources and His bounty. And we know that He is unchangeably the same. V. WE SHOULD BE ANXIOUS TO SECURE THE MERCY THAT IS PECULIAR TO THEM; and not be satisfied with His common kindness. VI. WE SHOULD BE CONTENT IF GOD DEALS WITH US AS HE HAS ALWAYS DEALT WITH HIS PEOPLE. While he could not be satisfied with anything less than their portion, David asks for nothing better; he implores no singular dispensation in his favour, no deviation from the accustomed methods of His grace. (W. Jay.) *The plea of use and wont*.—The psalmist employs the great plea of use and wont; for, says he, "As Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name." Use and wont generally have great weight in a court of law. A friend said to me, "How will such a suit go? The case has never been before a court until now." I answered, "Are you sure that what was done is according to universal and long-established custom? for, if so, though there be no law, the custom of the trade will stand." Custom among men reaching far back holds good in court; how much shall the custom of the eternally unchanging God decide His future acts? The psalmist pleads the Lord's own custom; and this is a grand plea with him, because He is unchanging. If you think it a good plea, urge it at the throne. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 123. Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—*Ordered steps*.—I. COMPLETE SUBSERVIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD. 1. "Order." He is a man who wishes to be under orders, he is willing to obey the Lord's commands, and he is anxious to receive them, and to be made to carry them out. 2. "Order my steps in Thy Word." Once we lived without any order, or plan, or method; but the grace of God makes us methodists in the highest possible sense. It makes us live according to God's method; and our prayer is, that we may never be disorderly, but that in all things, just as the universe is arranged by God, and all the stars keep their appointed courses, so we may be made to take our proper places, and may be kept in them, joyfully obedient to the will of the Most High. 3. "In Thy Word." He was perfectly satisfied with God's revelation; he had not so much of it as we have, but there was room enough in it for all his steps. He wanted no greater liberty than the Bible gave him. II. CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS. 1. He does not say merely, "Order my life," but, "Order my steps." Godly men desire to be kept right by God even in the little things of life. 2. That prayer means, "Order my ordinary daily life." Do not many think that religion is only something for Sundays? 3. Let us especially pray about all our advances. It is by steps that we go forward. III. COMPREHENSIVE OBEDIENCE. It has two clauses, the positive and the

negative. "Order my steps in Thy Word;" that is, "Lord, make me positively to do the right thing!" Then, "let not any iniquity have dominion over me"; that is, "Lord, preserve me from any thought, or word, or deed which would be contrary to Thy mind and will!" He is the right sort of believer who is an all-round Christian, one who is positive for doing the right, but who is equally determined not to do the wrong. IV. CAUTIOUS APPREHENSIVENESS. He means, "Lord, I am afraid to take a single step without Thine orders, I am afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should go wrong!" "Happy is the man that feareth alway." He that was too bold was never too wise. He that leaped before he looked, looked very sadly after he had leaped. He shall go right who knows where he is going, is careful about the road, and afraid lest he should go astray. He is the man who prays, "Order my steps in Thy Word." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A soul conscious of its dependence on God:—I. FOR GUIDANCE.* "Order my steps." The human spirit is destined to move on and on for ever. It needs a guide; it cannot guide itself, nor can any finite creature do so. 1. There is but one safe Guide. If He "order" our "steps," two evils will be avoided. (1) Moral stumblings. Souls are everywhere stumbling on the path of life, they fall, and often receive fatal injuries, "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." The other evil avoided will be—(2) Unhappy destination. The path of life, whilst it may have no real end, but run on through ages interminable, has one awful crisis that decides the ultimate fate of the traveller, and that crisis is death. 2. If He order the steps of the soul, the crisis will be the constant brightening and beautifying of the path. II. FOR EMANCIPATION. "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." 1. This is the worst of despotisms. (1) It is the most criminal. There are despotisms social and political that are calamities, not crimes: the poor victim cannot avoid them. Not so the despotism of sin. A despotism which, in the first place, he never ought to have allowed; but having allowed, he should break away from and become heroic and free. (2) It is the most powerful. A man might become such a victim of worldly despotism as to be imprisoned in a dungeon and cut off from all fellowship with living men. Still his soul may be free. Paul and Silas. But sin manacles the soul, shuts out its light, and binds its faculties in chains mightier than adamant. (3) It is the most enduring. Death will put an end to all worldly despotisms; in the grave the slave is free from his tyrant. But death has no power to put an end to this slavery of the soul. 2. This is the most prevalent of despotisms—co-extensive with the world of unregenerate humanity. (Homilist.) *A well-ordered life:—*This is not the prayer of an unconverted man, or the cry of an awakened sinner thinking to find salvation in good works; it is the prayer of one who is saved, and who knows it. Note each word of the text. "Order." David looking abroad saw order ruling everywhere; he would have his life in harmony with the universe. "My steps:" he is anxious as to details. He would have each single step ordered in holiness. "In Thy Word." Not by Thy Word, nor according to Thy Word. The sentence means that, but it means far more. Not by Thy Word, as though it were a law hanging up upon the columns in the market-place; but in, as though it were engraven in my heart and encompassed all my ways. "And let not any iniquity," etc. This expression is weaker than the first, pitched upon a lower key: as if he would say, "If, O Lord, my steps cannot be so ordered as that I shall be altogether without sin, yet let not any iniquity gain the mastery of my spirit. O, my Lord, suffer no iniquity to sit down on the throne of my heart and make me its serf and vassal." But now, keeping to the first sentence only, we note—I. THAT A HOLY LIFE IS A MASTERPIECE OF ORDER. Holiness rejoices in symmetry, proportion, harmony, order. That—1. Of conformity to rule. We have the rule given us in living characters in the incarnate Word. I fear me there are hundreds of Christians who do not scruple to do things without once pausing to use the plumb-line of Christ's example to see whether their actions are upright. But the truly Christian heart will ever seek to proceed according to the Divine mind. 2. That which is arithmetical. Things are never in order when the second is before the first, and order in life consists very much in seeking first the kingdom of God. Oh, it is well with the Christian when he has learned his notation table well, and gives the first thing the first place. 3. That which is geometrical. There should be progress in Christian life, and if the advance be by a constant multiple, how greatly will a man increase. He who did a little for Christ when but a babe in grace should do more as a young man, and most of all as a father. 4. The order proportional. All Christians should endeavour so to balance their

lives that there shall not be an excess of one virtue and a deficiency in another. Courage some will have till they are rude. Modesty in others will sink into cowardice. It is only in the life of Jesus that you see this order most of all: it shall perplex you to discover what virtues shine with purest radiance. 5. That of relation. We stand not alone; we are all the centres of circles, and innumerable lines intersect each other in the region of our hearts. Now, we should seek for right relationship with God and with all men and things: with the Church and our own families. 6. There is an order of period: the order of the celestial Almanack: duties done at due time. Holiness consists not in the rushing of intense resolve, which, like Kishen, sweeps everything before it, and then subsides, but in the constant flow of Silvah's still waters, which perpetually make glad the city of God. The tree that God commendeth bringeth forth its fruit in its season. It is the fault of numbers that their virtues are always too late. 7. The order of suitability. What would be right enough for one man is not so for another. What is suitable to the worldling is not the measure of the Christian's service. "What do ye more than others?" is a very pertinent question to all of us.

II. THE RULE OF THIS ORDER. "In Thy Word," not according to my wishes, which would be mere self-will. Nor according to profit of this world: nor according to the rule of pleasure: nor according to impressions, but "in Thy Word."

III. THE DIRECTOR whom David had chosen. God Himself. Much will depend upon the model that a man takes, and the captain under whom a man serves. A commanding officer, last week at Aldershot, was obeyed by his soldiers with that prompt discipline which is peculiar to the British soldier; but through some mistake he managed to dash together two parties of dragoons, so that one or two were injured and one man killed outright. When God orders us no harm can come then. David's prayer is for a loving heart, an illumined mind, guidance of the Spirit, to have the love of holiness; to be not tempted above what he is able—this prayer means all these things. Christians, seek holiness would you extend the Church's power; would you enjoy peace in your own souls. And you whose steps are not ordered in God's words—some of you are halting. Decide now. Others of you are hypocrites. How will you bear the judgment of God? Trust in Jesus now. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The gate to the drill-ground*:—I. THE PSALMIST RECOGNIZES AND ACCEPTS HIS OBLIGATION TO BE SUBJECT TO MORAL ORDER. He prays that his daily life, not only in its large outlines, but in its details, its "steps," may be ordered. We need a rule of life, and we need also to become established in a habit of loyalty to that rule. The prayer, "Order my steps," is a prayer for habitual subjection to Divine order. A religion which does not regulate a man's life is no religion at all. It contradicts its own name; for, according to its derivation, religion is something which binds together God and man, and therefore puts the whole of man's life in contact with God. All spiritual influences, however high they are lodged, gravitate inevitably to men's ordinary level of life. "As he thinketh in his heart so is he." II. THE PSALMIST RECOGNIZES THE SOURCE AND CENTRE OF ALL MORAL ORDER. God is its centre and God's Word its manual, and to God he addresses himself in prayer that he may be drawn and kept within the sphere of His heavenly order. The Bible brings to bear upon a man a variety of influences, all tending to the ordering of his steps.

1. It centres him. Whatever the Bible is, it is, first of all, a revelation of God. It keeps God before him continually. All its own movement centres in God, all its sanctions are God's. There is no detail but is referred to God. There is no escape from God. 2. It regulates him. The statutes of the Lord are right, and are meant, as some one has quaintly said, "to set us to rights." It does not make itself superfluous. It does not bring man into the sphere of God's order, and leave him there, but it leads him along in that order, ordering every step until he steps from earth to heaven. 3. It restrains him. There is no order without restraint. Restraint is implied in guidance. Yonder planet which fulfils its appointed course in its orbit, and century by century traverses the same unvarying track, moves, indeed, under a power which propels it from the centre, but it moves also under a power which holds it to the centre. And nothing in the Bible is more striking than this union of impulse and restraint. 4. It establishes him. The Bible brings the element of fixedness more and more into our lives.

III. Having acknowledged the obligation to be under moral order, having recognized the source and centre of that order, having prayed that he might be introduced to that Divine order and kept in it, the psalmist naturally prays to be delivered from the consequence of moral lawlessness: and that consequence is

expressed in a word—**SURRENDER**. In his prayer that iniquity may not have dominion over him, he utters the truth that sin is servitude; the truth which Paul expressed in (Rom. vi. 16). (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Life a series of steps*:—He who travels over a continent must go inch by inch. He who writes a book must do it sentence by sentence. Life is made up of little things—little courtesies, little kindnesses, pleasant words, genial smiles, a friendly letter, good wishes, and good deeds. One in a million, once in a lifetime, may do an heroic action. But the little things that make up our life come every day and every hour. If we make the little events of life beautiful and good, then is the whole full of beauty and goodness. (*Christian Weekly.*) *The Bible a chart*:—The Bible is a chart. It teaches men how to steer where the sandbank of temptation is, where that rock of danger is, where that whirling vortex of passion is. The Bible is a chart of salvation; and if a man only knows his course by this, he will go through life with all its storms and come safely into the port of heaven. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Symmetry in Christian character*:—Some men's lives are out of perspective. Do you remember Hogarth's caricature of a picture without perspective, wherein a man appears to be fishing in a river, but is really standing far away from it; a sparrow in a tree looks like a huge eagle, and a man on the top of a hill is borrowing a light from a candle held out of the window of a house down below on the other side of a river. Without perspective good drawing is impossible, and without proportion a complete life is impossible. A man may be, in many points, a good man, and yet he may have so much of one virtue that it may become a vice, and he may have so little of another virtue that it may be a grave defect. We can never attain to the right proportion of the virtues unless the Lord Himself arranges them in order for us. O Lord, help us. Order our steps. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 135. Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; and teach me Thy statutes.—*Christian obedience and support*:—I. **THE CHARACTER OF THE PETITIONER.** The true servant of God is distinguished by—1. Renunciation of the service of sin. 2. A rational and deliberate choice of that service in which he is invited to engage. 3. An entire devotedness to the Lord's service. 4. All the activities of Christian obedience. (1) Sincere. (2) Cheerful. (3) Universal. (4) Persevering. II. **THE IMPORT OF THE PETITIONS.** 1. "Cause Thy face to shine upon me." He here prays for—(1) Increasing discoveries of the Divine glory. Unsearchable wisdom, almighty power, unchangeable love, invariable truth. (2) The enjoyment of the Divine favour. 2. "Teach me Thy statutes." This implies—(1) A fervent desire for an increasing knowledge of the important truths. (2) A supplication for growing experience of its sanctifying power and rich consolations. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Ver. 136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.—*The wail of the good over the sins of the world*:—I. They are the tears of **ORDER**. Discord in sound is a cause of distress to a soul highly attuned to melody. But moral disorder is far more distressing to the soul of the truly spiritual, loyal and good. It is impossible for a man who has been brought into harmony with the eternal will of God and the order of the universe not to be distressed beyond measure at the pandemoniums that sin has created. II. They are the tears of **PHILANTHROPY**. It is the nature of love to desire the happiness of its object and to grieve over its misery. Its heart desire and prayer to God is, that it may be saved. But sin plays sad havoc with men, involves them in miseries, and sinks them to hells. In a world of misery a genuine philanthropist cannot therefore but shed "rivers of tears." III. They are the tears of **PIETY**. What can be more distressing to a man than to see the object of his strongest affections insulted, misrepresented, wounded, and bitterly opposed? This is what sinners do in relation to God; they transgress His precepts, they rebel against His authority, they aim to thwart His plans and wound His heart. What can piety do, therefore, but shed rivers of tears? (*Homilist.*) *Glorious tears*:—I. The tears of a **PATRIOT**. He knew that those who obeyed not the laws of God were pernicious citizens and would endanger the commonwealth. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," but righteousness is obedience to eternal laws. II. The tears of a **PHILANTHROPIST**. He knew that those who transgressed the Divine laws sinned against their own souls and endangered their own interest. He knew that all the sorrows and miseries sprang from disobedience. III. The tears of a

RELIGIONIST. He loved the great God, and he was grieved to hear His Name profaned, His precepts violated, and His authority contemned. (*Ibid.*) *Grief for the sins of men*.—If we mourn for sin truly, it will excite our grief wheresoever and by whomsoever it is committed. But, like all our sympathies, it will be excited more powerfully by the sins of those with whom we are more intimately connected, and by such of them as come more immediately within the sphere of our own observation. We are to mourn more especially, though not exclusively, for the sins of our own land, of the city in which we dwell, of the Church with which we are in immediate fellowship, of the congregation of which we are members, and of our own families. I. **TRACE THESE RIVERS OF GRIEF TO THEIR SPRINGS.** 1. Grief for the sins of men springs from love to God. Sin is a violation of the authority of God, and an offence to the essential purity of His nature. It insults His majesty, and reflects dishonour (so far as a created act can do) upon all His attributes. 2. It springs from love to the law of God. Christians must reckon every sin as a violation of that law which the Son of God hath magnified, and made honourable, and vindicated by His obedience in our nature and in our stead. And God, by the agony and death of His Son, has stamped sin with the broad and burning brand of His hatred. 3. It springs from love to the sinner. 4. There are personal feelings which stir this grief and enter into its composition. When we see a person in distress, it frequently reminds us that we were once afflicted in the same or a similar way—a recollection which strengthens our sympathy, if it is not the spring from which it directly flows. In like manner the saint is made to recollect his former sins, and his grief for them mingles with that which he feels for the present sins of others. II. **THE LEADING QUALITIES OF THIS GRIEF.** 1. It is genuine. (1) This is evinced by its impartiality. The sincere mourner is grieved for the sins of friends as well as of enemies,—of those of his own religious connection as well as those of other denominations,—for the sins of his own family as well as those of his neighbours; nay, he is more sensibly affected with the dishonours done to God by those who are most intimately connected with him—"the provoking of sons and daughters." He is grieved for all sin. (2) The genuineness of these tears is evinced by the ease with which they flow. Take a person of tender feelings to a scene of distress, and the tear will instantly start to his eye on beholding it. The mere sight of sin draws forth the sorrow of a godly man. 2. This grief is generous and seemingly. Such tears become Christian men—men of stature and valour; for, as one has expressed it, "it is the truest magnanimity to be sensible on the point of God's honour, which is injured by sin." 3. This grief varies, especially in its expression, in different persons, and in the same person at different times. This is common to it with other gracious dispositions in the hearts of men who are but partially sanctified, and whose exercise, in this their sublunary state, resembles the tide which ebbs and flows according to the varying influence of the moon. 4. This grief is habitual. David in the text does not say, rivers ran, but run. Paul could call God to witness that he "had great sorrow and continual heaviness in his heart" for his unbelieving and impenitent countrymen. As long as Christians are in this world they will have reason for this feeling. 5. This grief is influential and profitable. It may be useful to others; it will be useful to ourselves. "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." (*T. McCrie, D.D.*) *Christian grief because of transgressors*.—I. **THE DISHONOUR DONE TO GOD BY THE VIOLATION OF HIS LAW.** If a man of warm loyalty were living amongst traitors, it would wound him to the quick to hear the king whom he honoured continually reviled. If a man of warm friendship were with the enemies of the object of his love, it would surely grieve him to observe how this friend was hated and despised. And what are such feelings, in comparison with those which should arise in the man of real piety, when he beholds on all sides denial of God and defiance of His laws? What loyalty is comparable to his, seeing that the principle takes its greatness from the greatness of the object, and that it is to none other than the Lord of heaven and earth that he has given his allegiance? What friendship is comparable to His? II. **THE RUIN WHICH TRANSGRESSORS ARE BRINGING ON THEMSELVES.** The man who, like the psalmist, believes implicitly the Word of God and is thoroughly persuaded that all its threatenings will be executed. It is with him no matter of conjecture or speculation whether a life of wickedness will terminate in an eternity of misery. And who are these victims of Divine justice? Are they not his fellow-men, his brethren after the flesh, those for whom he would bitterly sorrow if he knew them exposed to some great temporal calamity?

Shall he, then, be unmoved by their everlasting wretchedness? III. THE INJURY WHICH THEY ARE CAUSING TO OTHERS. It is said by the psalmist, in regard of God's commandments—"In keeping of them there is great reward." The reward is present as well as prospective. It is no small part of this reward, that such is the nature of God's commandments, and such the intimate and indissoluble connection between obedience and happiness, that in proportion as the commandments are kept, the worst forms of evil are banished, and the best of good introduced. Shall it not, then, be with a genuine and deep sorrow that the righteous man, eager for a period of universal happiness, beholds the transgressors who are deferring that period, and prolonging the reign of confusion and misery? Who will say that his grief would be excessive, greater than the occasion warranted, if he were to weep over men's sins with such a weeping as that of the psalmist? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christian compassion essential to Christian effort*.—I. THE OCCASION OF CHRISTIAN COMPASSION. II. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN COMPASSION. 1. It is distinguished by its Divine original. It is a creation of God in the soul. 2. It is distinguished by its depth and intensity. 3. It is characterized by its powerful practical influence. (1) Prayer. (2) Personal exertion. (*T. Brookes.*) *The concern of the righteous for evil-doers*.—I. BECAUSE THEY OFFEND AND SIN AGAINST GOD'S LAW. Before we can experience anything of this jealousy for God and His Word, we must, like David, learn to know Him, not merely on the report of others, but by our own experience; not merely to have heard His Word, or read it, but to have felt it, and partaken of it, and enjoyed it. II. ON ACCOUNT OF THE HAPPINESS AND PEACE SINNERS SACRIFICE BY NOT KEEPING GOD'S LAW. 1. Oh, what an amount of present blessings do men lose by not keeping God's law! What joy in believing, what comfort of the Holy Ghost, what deep, genuine, abiding, solid peace! 2. Such are the present blessings which the believer enjoys; but who can describe those which are laid up for him at God's right hand for evermore? III. ON ACCOUNT OF THE SORROWS AND MISERIES WHICH THEY BRING DOWN UPON THEMSELVES. IV. ON ACCOUNT OF THE AGGRAVATED GUILT UNDER WHICH THEY PERISH. Oh, what reason have we to weep over those whom we daily see putting off Christ for something they like better than Christ! (*N. Ashby.*) *Saved by a tear*.—A man had gained great notoriety through his profligate habits. His wife urged him one evening to remain at home, and not to go to the saloon. He became angry, and went out of the house, leading his little girl by the hand. The child, knowing how much the mother suffered, begged the father not to go to the saloon that night. He took her up in his arms, and on putting his face close to hers his cheek was wetted by a tear. He said, in telling his experience some time afterwards: "My anger completely melted away. I determined to go back home and make my wife happy." If he had fought against the influence of that tear, it might have been his destruction. Certainly it was a manly thing to surrender to the tear of love. Cease to oppose God, and with angry words to fight against the influence of friends who would save you from ruin. (*Sunday Circle.*) *Won by tears*.—One time I was preaching in Chicago, and when I gave out the invitation a man stood up. He was an enormous fellow, weighing twenty-two stone, and I thought to myself, "You have caught a magnificent specimen to-night." After the meeting was over I went down and sat behind him and talked to him. He said: "Let me tell you how I came to take Christ to-day. I have been a church-goer all my life, but I only went to criticize, and when men got up in the prayer-meeting to talk I took out a little notebook which I kept, and wrote down what they said, and afterwards watched to see how their daily life agreed with what they said. I said to myself: 'All these Christians are hypocrites.' My heart was as hard as stone; I was perfectly indifferent. I was taken very ill, and one day when I lay down I thought I was dying. A man came to me, and asked if he might pray for me. I said: 'Well, if you want to pray for me, I have no objection, if it will do you any good. If you will enjoy it, pray away.' He knelt down beside my bed, and I watched him. I thought I was dying, but I wasn't a bit frightened. I was perfectly callous and hardened, and as this man prayed for me I watched him out of the corner of my eyes. As I was watching him out of the corner of my eyes, I saw a tear rolling down his cheeks, and I said to myself, 'Here is this man, a perfect stranger to me, and he is weeping over my sins and over my lost condition.' That broke my heart. That is why I am here to-night. That is why I got up and asked for prayer. That is why I have taken the Lord Jesus. I tell you, you will win more men and women by your tears than you will ever win by your arguments." (*R. A. Torrey, D.D.*)

Vers. 137-144. **Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments.**—*The testimony of a tried saint*:—I. HIS TESTIMONY CONCERNING GOD. 1. Concerning the Divine character (vers. 137, 142). (1) God's righteousness has no standard but Himself. What He does is right, not because it conforms to anything outside Himself, but because it conforms to His nature. (2) God's righteousness agrees with the moral constitution of the universe. Universal conscience agrees with it. "Just and right are Thy ways." 2. Concerning His Word. (1) Faithful. His Word is truth. (2) Pure as the purest gold, free from all dross, pure as the purest sunbeam, absolutely free from all erroneous thoughts, from all unholy sentiments and passions. II. HIS TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF. 1. Zeal for the Divine (ver. 139). How few can say they are zealous for the right, per se! When he saw the utter forgetfulness of his contemporaries of God, his heart glowed with zeal for the Divine glory. 2. Love for the purity of truth (ver. 140). Some may love the truth on account of the beautiful form in which it is presented, the power of its suggestiveness and the sublimity of its speculations. But this man loved it for the sake of its purity. 3. Consciousness of self-insignificance (ver. 141). How insignificant is the greatest man in comparison with God—His character and manifestations! 4. Joy in suffering (ver. 143). His interest in the Divine Word bore him up and made him happy even under suffering. 5. A desire for further knowledge. "More light" is what he wanted. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 140. **Thy Word is very pure; therefore Thy servant loveth it.**—*Religious affections spring from love to Divine things*:—1. A love to Divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency is the spring of all holy affections. 2. There is given to believers a new, supernatural sense, which perceives the beauty of holiness and is affected thereby. A holy object calls out a holy affection. The beauty and sweetness of holiness as found in God forms the grand object of a spiritual taste and appetite. 3. This moral beauty in God leads to the adoration of God by saint and angel. CONCLUSIONS. 1. By this all may try their affections, their love and their joy. Graceless persons see no beauty in holy things. 2. The natural mind may have a great sense of God's greatness, wisdom and power: that is, of His natural attributes. 3. This sense of the natural mind may affect men in various ways—fill them with awe and terror, or with joy and praise. Hence too much stress may be placed upon the mere natural discoveries of the natural attributes in God. Man may be overwhelmed by a sense of God's greatness and majesty, and yet be without a particle of love to Divine things. But to the spiritual mind the natural attributes of God are all the more engaging because they are supplemented by His moral attributes. 4. And so, I may add, what love to Divine things do those possess who seem to be filled with worldliness, and are so fond of operas, theatres and frivolous amusements? (*Homiletic Review*.) *God's Word tried to the uttermost* (P. B. Version:—Notice a few of the ways in which the Word of God has been tried and found perfect. I. BY PROPHECY. Things, and events, and persons have been foretold and described in it with the minutest detail, and they have all in due time been accomplished; as the seed of the woman predicted in Paradise, the deluge, the birth of Isaac, and Abraham's numerous posterity, the respective characters of Jacob and Esau, the future history of the twelve tribes, foretold by Jacob on his death-bed, the prophet like unto Moses, the 430 years of Israel's wanderings, the deliverance from Egypt, and possession of Palestine, etc. II. BY MIRACLES. Tried to the uttermost has the Word of God been by miracles of every variety, performed on every element, on the living and the dead, on fire and water, on Satan and his legions, on disease, the brute creation, and especially by the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord. III. BY PERSECUTION. Satan and wicked men have often tried to quench this spirit from Heaven. As Ahab hated Michaiah, and for the same reason, because "he told him the truth," men have fettered and silenced and destroyed the Word of God. Jehoiaquim was not the only one who cut and burnt the sacred Scriptures. It has been tried to the uttermost in the furnace of persecution, and the result is that it is "very pure," proved more manifestly than ever to be from heaven. IV. BY SCIENCE. V. BY EXPERIENCE. Thousands, millions have proved it to be God's power unto salvation. It has enlightened, renewed, comforted, and saved them. (*John Harding, D.D.*)

Ver. 141. **I am small and despised: yet do not I forget Thy precepts.**—*The common lot*:—I wish to speak of our own separate lives. To the most wearied of

you all, I would teach that there is hope. I would say, in spite of every trial which God's disguised mercy may send you, in spite of every humiliation which man's undisguised malice may inflict upon you, Respect yourselves! Value at its true estimate the soul which God has given to you; believe in the splendour of its possibilities and the glory of its immortality. "He," says Milton, "who holds himself in reverence and due esteem both for the dignity of God's image upon him and for the price of his redemption, which he thinks to be possibly marked upon his forehead, accounts himself a fit person to do the noblest and godliest deeds, and much better worth than to deject and defile with such debasement and pollution as sin, is himself so highly ransomed and ennobled to new friendship and filial relationship with God; nor can he fear so much the offence and reproach of others as he dreads and would blush at the reflection of his own severe and modest eye upon himself, if it should see him doing or imagining that which is sinful, were it even in the deepest secrecy." Thus, then, should we view our personal lives in that inherent grandeur which man can neither bestow upon them nor diminish. And we need thus to feel the sanctity of our beings. Do I not interpret the thoughts of many of you aright when I say that they are very often weighed down by depression and discontent. I ask whether many of you are not secretly saying in your hearts, "Oh that I had a higher position, a wider influence, a larger scope?" "What boots it for me," some of you will say, "to come day after day through the weary streets to the dingy office, to copy and cast up accounts till I am grey-headed and cast aside, or retire upon some miserable pension?" Or, "Why am I a humble tradesman, harassed by incessant anxiety about my business?" Or, "Why is no higher lot assigned to me in life than that of standing behind a counter to weigh sugar or measure ribbons?" Or, "Why am I a poor, lonely woman who has apparently missed many of the natural ends of life, whom there are none to praise and very few to love?" And so, more or less, all but a few of us have a lot in life, as has been described, all the harder to bear because in the pathos of it everything is below the level of tragedy, except the passionate egotism of the sufferer. Ah! how many of these discontented murmurs rise from false notions and exaggerated claims; how many of them would vanish if, having food and raiment, we would be therewith content! Our complaints and miseries rise in no small measure from our failure to grasp the real meaning, and to understand the universal experience of life; they rise because, dropping the substance we grasp at the shadow; they rise because we take for solid realities the bubbles which burst at a touch. A child crying because it cannot have the moon is not more foolish and ignorant than we are when we suffer ourselves to be unhappy because wealth, and rank, and success, and power come to others and not to us. Keep God's commandments, and you, small and of no reputation as you may be, are much greater, and better, and happier than another who has all earthly gifts, and does not make his moral being his prime care, as heaven is greater and better than earth. You sigh for riches; the Book in which you profess to believe pours silent contempt on gold. You wish for rank; the man who has the longest ancestry has no longer ancestry than yourselves. He and you are descended alike from the gardener of the lost Eden. You wish for genius, but he who increaseth knowledge very often increaseth sorrow. It is one of the most elementary lessons in life to know that these little earthly distinctions dwindle into absolute insignificance compared with real things, as time dwindles into nothing when compared to eternity. The world may, perhaps, hold you to be commonplace and insignificant people; but the world needs these hardly less than its gifted ones. It would be a woeful thing for the human race if all that is insignificant and all the commonplace were to be thrust to "stand there" or "sit there," under others' footstools, for the commonplace and the insignificant are the vast majority. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of us are in this sense, in the sense of the world, altogether commonplace and insignificant. Is it not the masses and the million who make mankind? What else have been the countless generations who lie under the miles of gravestones and ever extending pavements of tombs and sepulchres? How many of all those who lie in the catacombs or in the cemetery, in the marble monument or mountain cave, have left even the shadow of a name? Our lot, then, is nothing exceptional, nothing to complain of, nothing to be depressed at. It is just the common, the all-but-universal lot. It has nothing to do with the essential meaning of life. (*Dean Farrar.*)

Ver. 144. The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.—Alive:—I. CONSIDER THIS PRAYER IN ITS SIMPLICITY.

1. It is a suitable prayer for the awakened sinner. Christ is our life; but we need understanding, or we shall miss it. 2. It is equally applicable to one who is a Christian, and who is struggling against temptation. 3. It will often well up from the heart of the suffering believer. 4. It is suitable for workers. I want to get alive to the utmost; not only having life, but having it "more abundantly." I have some life in me, thank God; but I want it to quicken me more completely. 5. It is a very proper and blessed prayer for aspiring minds in the Church of God. 6. Last of all, when we shall not be so much aspiring saints as expiring saints,—when we come to lie upon our last bed, and to look into the unseen, then may we still pray after the same fashion. **II. THE PRAYER IS TO BE MORE FULLY OPENED UP.** 1. Here is a want confessed, because it is deeply felt. 2. The prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free grace. Understanding must be a gift from God. 3. The psalmist speaks of understanding in a general way—"Give me understanding"—as if he wanted the faculty for use in many directions. We bear within our own natures so much to confuse, and confound, and entangle, that if we are not taught prudence and understanding we shall certainly never escape from the mischief that is within us. 4. Still, while the understanding sought for in the prayer is evidently of a general character, the former portion of the verse links it with a special understanding of the Word of God; and, oh, beloved, we need above all things to understand what God has revealed. Take care first that you know it. **III. Now we will go deeper, LAYING BARE THE ARGUMENT OF THIS PRAYER.** 1. I think he means this—that the Word of God, when it is practically and experimentally understood by the mind, is a pledge of life. Do you think that God would take one of us to be His child and teach us His Word, and then after all permit us to be condemned to die? Is that His fashion? 2. The understanding of the Word of God is life, because we are told that the Word of God is the "living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." Very well, then, if that seed is sown in my heart, my heart must live for ever. There can be no death where the seed is incorruptible. If the Word of the Lord be living within us, then there is within us a life eternal. 3. The Word of God is not only the seed of life, but it is the food of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live;" and if you live on the word that cometh out of God's mouth you cannot die. 4. The understanding of God's Word is the very flower, and crown, and glory of true life. When a man so understands God's Word as to experience it, and to practise it, he has reached a high point of spiritual culture, and his life will be loaded, like Aaron's rod, with buds, and blossoms, and fruit unto God's glory. He will be such a man that he shall only need to take one step and be in heaven. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 145, 146. I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Thy statutes.—Cries of distress:—Do we, or do we not, desire to get rid of every evil way? Are we anxious to be sincere and without offence, holy in our character, and obedient to God's statutes in our lives? **I. EVERY MAN WHO DESIRES PURITY OF HEART AND CHARACTER WILL BETAKE HIMSELF TO PRAYER.** While struggling after purity he will soon discover that he is unable to reach it of himself. Sin will destroy us if we do not destroy it. Pray often, for sin will tempt often. Cry mightily, for Satan will tempt mightily. Innumerable snares will be place in your path; let your countless entreaties outnumber his devices. **II. THE MAN WHO DESIRES TO WALK IN GOD'S WAY NOT MERELY PRAYS, BUT HE RESOLVES.** He will find out what God's statutes are; and when he has found them out, he will keep them, cost whatever it may. Need I say that nobody becomes holy against his will? No man keeps God's statutes without he exercises a resolve to do so. David sought after a thorough allegiance and a perfect conformity to the will of God. He says, "I cried with my whole heart; I will keep Thy statutes"; not some of the statutes that were agreeable to him, but all of the statutes that had the Divine sanction. The true seeker for holiness is one who, while he resolves on obedience to God, will dare to be singular, if no man will accompany him in it. "I cried with my whole heart; I will keep Thy statutes." He meant to do it, though he should be without a companion. He was prepared to stand alone. **III. THE MAN WHO IS THUS SEEKING PURITY, while he prays and resolves, if he be really wise and taught of the Spirit, WILL HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF**

HIS OWN WEAKNESS AND DEPRAVITY (ver. 146). As though he should say, "Oh, Lord, I am praying and resolving; but my prayers want Thine answers, and my resolutions need Thy might to fulfil them. My prayers—what are they? My resolves—what can they do? My God, I want sifting, I want sifting. Oh, save me, and then I shall keep Thy testimonies." Before ever we can keep God's testimonies we must be saved. We must be saved first from the guilt of the past, from our sinful selves. We whose nature is evil cannot do much with so bad a nature to baffle all our efforts to cleanse our way. This nature must be removed and a new nature implanted, or else, whilst the old nature is extant the old evil will assert itself. Lord, save me, save me; change my heart; renew my spirit; make the fountain clear; set the mainspring right! Oh, Holy Ghost, regenerate me, and, if Thou do this, then, not till then, shall I keep Thy testimonies. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 148. *Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy Word.*—*The inexhaustibleness of the Bible*:—There is something very surprising in the fact—but that it is a fact admits of no debate—that the Bible is not of a size to alarm any one, be his time ever so occupied, and yet that it is of a size to engage all his time, be that time ever so completely at his disposal. You cannot find the individual, however many the years, and however great the diligence, which he has given to the study of the sacred volume, who feels that there is no more to be learnt from that volume; and that it is useless for him to re-peruse that volume. Yet, on the other hand, if you wish to guide a man into an acquaintance with "the things which belong to his peace," and accordingly press upon him the duty of reading the Bible, you can be met with no plausible excuse from the greatness of the prescribed task. It is not a huge library; it is only a single, and not very large book, which we entreat him to investigate; and with what fairness can a man of the most engrossing occupation plead "want of time" as his apology for refusing? We say again, this is one of the most extraordinary things to be observed in regard of the Bible. If the inspired writings together had filled a vast array of volumes, the great mass of men would have argued that the quantity sanctioned neglect. In our every endeavour at enforcing on them the duty of studying the Scriptures, we should have been met with the apparently reasonable statement that the necessary engagements of life forbade the embarking on so gigantic an undertaking. Then, on the other hand, had the Bible not been of so condensed and comprehensive a character that its chapters are libraries and its sentences volumes, the "righteous of the earth," having nothing but this single book to study, would presently have been left with nothing to study—nothing to ponder. A few short weeks would have finished a common book of the same size. What, then, is it but the Deity in the Bible which makes it like a fire for ever consuming and yet for ever unconsumed? These are two features which, in their combination, strongly mark off the Bible from all other books: these are two features, I say—that it is so small, that in regard of its study no one can be afraid of making a beginning; and that it is so large, that no one is ever able to make an end: and he who "prevents the night watches" may always find fresh matter for meditation. Who amongst us that is accustomed to read the Bible with diligence and prayer can be ignorant that the contents of this Book seem to grow with the being examined; so that in place of exhausting, we multiply materials of thought? and that passages in which we observed no particular beauty or force, though they had been a hundred times read, will suddenly strike us as being full of the most valuable meaning, and words which we had overlooked as unimportant, dilate into sermons, preaching to us of duties and unfolding mysteries? There are texts in the Bible which we have often given up as hopelessly obscure; but with greater experience has come greater light; and dark sayings have burst forth as amongst the most brilliant and precious in Scripture. He is, indeed, a rare character amongst Christians who should feel the want of a larger Bible! There may undoubtedly be many points on which men long for fuller information, and many subjects which they may wish elucidated with greater clearness than is derivable from the pages of Holy Writ—but can any say that there remains nothing for him to examine in Scripture; that he has gone the whole length that revelation would carry him, and that he is at a standstill for want of a larger Bible? A larger Bible! Who is there of us who will dare to say that he has so exhausted a single chapter of the Bible that he may be confident that there is nothing more of instruction, nothing more of warning,

nothing more of consolation to draw from its statements? And if it be thus true that the Bible is still unexhausted, though the world has for many centuries been diving into its treasures—that there are yet unexplored stores and riches to stimulate the industry and recompense the toil of every lover of its glorious truths, then must it on all hands be admitted that the Bible is adapted in its size, as well as in every other respect, to the capacities of human kind, since now in the old age of this creation, the sacred volume still presents fresh veins of precious ore, like a mine which, the more it is worked, the more it seems to contain and to yield. And since the world, if we may so express it, will not have finished the Bible when the concerns of humanity are wound up, and time itself shall die in eternity, then, indeed, we may well assent to the saying of St. John, that had all which Christ did been written—had, that is, great additions been made to the inspired volume of God Himself—"the world could not have held the books." But we also learn that the student of Holy Writ will never come to a stand in the study, as though the book were mastered, and had nothing further to yield to patient inquiry: nay, not even if from youth upwards to extreme old age, he could give as descriptive of himself the words of David in our text—"Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I may meditate in Thy Word." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 151. Thou art near, O Lord.—*The nearness of God*.—I. GOD IS NEAR US IN THE HOUR OF HUMAN DESERTION. We are never in reality alone, never in reality deserted. On our right hand and on our left the Invisible walks. II. GOD IS NEAR US IN THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION. When an army goes forth to battle, a true leader goes forth with it. In the supreme moment of his destiny, whether of downfall or triumph, God always stands by a follower. III. THE NEARNESS OF GOD TO US IS SEEN IN THE VARIOUS EXPERIENCES OF OUR LIFE AND GROWTH. Now it is hard to analyze the sources and causes of growth. Ask the rose how it grows. Say to it, "Whence came your sweetness and the royal colour of your leaves?" and the rising volume of its fragrance is your only answer. It cannot say how much it owes to the sun, how much to the shower, how much to the cloud, nor whether day or night brought most of perfume and beauty to it. So it is with the soul. You ask some aged Christian whence came her purity, her patience, her calm reliance and that hope of hers,—and can she tell you? No! She only knows that she is as she is through the grace of God. You may grope in darkness or walk in light, but He unto whom the light and darkness are one is ever with you. (*W. H. H. Murray.*) *The nearness of God*.—I. THE MOMENTOUS IMPORT OF THE SOLEMN FACT. I hear people speaking of loneliness, and saying how chill is life, how bitter is their lot! What an implied insult to a God who is ever so near! II. A FEW OF THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH THIS IMPORTANT FACT INVOLVES. 1. Then God knows all about us. 2. He not only knows us, but sees much to abhor. 3. He can also appreciate the good. The presence of God, then, should excite two vast opposing influences. It is deterrent to the bad, it is a help to the good. (*Homilist.*) *Nearer, my God, to Thee*.—Even in view of our folly and our failure, we who love the Lord will still rejoice that God sees us. We cannot hide our secret sins from Him, and I do not think we wish to. I. IN WHAT SENSES IS GOD NEAR TO HIS PEOPLE? 1. He draws near to them by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. 2. Moreover, through the indwelling of the Spirit the Lord is near to us, not merely above us and about us, behind us and beneath us, compassing us about with songs of deliverance, but dwelling in the human heart. II. TO WHOM DOES GOD THUS SPECIALLY APPROACH? 1. To the lowly. 2. To the prayerful. 3. To those who are in trouble. 4. To the broken-hearted. III. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THIS DIVINE PROXIMITY? 1. Recognizing this, we shall feel strong. If the Lord is near, it matters little who else is near, friend or foe. 2. His presence should make us very watchful. 3. If we know that God is near, we shall begin to want Him to be nearer still. (*T. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 157-160. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.—*The trials and traits of piety*.—I. THE TRIALS OF PIETY. They are twofold—objective and subjective. 1. Objective. "Many are my persecutors and enemies." "In the world ye shall have tribulation," etc. The seed of the serpent is always darting its venomous sting into the sensibilities of the seed of the woman. 2. The subjective. "I beheld," etc. Transgressors here points especially to apostates from Divine truth. In sooth all sin is moral apostasy, and all sin strikes sorrow

into the heart of the pious. II. THE TRAITS OF PIETY. 1. Steadfast adherence to truth. "Yet I declined not from Thy testimonies." Whatever happens, hold fast to truth. 2. Loving devotion to rectitude. "Consider how I love Thy precepts." It is characteristic of a godly man that he delights in the law of God. 3. Devout praying for a higher life. "Quicken me," etc. "I count not myself to have attained," etc. Excelsior! is the watchword of the Christly soul. 4. A settled consciousness of the truth of God. "Thy Word is true," or, "Thy Word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." That is the sum total, and each unit of the sum of God's commandments is truth and perfection (John iii. 33). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Thy Word.—*Christian grief over transgressors.*—One of the influences and results of true piety on the heart is to move its sensibilities on behalf of the interests and welfare of others. One example out of many is presented to us in the text, the author of which was most probably Ezra, to whom, as the priest of Jehovah, pertained the duty of purifying the people from their abominations on their return from captivity, and of settling the institutions by which, when restored to the land of their forefathers, they were to be recovered. He had taken a survey of the state of society, both in his own country and in other nations, and his spirit was stirred within him. I. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE PREVALENT HABITS AND CHARACTER OF MANKIND. "I beheld the transgressors." 1. God has actually established a law for the government of mankind. 2. There is amongst mankind a prevalent and a fearfully extended rebellion against this law. 3. The case of those who are in the attitude of rebellion against the Divine law should, by pious minds, be made the matter of frequent and serious contemplation. II. A RECORD OF THE EMOTIONS WHICH THIS CONTEMPLATION PROPERLY AND SPECIALLY PRODUCES UPON THE PIOUS MIND. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved." 1. For what reasons this emotion must be excited. (1) Because transgression is so insulting to God. (2) Because transgression is so fatal to the happiness of mankind. 2. To what conduct this emotion should prompt. (1) To personal nonconformity and separation from the transgressions which we witness, and over which we mourn. (2) To personal exertion in the diffusion of that truth which God has appointed as the instrument to reconcile and to save. (*J. Parsons.*) *Tearful concern for the godless.*—The evangel is not in the first place a denunciation of sin, nor a pronouncement of punishment. It is an announcement of good news. "Dr. Dale once said to me in his study that he knew of only one man who had the right to speak of the possibility of a soul being lost. 'Who is that?' I inquired; and he answered, 'Dwight Lyman Moody. The reason is that he never did it without tears in his voice, and never without passing on to proclaim how that man could be saved.'" *(Campbell Morgan.)*

Ver. 160. Thy word is true from the beginning.—*The Bible—God's Word.*—Civilization, intelligence, morality, and general prosperity unmistakably mark the pathway of the Bible. These are the results that follow its introduction, or they are the signs that mark its coming. Or if these evidences of civilization precede the Book, they precede it as the rays of the morning sun precede the sun itself. I. THE WORD OF GOD WOULD BE EXPOSED TO OBJECTION, AND ALSO LIABLE TO REJECTION BY REASON OF THE NATURAL STATE OF THE HUMAN HEART. All truth is truth, but the truth of the Bible differs from other truth in an important particular. The truth of the Bible is addressed specially, not to the intellect, but to the ethical or the moral character, and hence it involves moral accountability, and is, therefore, imperative in a sense in which truth ordinarily is not imperative. The Book is the true reformer. It begins with the heart, and it requires changes there, and the evidences of which are also to be apparent in the life. Hence the disinclination of the unregenerate man to consult the Bible either for counsel or instruction. Hence also the ignorance of what the Book really contains. II. THE PRIDE OF THE HUMAN REASON ALSO INTERFERES WITH THE STUDY AND THE RECEPTION OF THE WORD OF GOD. This remark applies more especially to those who profess to be the more learned among their fellow-men. In some departments of knowledge they are entitled to the advanced position which they profess to have attained. But their knowledge is ascribed to discovery. New truths in science are said to be discovered, and their discovery is ascribed to the superior knowledge or wisdom of the discoverer. But the Bible is a revelation, and not in any sense

merely a discovery of the human reason; and as such it also claims acceptance by the human reason, and that without any distinction of persons. But this again is not agreeable to the speculative turn and the ambitious spirit of the human mind, which has been accustomed to discover truth rather than to receive it in the ordinary manner. He who saw with clear and open eye the mystery of the human soul, accounted for His rejection on the one hand, and for the feeble influence of the Gospel on the other, by saying that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The same truth applies to the acceptance and to the rejection of the Bible. Not the want of sufficient evidence, but a moral cause, and often also a bad life is the strongest objection to the Bible. But the folly of the objection to the Bible, by reason of the purity of the heart and the uprightness of the life which it requires, is manifest in the fact that as any believe in a righteous God, to that extent also must there be a revelation possessing the characteristics of the God who makes it. The Book must bear the impress of its Divine Author. III. BUT WHY SHOULD THE BIBLE BE REJECTED IN VIEW OF ITS CHARACTER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE EARTH? It is the most remarkable Book in the world's literature. It is the basis for the religion of the civilized nations of the globe. It is everywhere the conserving companion of civil and religious freedom. It is the rock upon which governments must rest; it is the reflection of the Divinity, and the hope of humanity. It has been called the "Star of Eternity," and rightly so, since only by its light the bark of man can cross the Sea of Life and reach the shores of immortality securely. It has been most truthfully said, that whilst the Bible comprises in bulk not more than the three-hundredth part of the Greek and the Roman literature extant, yet it has attracted and concentrated more thought upon itself, and has produced more books than all the Greek and Roman literature combined. This attraction and concentration of thought has also been on the part of those nations that occupy the very forefront of civilization, science, and learning. Said Thomas Carlyle, "There never was any other book like the Bible, and there never will be such another." And when one said to Carlyle, "There is nothing remarkable in the Book of Proverbs," Carlyle's reply was, "Make a few." Yes, make a few only. Ordinarily the philosopher writes books for those who are devoted to philosophy. The scientist writes books adapted to the student of science. The statesman writes books for the sage and the statesman. But in the Bible we have fishermen writing books for the philosopher. Men in the shepherd's tent writing books for the statesman. Tax-gatherers writing books for teachers, judges, and legislators. Herdsmen writing poetry and prophecy. Physicians writing history and theology. No, there never was any other book like the Bible, and there never will be such another. IV. "THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER." And so the Bible has come to stay. As long as there is a living soul upon the earth, so long also will that Book remain in the earth. It is the Word of God; and the Word of God and the human soul, which is also God-given, are in need of each other, and whilst the one remains here so also will the other. (*J. B. Helwig, D.D.*) *True from the first*:—Take this declaration in many ways. Take it as a reference of a documentary kind. God's Word will be before us as a book or scroll, the scribe will refer to page one, line one, and he will go with us through every line and paragraph, and show us that the Word is true in root, and core, and origin, that the first syllable is a syllable of eternal, tranquil veracity. That would be the poorest way of all to take. A mere scribe never can be great. Yet even the scribe has his argument and his illustration, and we cannot do without the assistance of the scribe: we pass through the portal into the temple, we pass through the letter into the spirit; let us make a right use of the vestibule. Blind are they and foolish to themselves who tarry in the portico, thinking it the king's banqueting chamber. Look at the text from another and totally different point of view, namely, as covering all the instincts, desires, and aspirations of man's original moral constitution. In this sense it is true from the beginning; that is to say, the moment we begin to be, it begins to talk to us. The Bible is the dawn book; it whitens the east of our development, and goes with us through all the changing cloud and all the accumulating degrees until we wester towards our setting. If the Bible is not true in this sense, it cannot be true in any other. It is a moral revelation. If it can only join us at certain points in life, then it is an accidental book. The psalmist, with all the riches of his experience, with all his minute, personal, and kingly knowledge of life, says, "Thy Word is true from the beginning." That is to say, it is not a

guess, not a happy answer to a bewildering enigma. It comes to us with the authority of being right—true. The square was right before the building was put up, or before the square itself as an article in timber was ever made. The plumb-line cannot lie; the geometry of the universe is the text-book of all material, substantial, and permanent progress. The plumb-line does not by trial and use become true; it has not to be fastened down to something; let it alone, and it will swing itself into harmony with "the process of the suns." Thus we come upon the greatest argument for inspiration, namely, the sufficiency of the Bible to meet us in all the need, and pain, and service of life. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, in the market-place, in affliction, in intellectual howilderment, in moral self-disgust, everywhere, the Bible will join us, interpret us to ourselves, and interpret God to humanity. This, and not some cunning or skilful display of words, is the great and unanswerable argument for the inspiration of the Bible. What have we to do, then, with this Book of God? Test it. Lean upon it; draw out of it all that is in it, so far as your hunger and thirst require; put it to the proof, and if it fail you after honest trial, say so. But be sure of your interpretation. No Scripture is of any private interpretation. We must not use the Bible for purposes of sorcery or witchcraft, or prostitute it to any debased uses. We can only read the Bible aright in the spirit of the Bible itself, and we can only test the Bible aright when we test it honestly, broadly, continually. What is the testimony of people who have so tested it? "Thy Word is true from the beginning." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) "*The sum of Thy Word is truth*" (*R.V.*):—That is to say, the total of it; in other words, it amounts to truth; in varied phrase it brings together all the elements that are necessary to constitute the sum-total of moral and spiritual truth; or, in still varied words, without it we should have parts of truth, little glimmerings and aspects of truth; but having Thy Word, we have Truth. Who translated that Word so? He who offered the intercessory prayer with Gethsemane in front of Him, with the shadow of Golgotha already falling upon His beautiful, but marred, face. Said he, "Thy Word is truth"; sanctify them by Thy Word; make them holy; complete them; set them apart to consecration by Thy Word. "Thy Word is truth." Thus the voices join. What wonder if He who thus spake should, a few days afterwards, have begun at Moses and the Psalms, and expounded to wondering, saddened hearts all the things concerning Himself! The psalmist had said: "The sum of Thy Word is truth"; and He, greater Psalmist, with the blood-sweat soon to ooze from His bent brow and face, had said in prayer to God, "Thy Word is truth." Thus age speaks to age, as "star unto star speaks light." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.—*A common fact and a rare experience:*—I. A COMMON FACT. The history of persecution and martyrdom has been, if not always inspired, sanctioned and enforced by "princes." Their conduct in this respect is—I. In direct antagonism to the Divine intention. 2. Gradually alienating the hearts of people from their class. II. A RARE EXPERIENCE. 1. Reverence for God's Word. The meaning of this, perhaps, is, I have a greater dread of violating Thy law than I have of all the persecuting powers of princes or potentates. This is right, this is sublimely noble. 2. Delight in God's Word (*ver. 162*). 3. Loyalty to God's Word (*ver. 163*). 4. Gratitude for God's Word (*ver. 164*). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 162. I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil.—*Great spoil:*—How often is this idea repeated in Scripture! It is developed by our Lord in several of His parables, and touches us all very nearly. I. THE DISCOVERY OF THE UNEXPECTED. Religion is full of surprises. A flash of Divine light will startle us with some new meaning in every line. The religious man is ever finding. 1. He finds new depths of his own possibilities. 2. He finds new regions of intense existence. 3. He finds new glories in all he sees. 4. He finds the unfathomable height of infinite love. 5. He finds the unspeakable wisdom of almighty purposes. The deeper he digs the more he discovers. II. THE OBTAINING GREAT POSSESSIONS—"Finding great spoil." 1. Finding implies obtaining without cost. He who obtains eternal life does so without money and without price. 2. Finding implies activity. It may not mean seeking, for we may find without seeking. But no man can "find" unless he has his eyes open. The possession discovered is great. There is nothing mean in God's kingdom—all is great. What is greater than soul-life? What is greater than heaven? What is

greater than eternity? Great spoil! (*Homilist*.) Great spoil:—It is a figure taken from men of war, who, after they have overcome their enemy, divide the plunder among them. This expression is most natural as coming from David. David had been a soldier from his youth up, and he knew personally and literally what it was to divide the spoil. How I like to hear men both in prayer and praise speak like themselves! So must it be with the soldier: if cold, dead propriety rules him you will not know whether he is a soldier or a citizen; but let him grow enthusiastic, and his speech betrayeth him; wars and rumours of wars are in his utterances; he sings and prays to martial music. I. THIS GREAT JOY IS SOMETIMES AROUSED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS A WORD OF GOD. 1. This is true if we regard the Scriptures as a revealing of God. After going up and down in the world searching after Deity it is a great delight to come upon a book in which the one only living and true God has unveiled Himself to those who care to behold Him. It is a great "find" for a man to discover that after all he is not left in a fog to grope his way, but that God has kindled a sun that honest hearts may walk in the light of it, and in that light see all things clearly. 2. We also prize it as the guide of our life. This Book tells us the right and bids us follow it; it teaches us the way of wisdom, and the path of understanding, and supplies motives for walking therein. 3. More than this, a word from God apprehended in the soul is a sure pledge of mercy. Consider what words those words of God are; how full of love, and grace, and tenderness. 4. Holy Scripture, when it comes to us with power as the Word of God, is the beginning of communion with God. II. FREQUENTLY THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER IN THE WORD ARISES OUT OF HIS HAVING HAD TO BATTLE TO OBTAIN A GRASP OF IT. 1. We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them. 2. What a fight there is sometimes over a promise. 3. Sometimes the hardest fight is round a precept. 4. A sharp warfare often goes on over the threatenings. 5. Yet, once more, this is true about the Word which reveals Christ. We know not Christ aright till we are conformed to what we know of Him. If Christ be lovely we shall not understand that loveliness till we are in a measure lovely ourselves. We must get to be like Him; and oh, when we do, then every lineament of that dear face will be conspicuously and transcendently charming to us, because we have come to it through suffering. III. AT TIMES THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER LIES IN ENJOYING GOD'S WORD WITHOUT ANY FIGHTING AT ALL. 1. The Word of the Lord is often as spoil found, not fought for. The promise lies before me on the way, and I find it, and by the law of the kingdom of grace it becomes mine for the finding. What joy is this! 2. The spoil, however, must have cost somebody else most dear, though it has cost us nothing. Ah, what a fight—Gethsemane and Calvary! Life, light, peace, joy, holiness, immortality, heaven,—all these are brought back by our great Conqueror, who has taken the prey from the mighty, and brought back the lawful captives, leading captivity captive. O, brethren, we do rejoice when we get a hold of the precious treasures of the Word as Jesus Christ's spoil, fought for by Himself, and then distributed to us. IV. THERE IS A JOY ARISING OUT OF THE VERY FACT THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE MAY BE CONSIDERED TO BE A SPOIL. 1. A spoil is the end of the uncertainty. When a man has in experience fought up to confidence in the Word of the Lord, or has had it effectually laid home by the Holy Spirit to his own soul, then he reaches the end of the controversy so far as he himself is concerned: he is dividing the spoil, for he says, "We have known and believed the love which God hath," etc. 2. It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks; for when they divide the spoil they say to one another, "The invaders will be here again, no doubt, before long; but they will not have this great gun to turn upon us; we have spiked it. They may again take up arms; but their force is broken." Every doubt a man conquers by resting on the infallible Word has weakened the power of unbelief within him, and strengthened his faith. 3. In dividing the spoil there is always a sense of victory, and so there is in believing God's Word. In getting firm hold upon the faithful testimony of our God, we achieve a conquest over doubts, fears, disquietudes, and all our proud judgments of God. 4. In dividing the spoil there is profit, pleasure, and honour. When we can say that the things which God has revealed are ours, then we are rich beyond a miser's dream; and when we can hold them against all comers, then that which we believe becomes our honour and gives glory to us, and glory to faith, and chief glory to Him who wrought our faith in us by His almighty Spirit. 5. The spoil is a prophecy of rest, and so is that delightful dividing up of the Word of God, and the appropriation thereof by

faith. "Ah," said the Romans when they spoiled old Carthage, "we shall never see another Hannibal at our gates, nor dread the ships of Carthage in our seas." They had overcome their most potent adversary when they utterly spoiled her, and when they looked for a long period of peace. And that is the joy of receiving the Word. When we can believe that Jesus took our sins, and suffered for them on the tree, we are no more troubled as to the guilt of sin. When we believe that our heavenly Father overrules all things for the good of His people, then sorrow and sighing, fear and fretting flee away. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 164. **Seven times a day do I praise Thee.**—*David, the model of praise:*—David was a model of praise—I. FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS. We do not praise God, as much as we ought, for our temporal blessings. II. FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. This is what he means in one place, when he says that God's statutes "are more to be desired than gold," etc. (Ps. xix. 10). This is what he means again, when he says, "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life," etc. III. OF GROWING PRAISE. When he had learned to praise God for His mercies, he went on praising Him more and more. When he first began to praise God, he only speaks of doing it once a day (Ps. lix. 16). Then it seemed as if he thought that once a day was not often enough to praise God; and so (Ps. cxli. 2). Then he speaks of (Ps. lvii. 17). That was three times a day. And then, here, in the text, he says: "Seven times a day will I praise Thee." This shows how the spirit of praise was growing in David. IV. OF UNIVERSAL PRAISE. He says in one place, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. xxv. 10). He meant to say that whatever God does to His people He does in mercy and in love, and therefore we ought to praise Him for it. And so we see that David had learned to thank God for everything; and in this way he became the model of universal praise (Ps. cxix. 39, 62, 71; xxxiv. 19). He had learned to thank and praise God for everything that He did for him. And we should try to follow the model that David has set us in this respect. (R. Newton, D.D.)

Ver. 165. **Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.**—*The glowing testimony of the good:*—This is the testimony of—I. PHILOSOPHY. Moral remorse, malign passions, dark forebodings, battling impulses, these are the source of all inner tumult; but, in the nature of the case, where the soul is in a loving ruling sympathy with God's law, such elements of distress cannot exist. II. SCRIPTURE (Prov. iii. 13; Phil. iv. 7; John xiv. 27). III. EXPERIENCE. In proportion to the amount of the love of God in the heart of a man is his peace—with his own nature, his conscience, and God. (*Homilist.*) *The lover of God's law filled with peace:*—I. A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER. "They which love Thy law." 1. Love lies deep, it is in the heart: it is not a thing of the surface, it is of the man's own self. As a man loveth so is he. To love God's law is to have the very nature and essence of our manhood in a right condition. 2. This inward and spiritual love to God's Word includes many other good things. (1) A deep reverence for it. (2) This advances to rejoicing in it. (3) Further than this, we receive Holy Scripture with emotion. (4) Great gratitude to God for His Word is formed in the believing heart. 3. This love is productive of many good things. (1) Meditation on it. (2) Courage in defence of it. (3) Penitence for having sinned against it. (4) Patience under suffering. (5) Holiness. 4. If in any of us there is a love of the law of the Lord, this is a work of the Holy Spirit. II. A SPECIAL POSSESSION. When Orientals meet each other their usual salutation is "Shalom"—"Peace be to thee." The word does not mean merely quiet and rest, but happiness or prosperity. Great peace means great prosperity. Those who love God's law have great blessedness in this life as well as in that which is to come. In loving the law of God we have intense enjoyment and real success in life. 1. Great restfulness of the intellect. 2. A pacified conscience. 3. Peace in heart. 4. Peace as to our desires. 5. Peace in resignation to God, acquiescence in His will, and conformity to it. 6. A happy confidence in God as to all things in the past, the present, and the future. III. A SINGULAR PRESERVATION. "Nothing shall offend them." 1. Intellectual stumbling-blocks are gone. 2. No moral duty shall be a cross to them. 3. They can stand alone. Solitude does not offend them. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The greatness of God's peace:*—Its greatness appears from—I. ITS BEING THE RESULT OF LOVE TO THE DIVINE LAW. II. ITS BEING IDENTICALLY THAT PEACE WHICH CHRIST BESTOWS UPON HIS OWN, which He designated His peace, and which none but He can bestow.

III. Whether, therefore, you contemplate the agent or the agency, you behold here a peace so grand and so elevating, that THE POSSESSORS OF IT MUST EMBRACE THE WHOLE LAW WITH THEIR WHOLE SOULS. They can except against none of all the gracious commandments. There is not one thing you can put them on, whether to do or to suffer, which, in the strength of that heavenly love, and by the help of that grace, they will not go into for their Saviour. (*John Bruce, D.D.*) *The happiness of holiness*:—I. WE ARE SURROUNDED BY LAW. The law holds our entire being in its grasp—our heart, our secret acts, our words, our life, and there is no escape: nor is there any breaking of the law with impunity. II. WE CAN HAVE NO TRUE PEACE WHILE OUT OF HARMONY WITH LAW. The consciousness of wrong-doing brings a weight upon the soul (Ps. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 4). An unwillingness to submit creates internal strife (Rom. vii. 12-24): therefore there is no peace to the wicked. III. HOW CAN HARMONY WITH DIVINE LAW BE ATTAINED? By pardon through the atonement. By the renovation of our nature, so that the law is written on the heart (Heb. viii. 10)—so that the heart delights in that which the law enjoins (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27). IV. GREAT PEACE RESULTS FROM THIS HARMONY. 1. Absolutely perfect peace with and in God: the King is now our friend: loyalty is natural—"perfect love casteth out fear." 2. Peace with ourselves—the internal war is ended. Conscience is at rest, duty is a delight. 3. Peace with all mankind so far as lies in our power. 4. Peace with the universe, for when we are in harmony with law we are in harmony with God, and therefore with the whole God-pervaded universe. (*C. O. Eldridge, B.A.*) *Submission and peace*:—Loving the law of God, not only with delight in the vehicle of its expression, but with inward submission to its behests, we shall have—I. THE PEACEFULNESS OF A RESTFUL HEART. Such a heart has found an adequate and worthy object for the outgoings of its affections. Base things loved always disturb. Noble things loved always tranquillize. For our hearts are like the creatures in some river, of which they tell us that they change their colour according to the hue of the bed of the stream in which they float and of the food of which they partake. The heart that lives on the will of God will be calm and steadfast, and ennobled into reposeful tranquillity like that which it grasps and grapples. II. THE CALM OF A SUBMITTED WILL. If you were ever on board a sailing ship you know the difference between its motion when it is beating up against the wind and when it is running before it. In the one case all is agitation and uneasiness, in the other all is smooth, and frictionless, and delicious. So, when we go with the great stream, in not ignoble surrender, then we go quietly. It is God's great intention, in all that befalls us in this life, to bring our wills into conformity with His. Blessed is the ministry of sorrow, and of pain, and of loss, if it does that for us. And disastrous and accursed is the ministry of joy and success if it does not. III. THE PEACE OF AN OBEDIENT LIFE. When once we have taken it (and faithfully adhere to the choice) as our supreme desire to do God's will, we are delivered from almost all the things that distract and disturb us. Away go all the storms of passion, and we are no more at the mercy of vagrant inclinations. And as thus we may be delivered from all the agitations and cross-currents of conflicting wishes, inclinations, aims, which otherwise would make a jumble and a chaos of our lives, so, on the other hand, if for us the supreme desire is to obey God, then we are delivered from the other great enemy to tranquillity—namely, anxious forecasting of possible consequences of our actions, which robs so many of us of so many quiet days. "I do the little I can do," said Faber, "and leave the rest with Thee." And that will bring peace. IV. THE PEACE OF FREEDOM FROM TEMPTATIONS. "Nothing shall offend them." The higher love casts out the lower. Which is best, to overcome our temptations, or to live away up in the high regions to which the malaria of the swamps never climbs, and where no disease-germs can ever reach? That elevation is possible for us, if only we keep in close touch with God, and love the law because our hearts are knit to the Law-giver. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Of the inward peace and pleasure which attends religion*:—I. RELIGION IS APT TO REMOVE THE CHIEF CAUSES OF INWARD TROUBLE AND DISQUIET. 1. Doubt and anxiety of mind. 2. Guilt of conscience. II. RELIGION MINISTERS TO US ALL THE TRUE CAUSES OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY OF MIND. Whoever lives according to the rules of religion, lays these three great foundations of peace and comfort to himself:—1. He is satisfied that in being religious he doth that which is most reasonable. 2. That he secures himself against the greatest mischiefs and dangers by making God his friend. 3. That upon the whole matter he does in all respects most effectually consult and promote his own interest and

happiness. III. THE REFLECTION UPON A RELIGIOUS AND VIRTUOUS COURSE OF LIFE BOTH AFTERWARDS YIELD A MIGHTY PLEASURE AND SATISFACTION. (*Abp. Tillotson.*)

Love of God's law a source of peace:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHOM THE PSALMIST DESCRIBES. They love God's law. At the outset of religion our thoughts are generally fixed on God as a God of mercy and compassion. We almost lose sight of His other perfections: but this cannot last. And when we come to survey Him as the Just One, the Holy One, the Faithful One, as well as the Merciful One; the more we consider God as a combination of perfections—oh, we shall presently see that there is no safety for us unless and until those perfections are all and each on our side. But when this feeling is engendered, and we are brought naturally to love the law just as we do the redemption, we satisfy the law. The law is not merely admired, not merely revered, the law is loved—loved as what it was worthy of God to give—what it was worthy of Christ to fulfil, and what Christ has fulfilled by a Suretyship which leaves not one jot to be exacted from the sinner. And why have they "great peace"? Because there is no attribute of God to which they who love the law cannot find themselves reconciled.

II. TAKE THE CHARACTER THUS DECIPHERED, AND EXAMINE WHY IT HAPPENS THAT THERE ARE NOT STUMBLING-BLOCKS TO THOSE WHO POSSESS IT. Suppose we take certain of the hindrances which men meet with in following Christ, and endeavour to show you in each how, through loving the law, the obstacle is surmounted. For instance, the unequal distribution both of good and of evil in this life is often a perplexing thing to the righteous. But now observe—he who loves the law is exactly equipped for surmounting this offence. In being brought to love the law, a man has been brought into acquaintance with each and every attribute of God. Therefore he is quite assured of the justice of God; he is quite assured of the faithfulness of God. Again, when afflictions come thick on the godly man, they have a tendency to stagger him, or to serve as a "stumbling-block." But it will certainly be the man who loves God's law who is best prepared to meet such impediments; for it is required by the terms of the law that we should know God's attributes, and take delight in them all. Knowing each attribute, loving each attribute, he will be meekly confident that the issue must be right, though the process may be dark. And there are other kinds of offence, or stumbling-blocks, which may be met with by the Christian. Living, as we all must live, in some considerable degree, in association with our fellow-men, we are necessarily exposed to an influence, direct or indirect, excited by their conduct; for you can scarcely find the man of whom it can be truly said, that he is independent of the behaviour of others; that is, in the sense that his own moral character is not likely to be either advantaged or prejudiced by the deportment of those about him. Look, for example, at the faults and inconsistencies of religious professors. The faults of any one religious professor—covetousness, for example—ambition—the love of show—the ready association with the world—the facility in keeping piety out of sight, when it is likely to keep him out of favour—all these inconsistencies, put forth in the name of one professor of godliness, are calculated to damp the ardour of a hundred others, and bring into disrepute all those realities of religion, which, being removed, there remains nothing but the skeleton of Christianity. Who, we want to know, is best prepared to meet this offence? He who is a lover of the law. If I have reached the point of loving the law, if I love God because He hates sin, if I love God because He will punish sin, if I love God because He requires "holiness in the inward parts"—and all this, yes, and a vast deal more is love of God's law—then I have such an acquaintance with God as puts me far beyond the reach of accidents or contingencies. I know God—if the expression may be allowed—thoroughly; I know Him too well, under those very aspects with which the generality of Christians are least familiar, to render it necessary that I should infer His properties from what is done by others, or from what happens to others; and thus my love of the law gives me practically independence on the conduct or intercourse of my fellow-Christians; and I can overleap the obstacles which their failures may have thrown in my way; and thus I can verify the assertion—"Nothing shall offend" those who "love the law of their God." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Peace amid troubles:*—I. A POSSESSION. 1. There may be peace without great peace. But Christians have great peace. It appertains to a great subject, the soul; it eases great anxieties, those which have to do with our relation to God, and it has an abiding greatness of power, for no man taketh it away. 2. This peace is connected with obedience. The renewed spirit is under the law of the spirit of life. A living Christ rules as truly as a code! He says, "thou shalt not"

more successfully. Take the spirit of true love. If I really love, shall I injure in thought, word, look, deed? Not I. The law will rule me everywhere; it will be the law of the spirit of life. 3. Love will be the affectional bond. Here is the strength of the Christian man! Sin becomes distasteful to him—its bread bitter, its waters brackish. In fact, duty is like drawing a triumphal car; and wearing the thorn-crown is like bearing some insignia of highest order. II. AN EXEMPTION. "Nothing shall offend them." 1. Circumstances do not hurt them, or are not a stumbling-block to them. They are not too careless to despise them, or too heartless, in a human sense, to refuse to extract all the honey out of life's flowers that they can. Things present, as well as "things to come," are theirs. 2. Temptations do not hurt them. Arrows glance harmlessly aside from the impenetrable shield of the Christ-filled soul. 3. Death does not hurt them. How can it? They surely have been metening for it. It is not always longed for, but it is prepared for. (W. M. Statham.)

Vers. 166-168. Lord, I have hoped for Thy salvation, and done Thy commandments.—*A justifiable hope*:—There is a true hope and a false hope, a justifiable and an unjustifiable hope—the words direct us to the former. I. Here is a hope that has a justifiable OBJECT. What is the object? "Thy salvation." What does the real salvation of man involve? 1. Restoration to lost holiness. The soul was created in the image of God, that is, in moral perfection. That image it has lost, the restoration of that is salvation. The restoration of purity, love, spiritual freedom, loyalty. 2. The restoration of lost usefulness. The soul was made to be useful, to render by its true thoughts, pure sympathies, and wise counsels, service to other souls. But this usefulness it has lost. As a rule, men are injurious to each other. Salvation is the restoration of this usefulness. All souls ministering and inter-ministering to the good of one another. Now, is not this a justifiable object of hope? This is the hope which God has set before us in the Gospel. II. Here is a hope that has a justifiable REASON. The reason here assigned for this hope is devotion to the right. A man who is loyally and livingly devoted to the right has undoubtedly a justifiable reason for "hoping for salvation." It cannot be purchased, it cannot be given, it must grow out of the soul devoted to rectitude. (Homilist.) *The doing of God's commandments*:—Set upon the practice of what you read. A student in physic doth not satisfy himself to read over a system or body of physic, but he falls upon practising physic. The life-blood of religion lies in the practical part. Christians should be walking Bibles. Xenophon said, "Many read Lycurgus's laws, but few observe them." The Word written is not only a rule of knowledge, but a rule of obedience; it is not only to mend our sight, but to mend our pace. David calls God's Word "a lamp unto his feet" (ver. 105). It was not only a light to his eyes to see by, but to his feet to walk by. By practice we trade with the talent of knowledge, and turn it to profit. This is a blessed reading of Scripture, when we fly from the sins which the Word forbids, and espouse the doctrines which the Word commands. Reading without practice will be but a torch to light men to hell. (T. Watson.)

Ver. 168. I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies: for all my ways are before Thee.—*A sincere summary*, and a *searching inquiry* (with ver. 176):—These two verses form a paradox, both true, and true of the same man, at the same time. I. Our first text is a SINCERE SUMMARY OF A GODLY MAN'S LIFE. Looking back, he can say of it in general, "I have kept Thy precepts," etc. 1. It is needful that we should have so lived that this shall be the summary of our life; for if we have not so lived, what evidence have we that we have been born again,—that we have passed from death unto life,—that we have been delivered from the bondage of sin, and brought into the way of holiness? 2. Whenever a man can truly say, with the psalmist, "I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies," it is a fruit of grace. 3. This summary of life is excellent for its breadth. "I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies." I feel that I am as much bound to believe right as to act right; and it is just as truly a sin to believe error, when I can learn the truth, as it is to commit iniquity. 4. It is excellent for its length. 5. It is excellent from its cause. The psalmist kept God's precepts and testimonies because all his ways were before God. He felt that God was watching him, he lived under the consciousness of God's presence with him both by night and day. 6. It is excellent from its use. It is an

argument for the Gospel which the most sceptical cannot refute, and it is a most blessed way of propagating that Gospel, for men are more often convinced by our actions than by our words. II. The psalmist, after he had spoken thus, and spoken quite sincerely and truly, yet felt that he must close his long life's summary in another fashion. He then uttered our second text, which I called a SEARCHING SCRUTINY: "I have gone astray," etc. The life of a believer may be like that of Job, "perfect and upright," but when it comes under the scrutiny of an eye that is illuminated by the Spirit of God, and touched with the heavenly eye-salve, quite another verdict is given; and, tremblingly, with many tears, the confession is poured into the ear of God, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep"; followed by the petition, "Seek Thy servant"; and the renewed declaration, "for I do not forget Thy commandments." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 169-176. **Let my cry come near before Thee, O Lord: give me understanding according to Thy Word.**—A model prayer:—I. THE EARNESTNESS IT BREATHES. "Let my cry come near before Thee, O Lord." This prayer is not a statement, not an address, but a "cry" denoting great fervency. Importunacy is the essential characteristic of true prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." II. THE MERCIES IT INVOKES. 1. Spiritual light. "Give me understanding according to Thy Word." In a moral sense we are blind and foolish. 2. Soul deliverance. "Deliver me according to Thy Word." Through the fall, souls are embarrassed, imperilled, and enslaved. 3. Divine help. "Let Thine hand help me." We talk of self-helpfulness. This alone is a fiction, a dream. No hand can really help us but the hand of God. 4. Continued existence (ver. 175). He wishes to live, not for any selfish ends, but in order to praise the Lord. III. THE PLEAS IT URGES. 1. The testimony he pleads is the testimony of God. He prays for what was Divinely promised. All true prayer must be guided by the Divine Word. 2. He pleads his resolution to praise God (vers. 171, 172). He resolves to lay out the remainder of his days in the service of his Maker. "Unto Him be glory," etc. 3. He pleads his delight in the Divine law (ver. 174). Those who fully appreciate what they have from God are warranted to expect, and qualified to receive, more. IV. THE CONFESSION IT MAKES (ver. 176). This is true of all (Luke xv. 4; Matt. xviii. 12, 13). Gone whence? From the knowledge, the image, the companionship of God. Whither? Into the wilderness of moral darkness and confusion. This is our helpless condition. Christ came to seek and to save the lost, blessed be His name! (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 173-175. **Let Thine hand help me; for I have chosen Thy precepts.**—The character and requests of a truly godly man:—I. HIS CHARACTER. 1. His choice is the precepts of God. 2. His object of desire is God's salvation. With respect to earthly things, nature is contented with a little, and grace with less. Not so in spiritual things. Here grace is insatiable; the more it has received, the more it desires. 3. His source of joy is God's law. Here he chooses the term "law" for denoting the whole revelation of God's will, to remind us of the inseparable connection between privilege and duty, faith and obedience, holiness and comfort; and to teach us that we ought to be thankful to God for the direction He hath given us in the road to heaven, no less than for the promises by which we are assured of the possession of it. II. HIS LEADING REQUESTS. He prays—1. For strengthening and upholding grace. "Let Thine hand help me." 2. For quickening grace. "Let my soul live." This was the life for which David prayed; a confirmed sense of pardoning mercy, larger measures of sanctifying grace, communion with his God in a present world, and the full and everlasting enjoyment of Him in heaven. The life for which he prays is no other than the salvation for which he longed. He had tasted of its sweetness, and he thirsted for more. "Let my soul live," saith he; to which he subjoins, "and it shall praise Thee." III. THE ULTIMATE END FOR WHICH DAVID WAS SO EARNEST IN HIS REQUESTS FOR HELP AND LIFE, AND THE IMPROVEMENT HE PROPOSED TO MAKE OF BOTH. He prayed for upholding and quickening grace, that he might be better qualified for the service of his God, to whom he had devoted himself and his all. Thus he prays (Ps. li. 12, 13, 15). And the principal reason for which he was desirous to obtain Divine consolation appears from the use he intended to make of it (ver. 32). (*R. Walker.*)

Ver. 174. **I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord; and Thy law is my**

delight.—*Longing for salvation:*—I. THE STATE OF MIND OF WHICH HE WAS THE SUBJECT. This phraseology implies, that of all other benefits, none are of such great value as the salvation of the soul; also that we cannot save ourselves, neither is salvation to be hoped for from the hills or the mountains, or from the creature in any form which it can wear. It is "the grace of God" alone that "brings salvation." Then in what does this salvation consist? It consists in emancipation from the curse of the law, deliverance from the anger of God. It is a salvation with the possession of the blessings of forgiveness, of renewal, of progressive sanctification, of preparation for the joys in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb. II. THE GRAND TEST BY WHICH WE MAY JUDGE OF THE INTEGRITY OF THIS ARDENT DESIRE WHICH IS HERE EXPRESSED. "Thy law is my delight." The law of God presents us with the first and most beautiful exhibition of God's moral character and His attributes. The law of God, by its types and shadows, directs us to the grand remedial means—the great propitiation which was to take away the sin of the world. The law of God, considering it as embracing the whole lively oracles, points us to the Saviour, Christ the Lord. The law of the Lord says, that those who come to Him He will in no wise cast out. There is everything, therefore, in the Word of God, and in the Gospel of our salvation, to awaken our reverence, our admiration, and our most affectionate desire. (*J. Clayton, M.A.*)

David's longing and David's love:—I. HIS LONGING. By salvation is meant here no other thing but that which in the Scripture is sometimes called "life eternal," sometimes "the kingdom of heaven," sometimes "the glory which shall be showed" hereafter, sometimes "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," sometimes "the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," sometimes "an inheritance, immortal and undefiled, which fadeth not"; in a word, those unspeakable, and not to be conceived, blessings, "which God hath prepared for those that love Him." This was the object, the mark of David's longing. This salvation he calleth the Lord's (Thy salvation); because, as for us, it is neither an inheritance which we are born unto, nor a purchase which by any desert we can compass, so it is the Lord's every way: it is He which hath first prepared it: it is He which hath freely disposed it according to the good pleasure of His own will: it is He which reserveth it in heaven for those who are reserved unto Jesus Christ. There are three things required of a Christian: first, by a feeling of sin to seek Christ. Secondly, by a holy faith to find Christ. Thirdly, by newness of life to dwell with Christ. The first of these three is the same longing for salvation which I entreat of; and therefore, as in a ladder there is no coming to the upper step but by the nethermost, so there is no dwelling with Christ, which is the height of happiness in this life, but by finding Him; found He cannot be but by seeking; to seek Him and to long for Him are all one; no man seeks Him but he which longs for Him, and no man longs for Him but he will care to seek Him. II. HIS LOVE. "Thy law is my delight." It is not enough for a man to say he longs and desires to be saved, unless he make conscience to use the appointed means to bring him thereunto. It had been but hypocrisy in David to say he longed for salvation, if his conscience had not been able to witness with him, that the law was his delight. It is mere mockery for a man to say he longeth for bread, and prayeth to God every day to give him his daily bread, if he either yet walk in no calling, or else seek to get by fraud and rapine, not staying himself at all upon God's providence. Who will imagine that a man wishes for health, who either despiseth or neglecteth the means of his recovery? God hath in His wisdom appointed a lawful means for every lawful thing: this means being obediently used, the comfortable obtaining of the end may be boldly looked for; the means being not observed, to think to attain to the end is mere presumption. There is nobody almost, but if he be asked, for shame he will say he loveth God's Word, and that he were a very wretch if he should not. But come to the undeceivable marks and unseparable signs of this love, it will then appear that God's Word hath but a very few friends. The very sign of love to the Word of God is love to the public ministry thereof in God's Church: the reason is plain. He which loveth the Word unfeignedly, must needs love the means by which the Word shall become most profitable unto him. The next sign of love to the Word is the private use of it. If a man should be stinted to one meal a week, he would have a pined body at the week's end; what shall then become of our souls if we think it enough that they once a week be fed with the Word of God, and do not give them some other private refreshing. The third sign of love to the Word is love to the obedience of the Word. If ye love me (saith

Christ), keep My commandments: so, if we love the Word, we cannot but make conscience to do that which is commanded by the Word. The reason is this: he which truly loveth the Word must needs tender the credit of it, and labour by all means to maintain it. Now, it is the greatest honour to the Word of God that may be, when men which possess it are ruled by it, and walk according to it. The fourth sign of love to the Word is hatred of all false religion which is contrary to the Word. I hate vain inventions (saith David), and again, I esteem all Thy precepts most just, and hate all false ways. The last sign of our love to the Word is to love it when the profession of it is most despised. This is noted as a special fruit of David's love. Examine but this one psalm (vers. 23, 51, 61, 69, 110, 141). (*S. Hieron.*)

Ver. 175. **Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee.**—*The love of life vindicated*:—Setting aside those who love life only for reasons which ought not to have such weight with them, and who would prolong it only to abuse it, I shall show you some better reasons for this attachment; derived from nature, from society, and from religion. I. **WE NATURALLY LOVE LIFE**; and this argument alone is sufficient to prove the innocence of that love. II. **WE LOVE LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF SOCIETY, AND THE CONNECTIONS WE HAVE CONTRACTED IN IT.** A husband and a wife,—living in the happiest union, and looking forward to a great length of days, and to many comforts,—are threatened with sudden separation by death. Can any one blame the tender and lively regrets which both of them experience at this unlooked-for parting? And again; a man whose high station enables him to render important services to society may, without presumption, wish on this account for a lengthening of his days. III. **WE MAY LOVE LIFE FROM A PRINCIPLE OF PIETY AND RELIGION.** 1. Since life is a gift from God's bounty, a favour which He grants to us, why should we not love it in this point of view? Why, when it pleases the great Disposer of our days to prolong the course of them, should we not testify our joy by the sincerest thanksgivings? 2. Religion attaches us to life by another consideration, in which all of us are greatly concerned: and that is, the imperfection of the great work of our salvation; the just awe and fear of appearing at God's judgment-seat before we have set our accounts in order, and made our preparations for eternity. 3. One more consideration, very consistent with such true humility, is,—that of our good example; the light of which we may innocently, and even holily, wish to shine still longer, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." (*S. Partridge.*)

Ver. 176. **I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments.**—*The Christian, conscious of departure from God*:—We have in this verse the description of a believer—not as he ought to be—not as he would wish to be—but as he is. It is not a fancy picture; it is a picture of life. I. **IT IS AN HONEST CONFESSION.** It is upright; and downright. He does not throw the blame upon the world's seducements, and say—"That was too great an enemy for me, it overcame me." He does not throw the blame upon Satan. Neither does he throw the blame upon the flesh that was in him; though we know that was the source of the evil. He takes the whole blame to himself—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep." II. **THE PRAYER**: "Seek Thy servant." It implies that he had got so far that he did not know his way back. Quite evidently: "I have gone astray, seek Thy servant," I cannot find any way of return. III. **THE PLEA**: "For I do not forget Thy commandments." There are periods in a believer's life in which he not only has one evidence, but he has a hundred evidences of his adoption. But there are periods when it seems almost reduced to the little spark on the ocean. Here is that little spark—"I do not forget Thy commandments." Do not think it a mere point of memory. No, it is something more than that. "Though I have gone from Thee, though I have left Thy precepts, though I have not followed them as I ought to have followed them, yet 'I do not forget' they are sweet to me; I love them; I wish to have them written out in my heart." Conclusion—1. The tendency there is in sin. It is not contented with making us miserable; it wants to destroy us, and that for ever. 2. The weakness of the believer. Like a lost sheep. 3. The faithfulness of the Holy Spirit. He puts this plea in the heart. 4. The kind Restorer of this wandering sheep. 5. Beware of whatever leads to going astray. Love of the world, idleness, etc. 6. Seek that which promotes the life of God. Live upon Christ. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*)

PSALM CXX.

VERS. 1-7. *In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me.*—*The Songs of Degrees*:—How came this and fourteen following psalms to be put together, and to receive their distinctive title? It has been suggested that they were thus called from peculiarity in rhythm; but perhaps, in this respect, some of them might with as much correctness be described as songs of the goings-down. The opinion is equally doubtful that the heading was given them because, when they were chanted, the volume of voice and music gradually ascended. As much might be safely conjectured of many other psalms. It is not less a flight of fancy to explain the title as meaning Songs of the Steps, attaching the fifteen songs to the flight of fifteen steps in the Temple which led up from the common court to that of the priests; there being no evidence that the Levites were accustomed, in the great festivals, as they mounted from court to court, to halt on every step while singing, with the accompaniment of the flute, that song of the fifteen which corresponded with it in number; or no proof that the stair existed before the time of Herod. Nor can the allusion be to the carrying up of the ark to the tabernacle prepared for it by David; for the authors of half of the Songs of Degrees were not then born. Some conclude that these psalms were composed when the Jews went up from Babylon to their own country (Ezra vii. 9). It is not a sufficient objection to this view that they are not called songs of the going-up, but of the goings-up, inasmuch as there were more ascents than one from Babylon to Jerusalem after the seventy years' captivity; and there is no need to question that some of them were originated by circumstances of the return. But we take it that what the emancipation and its incidents suggested was, not more the composition of new songs than the adoption or adaptation of well-known hymns that had long been popular, and were suitable to the case of the returning Israelites. Fifteen were chosen; and, we may believe, scribes could not copy faster than the work was in demand. God directed the choice, and has preserved the Songs of Degrees for the use and edification of His Church to the end of time. It is not very difficult to see how appropriate were these select songs for the pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Patriotic, short and pithy, with key-words, and catch-words, they were easy to remember, and pleasant to repeat. Plaintive and low sometimes, blending with the thoughts of the aged and the sighs of the feeble and weary, they were as frequently lively and buoyant, tying the bounding youth to the slow pace of the caravan. Depicting domestic scenes, they brought to mind the dear ones left at home in the fatherly care of Jehovah. They contained sweet allusions to David's piety, and the immortal harp he had tuned for the tribes on Mount Zion, and to Solomon's magnificent and tranquil reign. They told of the beauty of the city, the splendour of the Temple, and the glad solemnities of the festival to which the pilgrims were going, or from which they were returning. Songs of defiance and triumph they were, of faith, hope and charity, of gratitude and joy, declaring the mighty deeds, watchful protection, bountiful providence and redeeming mercy of the Lord. Who, they demanded, could injure the servants of Him who had saved His people from their Egyptian, Arabian, Philistine, Babylonian and Samaritan foes? The songs of the pilgrims encouraged and strengthened them to persevere in the roughest places and against the greatest dangers. Songs of the Ascents these are, as aids in the goings-up of worship. A good hymn is wings to the soul; and the saint is a living psalm-book. The child of God often feels, when singing choice words, that his Father's hand is helping him higher. Not only on the long journey to the feast and back were the Israelites "singing pilgrims": they delighted in their sacred songs along the road and in Jerusalem, because they loved them at home. Hymns are for use in domestic and private devotion, as well as public services. The psalm-book is a looking-glass for you. In its writers, and the saints of whom they write, you may see yourself, and your experience and duty. Behold them at home, in the street, in the temple, in profound distress, in bitter conflict, looking to God, trusting in His mercy, waiting for His interposition, and triumphing in His salvation; and not merely resemble them in situation and want, but, so far as they set you a good example, in disposition, language, meaning and behaviour. Nothing can be fitter than this scroll of songs for the pilgrim to carry in his bosom, as he flies from Destruction, and aims at the Heavenly City. There is no stage in his progress in which

it will not supply his heart and lips with appropriate thought and expression. (*E. J. Robinson.*) *A good man with bad neighbours*:—Whoever is the author of the psalm he represents himself as a good man. He had prayed, and his prayer had been answered, and in the last verse he says that whilst his neighbours were for war he was for peace. But his neighbours were distinguished by two great evils—slandering tongues and querulous tempers. I. **SLANDERING TONGUES** (ver. 2). Slander is a common and a very pernicious evil. "How frequently," says Sterne, "is the honesty and integrity of a man disposed of by a smile or a shrug! How many good and generous actions have been sunk into oblivion by a distrustful look, or stamped with the imputations of proceeding from bad motives, by a mysterious and seasonable whisper." 1. The slanderous tongue was terribly painful to the psalmist. He speaks of it as—(1) Sharp arrows of the mighty. (2) Coals of juniper. 2. The slanderer deserves appropriate punishment. II. **QUERULOUS TEMPER** (vers. 5, 6). There are in most neighbourhoods those of irascible, choleric, petulant tempers, always ready for angry wrangling and disputation. Like a tinder box they only require a spark to produce an explosion. Shenstone says, "I consider you very testy and quarrelsome people in the same light as I do a loaded gun, which may, by accident, go off and kill one." What are you to do with people of this irascible make? Do not contend with them, do not return their spiteful and malignant utterances. As well endeavour to quench the lightning with a spoonful of water. As God made such tempers they have their use. Out of them come the severe critic, the inflexible censor, the savage warrior, the denunciatory preacher. On the contrary, show them kindness. Though much may depend upon their physical organization, the querulous spirit may be exorcised from them, may be utterly overcome. Such reformations have been effected, and Christ's Gospel of kindness, mighty for that purpose, will one day turn all such natures into love. (*Homilist.*) *Uncongenial society*:—I. ITS CHARACTERISTICS (vers. 2, 6, 7). This is the very climax of bad society! There is nothing more damaging and dangerous than "lying lips"; nothing more viperous than a "deceitful tongue"; nothing more distracting and disagreeable than a spirit of strife and contention, etc. II. **UNCONGENIAL SOCIETY IN ITS RESULTS**. 1. Inflicting punishment on itself (vers. 3, 4); piercing; scorching and consuming. 2. Inflicting distress on the Christian (ver. 1). Causing—(1) Misery (ver. 5). (2) Self-vindication (ver. 7). (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips.—*Lying lips*:—A watch that cannot be depended upon is of very little use. It may have a beautiful gold case, it may be sparkling with jewels, but yet it will be of no service to me as a watch unless I can depend on what it tells me about the time. And so one of the things by which we judge of the real value and worth of men or women, of boys or girls, is this—Are they truthful? Do they mean what they say? Are they really what they seem to be? If so, then they are like a watch that keeps good time. But one of the effects of sin on our hearts has been to take away from them the love of the truth, and to incline them to lying. I. **THE DISGRACE WHICH ATTENDS LYING**. 1. It should make little difference to us what wicked men consider to be disgraceful. But if anything will bring shame and disgrace to us, in the opinion of God and of good men, then we should be very careful not to do that thing, whatever it may be. But there is nothing that will do this sooner than lying (Prov. vi. 17; xii. 22). 2. It is always disgraceful to follow the example of a very wicked person. But we know that Satan is the most wicked person in this world, or in any other. He is "the father of lies" (John viii. 44). When we tell lies, we prove ourselves to be the children of Satan. And there cannot be a greater disgrace in the world than to be closely related to such a person, and to have it proved that he is our father. But liars are not only the children of Satan; they are his servants also (Acts v. 9). Lying is Satan's work. And when we engage in lying, we let our hearts become Satan's workshop. 3. In some parts of India, if any person is proved to be a liar, he receives the penalty of the law, which requires that his mouth be sewed up. The offender has his hands tied behind him. He is led out to a post in a public place, to which he is tied, and one of the officers of the government, appointed for that purpose, sews up his lips with a needle and thread. Then he is allowed to go. And every one who sees his closed lips, and the blood flowing from them, can say to himself, "There goes a liar!" What a disgrace that sewed-up mouth would be to a man! David tells us that "the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped" (Ps. lxxiii. 11);

Solomon tells us that "a lying tongue is but for a moment" (Prov. xii. 10); and in another place David says that "lying lips shall be put to silence" (Ps. xxxi. 18). We are not told how God will do this; but we may be very sure it will be in some way that will fasten shame and disgrace on those who have not prayed earnestly, as David did, in the language of our text, "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips." II. **THE INJURY THAT IT DOES.** 1. The first sin ever committed in our world was a lie. It was in the Garden of Eden. Satan was tempting Eve to break God's commandment. He did it by telling her a lie, and getting her to believe it. And now it is impossible for anybody to count up all the injury that has been done by that sin. That one sin was like poisoning a fountain, and then all the water that flows from it is poisoned too. 2. And when we tell a lie now, we never can tell where the injury that springs from it will stop. It is just like loosening a great rock at the top of a mountain, and letting it go rolling and plunging down the side of the mountain. Nobody can tell how far it will go, nor how much injury it will do before it stops rolling. Telling a lie is like letting a wild beast out of a cage. You can never tell how many people that animal will wound or kill before he is caught again. Telling a lie is like dropping sparks in powder. It is sure to make an explosion, and no one can tell beforehand how much harm that will do. Telling a lie is like going out from the plain beaten path into a tangled wood. You can never tell how long it will take you, or how much you must suffer, before you get back again. III. **THE PUNISHMENT THAT FOLLOWS** IT (Prov. xix. 9; Rev. xxi. 27, 28). But it is not only after death that punishment follows lying. The Bible shows us how God often punishes people for lying even in this life. There we see Gehazi telling a lie, and the very same day on which he told it brought the punishment. And then we read about Ananias and Sapphira. They agreed together to tell a deliberate, dreadful lie; and they were both struck dead with that lie upon their lips. (R. Newton, D.D.)

Ver. 4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.—"Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper":—Thy arrows are not pointless, and thou aimest them with some precision; but on my side is the Almighty Warrior. Thou art able to scorch me for a season; but the vengeance of my Deliverer upon thee is a burning fire that never shall be quenched. He shall more than pay thee in thy own coin. Seeking my ruin, thou destroyest thyself. Thou fallest on thy own sword, and into thy own flame. Nay, thou drawest down upon thee the two-edged sword of the mouth of the Almighty (Rev. i. 16; ii. 16; xix. 15, 21). Thou provokest to thy eternal perdition the "Consuming Fire" (Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3; Heb. xii. 29). They who use the tongue as an arrow shot forth with inflamed combustibles wrapped about it to set fire to the habitations of others, bring upon their own dwellings and themselves "sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Eph. vi. 16). By "coals of juniper" or "broom" is meant the most vehemently and longest burning fuel, and by "sharp arrows of the mighty" the vengeful weapons of the conqueror. Both figures denote ways and instruments of punishment, and are here employed to picture the defeat and ruin that will come from Jehovah upon His people's enemies (Ps. vii. 18; xlv. 5; cxi. 9-11). "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His Name" (Ex. xv. 3; Isa. xlii. 13). "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight" (Ps. lxxii. 14). They who stir their tongues against His children shall have Him move His tongue against themselves. Do men live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? It is equally true that by His voice they die. He has but to speak, and they perish. Tremble at the terror of the Lord, "sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." The language of the wasted and weary, the psalm is also that of the confiding and persevering. Why should the Lord's people allow lying lips to divert them from the work which He has given them to do, and for which He will find them means and opportunities according to His pleasure? Let the false tongue call them presumptuous, ambitious, incapable, insane: the city and temple of God will yet be completed. They will think less of the adversaries around them, and more of the Master and Friend among them and over all. Their foes may be strong and fierce as Mesech, and wild and false as Kedar; but the Mighty One who delivered them before is their present Saviour. In the renewal of their distress, they cry to the Lord as formerly; and He repeats His mercies, giving them peace even when there is no peace. (E. J. Robinson.) *Correspondence between transgression and retribution:*—The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is

frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution. The evil we had prepared for others recoils one day upon ourselves; and the cup we had mingled for others is afterwards applied to our own lips. He who sows serpents' teeth need not look for a joyous harvest. This law of correspondence seems to be here indicated. Similar figures are employed to express the offence and the punishment of the wicked (Jer. ix. 3; Ps. lxiv. 8). But let the slanderer be upon his guard. There is another bow besides that in his possession. The arrows are sharp and burning; and when they are sent from the bow by the arm of Omnipotence, nothing can resist their force, and in mortal agony His enemies bite the dust (Ps. vii. 12, 13, 16; lxiv. 7). This train of thought is also pursued in the illustration of fire. James (iii. 6) compares the tongue of slander to fire. Such is the tongue, and here is the punishment: coals of juniper, remarkable for their long retention of heat. And yet what a feeble illustration of the wrath of God, which burns down to the lowest hell! "His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire." Liars are excluded from heaven by a special enactment of the Sovereign; and all of them "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (N. McMichael, D.D.)

Ver. 5. **Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech.**—*The sojourn in Mesech*:—Mesech was the son of Japheth, from whom were descended the men who inhabited that most barbarous of all regions, according to the opinion of the ancients, the northern parts of Muscovy or Moscow, and Russia. The inhabitants of the tents of Kedar were the descendants of one of the sons of Abraham, who had taken to nomadic habits, and were continually wandering about over the deserts; and were, besides, thought, and doubtless were, guilty of plundering travellers, and were by no means the most respectable of mankind. We are to understand, then, by this verse, that the people among whom the psalmist dwelt were, in his esteem, among the most barbarous, the most fierce, the most graceless of men. This has been the cry of the children of God in all ages. You have longed to be far away from this dusky world, so full of sin, and traps, and pitfalls, and everything that makes us stumble in our path, and of nothing that can help us onward towards heaven. I. First, then, a WORD OR TWO IN JUSTIFICATION OF THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT. I will not say that it is thoroughly commendable, in a Christian man, to long to be away from the place where God's providence has put him. But I will say, and must say, that it is not only excusable, but scarcely needs an apology. 1. Think how the wicked world slanders the Christian. There is no falsehood too base for men to utter against the follower of Jesus. 2. Besides, the Christian is conscious that evil companionship is damaging to him. If he is not burnt, he is at least blackened by contact with the ungodly. 3. The continual process of temptation which surrounds the Christian who is situated in the midst of men of unclean lips. II. Having thus spoken a word of justification for the psalmist's complaint, I am going, next, to JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD WITH US, IN HAVING SUBJECTED US TO THIS DWELLING IN THE TENTS OF KEDAR. 1. It is right and just, and good that God has spared us to be here a little longer; for, in the first place, my brothers and sisters, has not God put us here to dwell in the tents of Kedar, because these, though perilous places, are advantageous posts for service? That was a noble speech of our old English king, at Agincourt, when he was surrounded by multitudes of enemies, "Well, be it so. I would not lose so great an honour, or divide my triumph. I would not," said he, "have one man the fewer among my enemies, because then there would be a less glorious victory." So, in like manner, let us take heart even from our difficulties. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge; Jehovah-Nissi is inscribed on our banner. 2. You never will wish, I am sure, to get away from the tents of Kedar if you will recollect that it was through another Christian tarrying here,—when, perhaps, he wanted to be gone,—that you are this day a Christian. If you were to go to heaven now, perhaps you would go almost alone; but you must stop till there is a companion to go with you. 3. Perhaps our Master keeps us in the tents of Kedar because it will make heaven all the sweeter. III. A WORD OF COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN WHILE PLACED IN THESE APPARENTLY EVIL CIRCUMSTANCES. Well, there is one word in the text that ought to console him in a case like this. "Woe is me, that I sojourn"—thank God for that word "sojourn." Yes, I do not live here for ever; I am only a stranger and a sojourner here, as all my fathers were; and though the next sentence does say, "I dwell," yet, thank God, it is a tent I dwell in, and that will come down by and by: "I dwell in the tents of Kedar."

Ye men of this world, ye may have your day, but your day will soon be over; and I will have my nights, but my nights will soon be over, too. It is not for long, Christian, it is not for long. The end will make amends for all that thou endurest, and thou wilt thank God that He kept thee, and blessed thee, and enabled thee to suffer and endure, and at last brought thee safely home. This, however, is not all the comfort I have for you, because that would look like something at the end, like the child who has the promise of something while it is taking its medicine. No, there is something to comfort you during your trials. Remember that, even while you are in the tents of Kedar, you have blessed company, for God is with you; and though you sojourn with the sons of Meseeh, yet there is Another with whom you sojourn, namely, your blessed Lord and Master. Brethren, ye may be comforted yet again with this sweet thought,—that not only is God with you, but your Master was once in the tents of Kedar; not merely spiritually, but personally, even as you are; and inasmuch as you are here too, this, instead of being painful, should be comforting to you. Have you not received a promise that you shall be like your Head? Thank God that promise has begun to be fulfilled. What more can you want? Is not this a sufficient honour, that the servant is as his Master, and the subject is as his Sovereign? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Murmuring, its cause and cure.*—The disposition of which such words as these are the indication is familiar to all of us. We continually observe it. We at least occasionally experience it. It is the disposition to regard ourselves as unfortunate in our circumstances or surroundings, and to fasten upon them the responsibility of our own indolence or failure. I. **AIMLESSNESS IS THE MOTHER OF MURMUR.** Take all the men you know who are always complaining of everything and every one, and I think you will find that they are persons who have no perceptible object in life, and of whose continued appearance upon the stage of this world you can give no account; except that it is not the will of Providence that they should die, and that it is not their own will that they should commit suicide. II. **THERE IS SUCH A THING AS SPIRITUAL AIMLESSNESS,** and it is precisely the same in kind as that with which we are all familiar. It is of this that I am about to speak. It, too, is the parent of murmuring. From it springs dissatisfaction with our circumstances, impatience of our position, weariness of our enforced employments, and a general state of feeling leading up to such an exclamation as that of the text. III. **WHAT, THEN, DO I MEAN BY SPIRITUAL AIMLESSNESS?** To make this clear we must understand what is spiritual aim. There are a great many kinds of aim connected with, and even tending towards, religious objects, and yet you may have any or all of them distinctly before you, and be all the while spiritually aimless. There is aim in the conversion of the heathen, the correction of religious error, the building of churches, the government of the Church in general, the improvement of ritual or of worship in some church in particular, the teaching of the young, the visiting of the sick, the comforting of the afflicted. But there is one from which all these ought to spring—one in which they ought all to centre—one to which they ought all to be subservient. That one is the salvation of your own soul. We all need to keep before our minds “the end (aim) of our faith even the salvation of our souls.” That faith is “the substance of things hoped for: the evidence of things not seen.” That faith includes—nay, that faith is a belief that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”—that from His love neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword shall separate us, that, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” And so, in proportion to the reality and constancy of that faith, will be our power to repress each rising murmur, of which I have taken the text as an example. IV. **AT THE VERY BEST SUCH A MURMUR IS THE EXPRESSION OF A REGRET THAT WE CANNOT DO MORE FOR GOD.** And so its obvious corrective is the deepening of our conviction that even so He may be—nay, He certainly is—if we really “love Him above all things,” doing more for us than if He “gave us our desire and sent leanness withal into our soul.” Perchance we are right in our belief that other positions, companionships, or employments would tend to the fuller development of that part of our constitution—intellectual, moral, or spiritual—to which we feel as towards some favoured child. But are we so sure that the course we should mark out for ourselves would tend to the forming of our characters “all round”? No. We do not believe in the love of God if we do not believe that He is doing what is best towards such a formation of us; which, after all, is conformity, as

far as we can be conformed here below, to the perfect character of Him whose name we bear, whose life is our example, whose death is our hope. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *Mesech and Kedar*:—The language is metaphorical, for the same people did not be in opposite countries remote from each other, and the two races did not intimately mingle in any border land. The implacable people among or near whom the children of the captivity had to work and wait, whether degenerate countrymen, oppressive Chaldeans, or, more probably, malicious Samaritans, were no better than the fathers of the Muscovites or the offspring of Hagar. In the same way we speak of the Goths whom we encounter, Arabs in our streets, and heathens in Christendom. The psalm, passing from figure to fact, explains itself in the concluding verses. "My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace." By *Mesech and Kedar* are meant the disturbers of Israel. The missionary abroad, persecuted by ungrateful pagans, and maligned and hindered by immoral and envious settlers; the evangelist at home, whom Pharisees pronounce a low person, and infidels despise; the Methodist, nicknamed by one party a schismatic, and by another now patted on the back, and then cuffed and kicked; the Christian student, in a class composed mainly of disdainful unbelievers and provoking worldlings; the religious workman hated by intemperate associates for his purity, and cursed by blasphemers among them for his piety; the God-fearing apprentice, under an ill-tempered taskmaster who construes his mistakes into proofs of hypocrisy, and among thoughtless shop-mates who ridicule his habits of devotion and his scrupulous behaviour; the converted youth whose parents are not ashamed of being without sittings in the sanctuary, and whose brothers and sisters are Sabbath breakers; any one of these tried saints of the Lord, and many another sufferer from proud and false tongues, may use the words, "Woe is me," etc. (*E. J. Robinson.*) *Grace independent of ordinances*:—When there was no rain from heaven, God could cause a mist to arise and water the earth (*Gen. ii. 6*); even so, if the Lord should bring us where there be no showers of public ordinances, He can stir up in our souls those holy and heavenly meditations, which shall again drop down like a heavenly dew upon the face of our souls, and keep up a holy verdure and freshness upon the face of our souls. Egypt is said to have no rain; but God makes it fruitful by the overflowing of its own river Nilus. And truly if God bring any true believer into a spiritual Egypt, where the rain of public ordinances doth not fall, He can cause such a flow of holy and heavenly thoughts and meditations as shall make the soul very fruitful in a good and a holy life; and therefore we should oft, in such a condition, believingly remember, that if we do our endeavour, by private prayer, meditation, reading, and such like, God is able, and will, in the want of public ordinances, preserve the life of religion in our souls, by private helps. (*J. Jackson, M.A.*) *Forced associations with the ungodly*:—Religious people are sometimes forced by the necessity of their lives to associate with those who are worldly and irreligious. "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar." How shall those who have to dwell in the tents of ungodliness keep their souls from being contaminated by bad examples? The following anecdote furnishes a useful hint. A certain nobleman, we are told, was very anxious to see the model from whom Guido painted his lovely female faces. Guido placed his colour-grinder, a big coarse man, in an attitude, and then drew a beautiful Magdalen. "My dear Count," he said, "the beautiful and pure ideal must be in the mind, and then it is no matter what the model is." He in whose heart and mind is enshrined the beautiful and pure idea of Christ has a model after which to shape his life, and then it is no matter about other models. (*Quiver.*)

Ver. 6. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.—*Haters of peace*:—What an appalling picture have we here of unreasonable and wicked men! As they love lies, so they hate peace. Is not this the very spirit of him, who was both a liar and a murderer from the beginning? They hate that which is beloved by all the good. What holy and gentle delight is associated with the very name of peace! Peace resting upon our bosom, and soothing all its cares: peace resting upon our households, and folding all the members in one loving embrace: peace resting upon our country, and pouring abundance from her golden horn: peace resting upon all nations, and binding them together with the threefold cord of a common humanity, a common interest, and a common religion! The man who hates peace is a dishonour to the race, an enemy to his brother, and a

traitor to his God. He hates Christ, who is the Prince of peace. He hates Christians, who are men of peace. Destitute of internal peace himself, and reluctant that any should possess a blessing in which he himself has no part, it is his incessant effort to sow the seeds of alienation, and to fan the flames of discord. And just as the foul bird of prey scents the battle from afar, and flies to the field of carnage, so you find the haters of peace perpetually prowling around scenes of contention, that they may lend a helping hand to the work of Satan. (N. McMichael, D.D.)

PSALM CXXI.

VERS. 1-8. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.—*Guaranteed security*.—I. **THE GODLY MAN'S NEED.** "Help." Can never outgrow this: dependence the characteristic of the creature: "help" must be had in the conflict or it will end in defeat, in the toil or it will issue in failure, in the pilgrim-march or we faint and fail by the way, etc. II. **THE GODLY MAN'S ATTITUDE:** Looking for help—"I will lift up my eyes," etc. He waits—he expects—he obtains. The truest vision is soul-vision. Looking up in solicitation, contemplation, expectation. "Up," from the mud and mire of earth, and the sins and sorrows of self. "The hills"—expressive of strength, "the strength of the hills is His": of majesty—of stability, "the everlasting hills": of veneration, "the silence of the hills breathes veneration" (Mrs. Hemans); striking and suitable emblem of Him to whom all might, and majesty, and duration, and reverence belong. III. **THE GODLY MAN'S CONFIDENCE:** "My help cometh from the Lord," etc. He is assured that He who made the heavens and made the earth would rather let the sky fall and the earth perish from the want of His support, than that he should suffer injury from the withholding of His help. Help alone cometh from God: help does and ever will be vouchsafed, etc. IV. **THE GODLY MAN'S SAFETY:** "He will not suffer," etc. 1. Safety guaranteed from the highest source: "the Lord is thy Keeper" (ver. 5). His wisdom, power, love, all His attributes a royal battalion—bodyguard around him, unceasingly around him (vers. 3, 4). 2. Safety guaranteed to the whole man, under all circumstances, through all time, from all evil (vers. 7, 8). (J. O. Keen, D.D.) *The good in time of need*.—I. **HIS ATTITUDE.** 1. God is the only true help of the soul. He alone can raise it from its fallen condition, break its fetters, heal its wounds, energize its faculties, and set it on a course safe and prosperous. 2. To Him the godly soul instinctively looks in trial. The worldly man in trial looks to earthly things for succor and support, to social sympathies, to human friendships, to Church officers, but the good man turns at once to God, feels that from Him alone the necessary help can come. II. **HIS PROTECTOR.** 1. The universal Creator. 2. A sleepless Guardian. 3. The all-sufficient. III. **HIS CONFIDENCE** (ver. 7). (*Homilist*.) *Looking to the hills*.—We see the exile, wearied with the monotony of the long-stretching, flat plains of Babylonia, summoning up before his mind the distant hills where his home was. We see him wondering how he will be able ever to reach that place where his desires are set; and we see him settling down, in hopeful assurance that his effort is not in vain, since his help comes from the Lord. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills;" away out yonder westwards, across the sands, lies the lofty summits of my fatherland that draws me to itself. Then comes a turn of thought, most natural to a mind passionately yearning after a great hope, the very greatness of which makes it hard to keep constant. For the second clause must be taken as a question: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?" How am I to get there? And then comes the final turn of thought: "My help cometh from the Lord," etc. I. **THE LOOK OF LONGING.** "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills"—a resolution, and a resolution born of intense longing. It comes to be a very sharp question with us professing Christians, whether the horizon of our inward being is limited by, and coterminous with, the horizon of our senses, or whether, far beyond the narrow limits to which these can reach, our spirits' desire stretches boundless. Are, to us, the things unseen the solid things, and the things visible the shadows and the phantoms? We see with the bodily eyes the

shadows on the wall, as it were, but we have to turn round and see with the eyes of our minds the light that flings the shadows. "I will lift up my eyes" from the mud-flats where I live to the hills that I cannot see, and, seeing them, I shall be blessed. Further, do we know anything of that longing that the psalmist had? He was perfectly comfortable in Babylon. There was abundance of everything that he wanted for his life. But for all that, fat, wealthy Babylon was not Palestine. So the psalmist longed for the mountains, though the mountains are often bare of green things, amidst the lush vegetation, the wealth of water and the fertile plains. Do we know anything of that longing which makes us "that are in this tabernacle to groan, being burdened"? Unless our Christianity throws us out of harmony and contentment with the present, it is worth very little. And unless we know something of that immortal longing to be nearer to God, and fuller of Christ, and emancipated from sense, and from the burdens and trivialities of life, we have yet to learn what the meaning of "walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit" really is. Further, do we make any effort like that of this psalmist, who encourages and stimulates himself by that strong "I will lift up my eyes"? You will not do it unless you make a dead lift of effort. II. THE QUESTION OF WEAKNESS. "From whence cometh my help?" The loftier our ideal, the more painful ought to be our conviction of incapacity to reach it. The Christian man's one security is in feeling his peril, and the condition of his strength is his acknowledgment and vivid consciousness always of his weakness. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." "Pride goeth before destruction." Remember the Franco-German war, and how the French Prime Minister said that they were going into it "with a light heart," and how some of the troops went out of Paris in railway carriages labelled "for Berlin"; and when they reached the frontier they were doubled up and crushed in a month. Unless we, when we set ourselves to this warfare, feel the formidableness of the enemy and recognize the weakness of our own arms, there is nothing but defeat for us. III. THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH. The psalmist asks himself: "From whence cometh my help?" and then the better self answers the questioning, timid self: "My help cometh from the Lord," etc. There will be no reception of the Divine help unless there is a sense of the need of the Divine help. God cannot help me before I am brought to despair of any other help. If we conceit ourselves to be strong we are weak; if we know ourselves to be impotent, Omnipotence pours itself into us. We read once that Jesus Christ healed "them that had need of healing." Why does the evangelist not say, without that periphrasis, "healed the sick"? Because he would emphasize, I suppose, amongst other things, the thought that only the sense of need fits for the reception of healing and help. If, then, we desire that God should be "the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever," the coming of His help must be wooed and won by our sense of our own impotence, and only they who say: "We have no might against this great multitude that cometh against us," will ever hear from Him the blessed assurance: "the Lord will fight for you." "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Looking up*:—The text would be better rendered, "Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? Whence should my help come? It cometh from Jehovah, who is high up above the hills; even from the Maker of heaven and earth." Palestine is a mountain-land; and such a country exercises a strange fascination over its inhabitants. What a holy power the great mountains have over us all! They seem to be so near to God, so full of God, that they bring us near to Him, and they fill us full of Him. They make us "look up." And that is precisely what we all need to have done for us. I. WORLD-DRAWN, WE LOOK DOWN, AND SO ARE WEAK. We are in the world; in a thousand subtle ways we are kin with the world, we are subject to its influences, caught by its whirl of excitement, absorbed by its pressing claims, and easily we may become of the world as well as in it. But everything the world presents to us is below us, beneath us; and it so keeps us looking down, that at last the habit of down-looking grows upon us. How powerfully we are all drawn by world-interests! The influence of the world begets a downward look, a sort of set of the eyes and heart downwards. What do we see when we thus fix our gaze? Nothing elevating, inspiring, ennobling, much of self, of man, and of things. Much of conflict, and struggle, and loss, and pain, and change, and dissatisfaction. Much of man, and his things, that perish with the using. Much of man, and the fashion of this world that passeth away. Human grandeur, which, seen from above, is all of tinsel. Human successes, that are touched by the chill hand of death, and fade sooner than the summer cloud.

What do we see when we look down? The hurry and bustle of thousands who, along with us, are hasting to be rich. The physicians, driving to homes that are full of pain, and grief, and fear. The mourners going about the streets. And the shadow of God's curse on sin resting darkly everywhere. It is this downward, earthward looking that makes us so weak: so weak as those who, being made in the image of God, ought to be strong in the strength of God. II. GOD-DRAWN, WE LOOK UP, AND SO GROW STRONG. God is ever calling. If we would stop and hush awhile, we might hear the voice of God in our souls, ever saying, "Look up! Look up!" Observe the gracious mission God has entrusted to the mountains. 1. Looking up, we find nothing of man's, it is all of God up above. 2. Looking up, we feel how pure God's snow is. 3. Looking up, we find God's clouds are glorified. 4. Looking up, we may hear the voices of the hills saying, "The mists and the storms are all outside us; they are not us. We abide firm through all the changes. The mists pass swiftly about us, and pass away. The storms wildly rage about us, but the winds die down, the rains stream off, the thunder-voice is quieted, and we come forth again, only cleansed and purified." It is a message from God for us troubled, sorrow-stricken, storm-tossed men and women. 5. And the hills seem also to say, "Up above is more sunshine than storm. Down below, man's smoke lies heavy over the towns, and God's clouds seem dark; but it is almost always sunshine up here." These are the messages that seem to come from the hills. "Look up! Look up more!" (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Excelsior!*—I. WHO IS IT THAT ASCENDS?—The Christian ascends. II. WHITHER? Heavenwards: to the everlasting hills. III. FROM WHENCE? From this vale of tears. IV. BY WHAT STEPS? By faith and repentance. (*C. A. Fowler, M.A.*) *The mountaineer's psalm*:—I imagine the psalmist had either dwelt under the mountains, or had climbed some of their steep sides. Palestine, it is true, was not a mountainous country, like Switzerland; but still, it had its mountains, notably Hermon, which is over 9,000 feet above sea-level, and usually covered with a cap of snow. In a small way the psalmist might have been, probably was, a mountaineer, and so knew the unique feelings which come to one in lofty places. The special point I want to enforce is this—that what the mountains are to the lower, that God is to the higher life of man. I. INVIGORATION COMES FROM THE MOUNTAINS. Every one is conscious of this. In the valleys there is heat and the languor it produces. On the mountains there may be heat from the sunlight, but there is the tonic which comes from glacier or snow-field. In the valley the air is heavy and depressing. On the mountains the air is light and exhilarating. And so exertion which is impossible down below, is possible and easy higher up. And what the mountains are to the body God is to the soul. He is the true invigorator. In Him is our help found. Like the body, the soul needs invigoration, and that invigoration is found only in God. Immunity from evil comes only from an invigorated spiritual nature—and such a nature comes only from the sense of God. II. THERE COME FROM THE MOUNTAINS WIDE OUTLOOKS. Down in the valleys the outlooks are narrow. You can see the valley sides, and it may be you can catch the sight of some solitary peak shining with snow, but all is limited. You cannot look into the valleys near, or see the peaks that lie beyond. But move upward to the hills which frame in the valley, or, better still, climb some lofty peak, and the whole land lies before you—peak after peak, valley after valley, till you are almost overpowered with the sight. And it is so when we lift our eyes to God. With Him in our heart we get wide outlooks. Look at the world from the standpoint of God. Lord Salisbury once advised people who were talking ignorantly about foreign affairs, and who knew little of the geography of the world, to turn to large maps. I venture to bid those depressed at heart to take wider outlooks—to come up out of the valley where the little drama of the present is being enacted, and remember that there is still One "who sitteth upon the circle of the earth," and who will guide the world, in spite of its aberrations, into the way of righteousness and peace. III. THE MOUNTAINS MAY REMIND US OF THE LOWLINESS OF MAN AND THE GREATNESS OF GOD. Down in the cities of the world man seems the great factor. He is in evidence everywhere. His works face us at every turn. But up among the mountains man and his work fade from view, and God and His work alone are in evidence. God is nearer to us in flower and tree, valley and mountain, than in any buildings made with hands. And the voices which have gone deepest into the hearts of this generation are not the voices of men who dwelt amid the crowded haunts of men, but of those who in the quietness of the country heard the voice of God. Wordsworth amid the dales

of Cumberland; Tennyson amid the heather-clad slopes of Surrey, or by the sea at Farringford; and, before and beyond all these, the Christ Himself, who said to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." (*W. G. Horder.*) *Looking up and lifting up*:—Hills have a fascination for those brought up among them. How Israel in Babylon sighed for their much-loved hills! How the Swiss away from their own country pine for the mountains of their native land! Jesus loved the hills. His chosen walks were among them. The hills were His sanctuary for prayer, His temple for worship; from the hills of Capernaum He preached; the crest of Tabor was the scene of His transfiguration; on the hill of Calvary He was crucified; from Olivet He ascended. There is an affinity between souls and hills. Especially for those who have become acquainted with their own solemn depths and sublime heights. The outward world tends to awaken the sympathy of the thoughtful for the true order which has been lost. It pictures to him both sides of his nature—his real and his ideal life, the life he lives, and the life of which he dreams, and for which he prays. The hills represent heights that he ought to attain—the deep places, depths of degradation into which he has fallen. Though imprisoned by a sinful darkness, and fettered by a chain of evil habits, the hills will not allow him wholly to forget his lost heights of freedom, peace, and blessedness, to which, now and again, he fain would, but feels he cannot return. The way of ascent is difficult. There is a broad and easy way, but it leads to deeper depths and heavier bonds. But in the deepest depths, and under the heaviest burdens, he ever and again remembers the heights, though the corresponding life may, long since, have been transferred to his dreams. There are no heights like those to which the soul rises in the exercise of faith—heights incredible to the senses. By faith, we finite creatures, with a sense-experience only of the finite, nevertheless apprehend the infinite; by faith, we creatures of "flesh and blood," shut in by the material, discover our only true home to be in the spiritual; by faith, we mortals, in a world of mortality, anticipate immortality; by faith, we poor slaves of a manifold bondage look for perfect liberty; by faith, we, the offspring of earthly parentage, claim God for our Father, and Heaven for our home. These are some of the heights of which the hills are representative, and to which they point, hills of hope, and help for our original and eternal nature. From "the hill of the Lord" we receive help for the valley. If we look up we shall receive light for our way, and be led in a plain path. The hill of the Lord is to the pilgrim who looks up what the compass is to the mariner who finds his course by it through the troubled waters of the pathless sea. For those who look to Him, the Lord opens up "a way in the desert," a path through the woods, and turns the sea into dry land. "In the presence of their enemies He prepares them a table" and causes them to "lie down in peace," and goes before them in the way—a guardian, guiding Presence—"a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night." In this short psalm the writer is so full of the protection and help of Jehovah that he cannot find terms enough in which to express the rich fulness of his joy and confidence. Fifteen times in eight verses he assures Israel of the "help," "keeping," and "preservation" of God—at all times; under all circumstances; for every one, with respect to his whole nature and history; for time and eternity. Oh, what hills of hope and help there are for the upward use of our eyes, altitudes of our own nature as seen in Jesus, which, like Alpine summits, far above every storm-swept height, look down in the mute eloquence and sublime repose of their eternal state invitingly on all below! The men who permanently bless the world are men who look up, and receive that which, travelling down "the starry road of the Infinite's abode," fills their eyes with reverence and a grand hope, and inspires their souls with a divine disdain of earthly goods and worldly honours, as being unworthy of man's "chief end." This habit of looking up will teach us to understand the use of trouble in the valley. Let us learn to regard all that troubles and disturbs us in our health, our home, our circumstances as the means by which God calls upon us to look up,—to disengage ourselves from earthly entanglements,—to prepare to ascend. By the trouble to which we are born, He seeks to wean us from the love of earth, that He may woo us to the love of heavenly things and the spiritual life of our eternal home. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) *Lift up the eyes of the soul*:—This verse would be a suitable inscription for a church entrance. It is a scripture to be repeated when walking to the temple. If ever the eyes are strained towards heaven, it is by those who go to the sanctuary, or long to do so. Yet it is possible to join the assembly of God's saints, and not lift up our eyes to

the hills. Some who make excursions seem to see all the meaning of their journey in what they take with them, others go chiefly to refresh themselves in the contemplation of God's flowers and trees, rocks and rivers, valleys and hills. Of travellers climbing together to a mountain summit, there are those who, on reaching it, as if they had done all, lie down till the moment for returning; while their wiser companions, as if there were something for which they had been at the trouble of ascending, stand on the top, and look forth earnestly. They admire the prospect, and mark the direction of a more lofty mountain which they intend to gain, and how the road lies by which they will have to travel thither. Our feet are to visit the hill of the earthly Zion, that our hearts may get a better view of the mountain of the Lord's house in the heavenly country. The object in attending the services of the sanctuary is to "hear of heaven and learn the way." (*E. J. Robinson.*) *Hills*:—Hills make us look up. It is well they do so, for all that is necessary for our life here comes from above. An artist whose eyes have been much accustomed to look up, has painted some very beautiful pictures of sunset skies, which astonish many people who visit the Kensington Museum in London. They have never seen such gorgeous sunsets, and for the good reason that they have not looked for them. We lose much by fixing our eyes upon the things beneath and seldom looking up. A king once asked a duke if he had seen an eclipse of the sun on the previous day. "No, sir," replied the nobleman, "I have so much business on earth that I have no time to look up." By looking up the wise men of the East were led to the Saviour, who then lay an infant in Bethlehem's manger. By looking up many a downcast heart has rejoiced to see the morning's sun rise, which seemed to speak to them of brighter days yet to come. But there is another kind of looking up that is necessary to give joy and true satisfaction to the soul. The high hills, the lovely skies, and the glowing sunsets should lead us to look higher up still—even to the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. This looking consists of real faith in God and in His promises. It is the soul looking beyond itself and all that is earthly to the Rock that is higher than we are. "Looking unto Jesus" is the secret of all true joy in the Christian life. It is as we look up with the eye of faith that the beauty of the Saviour is reflected upon us, and we are made like Him. But the hills have a few more lessons for us. 1. They give us a taste for what is beautiful. Some of the prettiest scenery in the world is amongst the hills. It is there we find "flowery glens and mossy dells, where happy birds in song agree." It is there we behold the delightful waterfalls and other beauties of nature. We have read of a traveller who went to America to see the Falls of Niagara, and who, after a long, weary journey, was within a few miles of them, and inquired of a man if the rumbling noise he heard was that of the Falls. The man replied that perhaps it was, but he had never been there, although all his life he had lived so near them. But it is not always that people have the time and the means for travelling, and so they are to be excused. There is, however, no excuse for people being ignorant of the beauties of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of all who come to Christ to see spiritual sights which gladden the heart and prepare the soul for heaven. Travellers tell us of beauty in other lands far surpassing anything we have ever seen here. And there is also a heavenly land which is so fair that its glory can never be told us, as we have no language to express it or mind to conceive it. 2. The hills are very valuable to us. Their lofty summits cause the moisture of the air to descend as rain or snow to refresh and make the earth fruitful. Then they give motion to the water, and thus keep it from growing stagnant or impure. Otherwise the water would have disease and death in it. Our souls, too, require heavenly rains to descend to refresh them, and to make them bear the fruits of the Spirit. We need the pure river of the water of life to flow through our souls to keep them in the love of God. 3. Hills praise God. They are commanded to do so in Scripture. One way by which they praise God is by producing holy desires in the hearts of men. They often cause people to think of the greatness and the glory of God. And they daily witness to His power and wisdom. We also are commanded to praise God, and we can do it consciously, which the hills are unable to do. We ought to praise God by the adoration of our hearts, the fruit of our lips, and the devotion of our lives. 4. The hills and the love of God are contrasted (*Isa. liv. 10*). How blessed it is to know that when the hills shall have passed away there is something that shall abide! Yes; the love of Jesus shall remain, and we shall dwell in the enjoyment of His glorious presence. His love was manifested upon a hill, which of all hills should

never be forgotten—the hill at Calvary. This hill speaks of the amazing love of God in giving up His only Son to die for us, and of the matchless love of Christ in bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. (*John Mitchell.*) *The far-away look*:—In one of Dr. Miller's helpful anecdotes we are told of a Christian woman, a busy editorial worker, whose eyes began to trouble her, until she was obliged to go to an oculist to see what was the matter with them. She told him she thought she needed a new pair of glasses. The oculist told her that what she needed was not new glasses, but rest for the eyes. That, she told him, was impossible. Her work compelled her to sit all day bending over a desk, reading and writing. The wise oculist asked her where she lived, and found it was in full sight of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Alleghanies. "Go home," he said, "and do your work as usual, but every hour or so leave your desk, and go and stand on your porch and look at the mountains. The far-away look will rest your eyes after the long strain of reading manuscripts and proof-sheets." That is what Sabbaths are for—the far-away looks. We all need them—an hour or two on Sunday, if no more. Then—and here is the lesson for many a busy house-mother who must prepare meals even on Sunday for her hungry children, who must often nurse the sick ones or stay at home with the little ones—if anything calls one away from the rest of soul and body, remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said that God wants mercy (kindness, goodness, helpfulness) even more than sacrifice. *From whence cometh my help.—The help of the hills*:—Let me speak of the helpfulness of the mountains as a sign, not a measure, but an imperfect sign of the helpfulness of God. The most sheltered spots of earth are mountain guarded. When we rejoice in the valley, let us remember only the mountain made it possible. Is it protected from devastating storms such as involve the plains in their fury? It is because the mountain has guarded it. It has broken the hurricane's wing and the cyclone's wheel. Is it alive with meadow streams that sing their glad song to the green grasses that bend over to listen? It is because the mountains sent the streamlets flashing down, pure as crystal and full of tonic for every living thing in the valley. Has there been an abundance of rain? The mountain nurtured the storm full of menace, but so full of blessing that when it saw the fields suffering for its baptism, it opened its veins of life with the lightning's lance, and became balm and benison to the blighted fields. Not only so, but the mountains give their fresh wealth to supply new soil to the valley. The storms that scar their old sides are ploughing up fresh soil for the cornfields and the valley. And the streams are the carriers that, plunging gaily from steep to steep, carry it down. The Alleghanies help to make the Ohio Valley. The Rockies enrich the Missouri, the mountains of Central Africa make the exhaustless granary of the Nile delta. Oh! the help there is in the stern hills! Oh! the blessing God is to this low world! How He comes to shield from storms. How He sends upon us the living streams of His truth. Yes, how He bends Himself to be the nourishment and strength of His people! Consider the influence of the hills on the civilization of the world. They have been the nurseries of heroism, of physical and moral strength. The early Turanians, who displaced the stagnant barbarism of Asia with a rude vigour, descended for their work from the mountain ranges of Siberia. The Medes and Persians, who came down like messengers of Divine judgment on the effeminate luxury and showy splendour of Babylon, came from the hill country. The Spartans who filled the Thermopylæ Pass were mountain men. The Waldenses, who held their own for liberty, held it in poverty and pain among the pinnacles of Piedmont—held it against all the cultured and disciplined power of the cities on the plains. Their natures were as rugged as the grey Alps around them. It is a grand preparation for heroism to be obliged to fight life's battle under the stern conditions of the mountains. They do not smile on easy living. They are severe masters, but they enforce the lesson. He who has overcome the mountains has overcome many other things at the same time. But I do not believe that the chief value of mountains as promoters of heroism is of a physical sort. At last heroism has a moral base. Mountains make tough animals. They are the habitation of daring wild beasts, but they also work on those moral qualities which make great patriots. They affect men's thoughts. They appeal to a man's reverence. They overawe him with power. They work on his conscience. To face Mont Blanc is itself a sort of judgment day. It says "God." There is absolutely no support for tired human spirits but in the idea of God, and that which that idea implies. To the mountain of Sinai you must look for the quickening of conscience; to the mountain of Calvary for salvation from

sin. As the mountains lift themselves above the world in a "stillness of perpetual benediction," so God rises to our faith and hope above these storm-driven plains of time. His Fatherhood overhangs us like a perpetual benediction. He helps us with a help that is quite sufficient, and that sustains us amid all circumstances; yea, with a help that makes us indifferent to circumstance. To men accustomed only to the light of reason and calculation it is difficult to present the spiritual help of the Lord. It cannot be explained. But it is the one profound fact that makes the difference between the submissive and meek-browed; yea, the rejoicing saint and the complaining and rebellious sinner. I have often asked friends, "What is the source of the contented lives the Swiss peasants live amid their secluding mountains?" Contented and peaceful they undeniably are, and that, too, in poverty and toil from beginning to end. It seems as if the genii of the mountains from unseen sources beyond the storms brought unfailing peace and comfort as the streams that spring from the snows water their flocks and their pastures. The reservoir never fails. Now, God's sustaining grace is like those streams of Alpine blessing. You cannot quite trace; you certainly cannot explain it. The child of God who perhaps has nothing but poverty and pain, misery and misfortune, as the world reckons, somehow holds a boundless peace, and the martyr who smiles in his agonies is not a more conspicuous example of this strange unseen help of God than is the quiet patient soul who, in ordinary ways of uneventful living, holds a steadfast faith and a happy hope in God. (*C. L. Thompson, D.D.*) *Help needed and provided*.—It was "help" and only "help," which he looked for from his God; and help is not that which dispenses with exertion on our part, but rather that which supposes such exertion. Helping a man is not the doing everything for him, and leaving him nothing to do for himself; but rather the assisting him in his efforts,—making those efforts effectual, when perhaps without aid they would be insufficient and frustrated. It is help, and nothing more than help, which is promised throughout the Scriptures. "Help us, O God of our salvation," is the burden of the supplications of David; and St. Paul, when he would found an argument for boldness in approaching the mercy-seat, on the fact of our having "an High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," does not apply it to the expecting more than mercy and help—"That we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." There cannot be a more dangerous delusion than the supposing that the operations of Divine grace are such as to supersede the necessity for exertion, or such (so to speak) as will make us religious in spite of ourselves. The Spirit will not force us to pray; but if we yield to His impulse, and endeavour to pray, He will "Help our infirmities," and enable us to pray effectually. He will not make it impossible for us to be overcome of temptation; but if we strive against it, He will so come to our assistance as to ensure us the victory. He will not bring to maturity the virtues implanted by Himself without requiring from us any of the processes of moral husbandry; whilst the showers and the sunshine are altogether His, the labour and the tillage must be ours. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 2. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.—*Turning creation to account*.—This, indeed, is turning creation to account. It is thought a great thing to have a patron who is distinguished by his rank or his deeds. The man is envied who can look up for help to kings, or princes, or nobles; but the meanest believer may say of the Lord who made heaven and earth that He is engaged for his succour and protection. This, we say, is turning creation to account. This is pressing the forests, the mountains and stars into our service; and making them minister to our comfort and assurance. There is not an impress of power on the visible universe but is a message to the Christian, telling him not to be afraid. Every glorious demonstration of Almighty power which is set forth in the processes of nature, or in the revolutions of systems, does but announce to him what a guardian and upholder he has. Yea, and it is not only when God is revealed as a God of providence—a God who is "about our path and about our bed"—that it is comforting and elevating to think of Him as the Lord who "made heaven and earth." I like to remember that it is said of the Redeemer, even of our Lord Jesus Christ—"By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible." If He was crucified in weakness, he was nevertheless the Being at whose word arose all the magnificence of the material universe, and the "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers" of the spiritual creation. And, therefore, when it is even the hill of Calvary to

which I look up, where there seems presented no spectacle but one of ignominy and death, I can gain confidence from the fact with which the psalmist was encouraged. Yes, blessed Saviour, our help is indeed from Thee! We must lift up our eyes to Thee—to Thee extended on the cross—if we would be enabled to escape Divine wrath, and obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. But we recognize in Thee more than the persecuted man, borne down by the malice and fury of the powers of darkness; we behold in Thee, even when we see Thee on Calvary, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." And the proud and the unbelieving may wonder at, or even ridicule, our expecting assistance from one who died the death of a malefactor; but we bow before Thee on the cross; we look towards Thee on the cross; and owning the ever-living God in the suffering man, we exclaim in holy confidence, our "help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.—"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved":—Any of you who have tried to climb the hills know that that is just the great danger of it. One slip, and you may go sheer down hundreds of feet, and be dashed to pieces. Do we not use this expression to cover the idea of safety? We talk about the "sure-footed" guide, and the "sure-footed" mountaineer, the man of keen eye and cool nerve, and of muscles like iron all over his body; a man who can be depended on. If he gets a foothold for his foot, he will put his foot there, and keep it there, until he gets another as good. So is the Christian. Why, in one sense, we are engaged in a perilous journey. We are going up. We are climbing. To brace yourself to climb the Matterhorn is a small thing compared with this girding of your mind to be sober and climbing right up from hell to heaven. And that is the climb for every one of us. (*John McNeill*). *The Christian's stability*:—The North Pole is perpetually roving within the limits of a circle sixty feet in diameter. What is the North Pole to-day is not the North Pole to-morrow. The true North Pole has been known to travel more than four feet in a week, while sometimes it has required more than a month to cover a yard. Suppose that you and I were to sail from opposite points to discover this turning-point. We will say that you, with your astronomical instruments, planted your flag upon the exact North Pole six months ago, and then went away. I, arriving to-day, make equally accurate calculations and plant my flag also upon the true North Pole. My flag is probably forty feet from yours, yet neither of us is in error. To-morrow the elusive little tip-top of the earth will have slipped away from both of us. And if I were to claim a building site the corner-stone of which was marked by this North Pole, a strange predicament would follow. I should have to place my fences upon castors, and keep them continually moving in order to mark strictly my own reservation. So it is with too many Christian lives. Want of stability in the Christian faith and life is one of the great—one might say the greatest—hindrances to the true development of Christianity among us. We are constantly veering round in our faith and life, following the latest "new belief," accepting every modern "faith," or doubting some established Christian doctrine. Let us be more stable in our religion. (*Signal*.)

Ver. 4. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.—*God, the Keeper of Israel*:—Why was this added? Was it not enough to say, "He that keepeth thee will not slumber"? Nay, this is not mere repetition. In the one sentence God is spoken of as the Keeper generally of His Church, or people; in the other sentence as the keeper of the believer individually. And the transition from the believer to the Church is exquisitely beautiful and comforting. For the individual, on being told of the wakefulness of his heavenly Keeper, might say—"Can I dare to hope that one so insignificant as myself is to be the object of so unwearied attention?" And why not, "O thou of little faith"? Thou art a member of that body which God hath purchased to Himself at inestimable cost. Dost thou not know, that to touch this body is to touch "the apple of His eye"? and is not the body touched, if touched in the very least of its members? If thou canst believe that "He that keepeth Israel never slumbers," is not the wakeful eye upon thyself? What is "Israel" but the aggregate of such units as thyself? and how can "Israel" be incessantly watched if a single unit be overlooked? Or there is another way, in which the third and fourth verses may be connected. There is nothing of selfishness in religion. It does not content the believer that great privileges are his; he longs to share them with others; they seem but half

enjoyed, unless enjoyed in fellowship and communion with multitudes possessing "like precious faith." Does his heart, then, bound at being told—"He that keepeth thee will not slumber"? Yes, but his joy is not full till the celestial voice adds—"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Then he feels—"There is a blessed company who share with me this unwearied protection. I am not alone, and I would not be alone, in the favour of that glorious Being, who made heaven and earth." Friends, kinsmen, children, all may be included. There is room for an innumerable multitude:—oh! that an innumerable multitude may suffer themselves to be gathered under the shadow of His wings. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The wakeful eyes of God*:—I. **THE LORD KEEPS ISRAEL**:—1. As a shepherd keeps his sheep—by feeding them, by supplying all their needs, and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging of the wolf or by the straying of the sheep. 2. As a king keeps his jewels. God hides His people in the casket of His power, and protects them with all His wisdom and strength. 3. As a governor keeps the city committed to his charge. II. **HE SHALL NEITHER SLUMBER NOR SLEEP**. 1. Think of God's eyes as never wearying of His people. Infinite patience! 2. God is never forgetful of His people for a single moment. 3. God is always ready to show Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him. 4. God is never asleep in the sense that He ceases to consider us. You and I, in thinking of one thing, often forget another; but it is not so with God. He is so great that His centre is everywhere, and His circumference is nowhere; and you, dear brother or sister, may be the very centre of God's thoughts, and so may I; and all His redeemed may at the same moment have His thoughts fixed upon each one of them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *There is no sleep with God*:—His eye is ever upon His people for good. That great eye never closes. That great eye is as bright and piercing as ever, and not for a single instant is the vigilance relaxed. A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. "How did you lose it?" said the monarch. "I fell asleep," was the reply, "and a robber entered my dwelling." "Why did you fall asleep?" "I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake." The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep, is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the Divine government. We can sleep in safety, because our God is ever awake. We are safe, because He never slumbers. (*N. McMichael.*) *All preserved for Israel's sake*:—As He preserved the ark for Noah's sake, and Goshen for the ancient Israelites' sake, and all that were in the ship for St. Paul's sake, and all that were in the bath for St. John's sake, and all that fled to the tombs of the martyrs in Rome, when the Goths sacked the city, for the Christians' sake: so at this day He supporteth all kingdoms and states for the Churches' sake. The world is as a hop-yard, the Church as the hops, kingdoms, states, and commonwealths as the poles; and as the owner of the hop-yard preserveth the poles and stakes carefully, not for themselves, but that the hops may grow upon them: so God preserveth all states and societies of men, that they may be a support to His Church. We may take this note higher, and truly affirm that He keepeth heaven and earth for her sake; the earth to be as a nursery for her children, to grow awhile; and the heaven for His garden and celestial Paradise, whither He will transplant them all in the end. Wherefore, although the world never so much scorn, and condemn, and malign, and persecute God's chosen, yet it is indebted to them for its being and continuance; for God keepeth the heavens for the earth, the earth for living creatures, other living creatures for men, men for Israel, and Israel for the elect's sake. For their sake it is that the heavens move, the sun, moon and stars shine, the winds blow, the springs flow, the rivers run, the plants grow, the earth fructifieth, the beasts, fowls, and fishes multiply; for as soon as grace hath finished her work, and the whole number of the elect is accomplished, nature shall utterly cease, and this world shall give place to a better in which righteousness shall dwell. Yet when heaven and earth shall pass, this word of God shall not pass; for He that now keepeth militant Israel in the bosom of the earth shall then keep triumphant Israel in Abraham's bosom. (*D. Featly, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-8. The Lord is thy keeper.—*Divine protection*:—A celebrated traveller—after an absence of three years, during which he had walked across the continent of

Africa from east to west, through vast regions never before trodden by the foot of the white man—recently received an enthusiastic welcome home. As he approached the quiet Kentish village where he had spent his boyish days, his first act, before entering his much-loved home, was to pass through the portals of the church where his aged father ministered, and, humbly kneeling, offer his devout thanksgiving to that God who had watched over and preserved him in all his wanderings. Among other appropriate Scriptures this psalm was read. It was a touching scene! Many hearts heaved with emotion, and many tears were shed, as the reader, in trembling accents, uttered the words, "The Lord is thy keeper," etc. It was a fitting acknowledgment of that Divine goodness which had safely conducted the weary, sun-burnt traveller through all the perils of his great and adventurous journey.

I. THE DIVINE PROTECTION IS AMPLE AND EFFICIENT. 1. It is ample. "The Lord is thy shade." He surrounds His people, and guards them at every point of attack. The foe must be able to pierce the invulnerable, and conquer the invincible, before he can touch the feeblest saint who is sheltered by the wings of God. 2. It is efficient. "Upon thy right hand." As the enemies of God's people are ever standing at their right hand to frustrate all their efforts in well-doing, so Jehovah is at their right hand to encourage and sustain those efforts, and restrain their enemies.

II. THE DIVINE PROTECTION SHIELDS FROM THE MOST OPEN ASSAULTS. "The sun shall not smite thee by day." The worker in the dismal mine, the traveller by road, or rail, or sea, the toiler surrounded by the most destructive materials, is alike under the shadow of the Divine protection.

III. THE DIVINE PROTECTION GUARDS FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE MOST SECRET TREACHERY. "Nor the moon by night." The Divine Sentinel never slumbers. He can never be outwitted by the cunning of the most malicious.

IV. THE DIVINE PROTECTION IS A DEFENCE AGAINST EVERY EVIL. "The Lord shall preserve thee from evil: He shall preserve thy soul." He protects from the evil of sin and of suffering. He turns away the evil that is feared, and alleviates and sanctifies the evil He permits.

V. THE DIVINE PROTECTION IS REALIZED AMID THE ACTIVE DUTIES OF LIFE. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out." The good man is directed in the beginning of his undertakings, and shielded by the Divine presence during their active prosecution (Deut. xxviii. 3-6). He is safe wherever his duties carry him—in the workshop, the street, the busy mart, on the restless sea, or in strange and distant countries.

VI. THE DIVINE PROTECTION OVERSHADOWS THE REST AND QUIETNESS OF HOME. "And thy coming in." Evening brings all home; and the weary one, after the toils and dangers of the day, enjoys the peace and rest of his home all the more because he knows he is encircled by the Divine guardianship. And when the shadows of life's eventide gather round him, he fears not. The Lord will preserve his coming in—his tranquil entrance into the heavenly home!

VII. THE DIVINE PROTECTION IS UNREMITTING. "From this time forth and even for evermore." Lessons—1. Offer grateful praise for the protection of the past. 2. Fear not the most furious assaults of the enemy. 3. Put all your confidence in the Divine Protector. (*G. Barlow.*) *The Lord our Keeper*:—**I. THE KEEPER.** 1. Those who are redeemed need to be kept (Ex. xxiii. 20). 2. He who is our Redeemer is also our Keeper (Ps. cxxi. 5; 1 Sam. ii. 9; Isa. xlii. 6; John xvii. 11). (1) He keeps us in His power (1 Pet. i. 5). (2) He keeps us by His peace (Phil. iv. 7). **II. THE KEEPING.** 1. As in a tower (Prov. xviii. 20; Ps. xviii. 2). 2. As in a bank (2 Tim. i. 12). 3. As in a sheepfold (Ps. xxiii. 1; lxxx. 1). 4. As behind a shield (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). (1) Safe (Ps. xxxi. 20; cxxi. 5-8; Jude 24). (2) Holy (John xvii. 11, 15; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24). (3) Happy (Isa. xxvi. 3; Ps. xxiii. 7). (4) Ceaseless (Isa. xxvii. 3; Ps. cxxi. 3).

III. THE KEPT. 1. They renounce their own keeping (Prov. iii. 26; Ps. cxxvii. 1). 2. They commit themselves to be kept (1 Pet. iv. 19; Ps. cxxi. 5). 3. They trust Him to meet them (2 Tim. i. 12; Ps. cxxi. 23). (*E. H. Hopkins.*) *Kept by God*:—1. The Lord is my Watchman! I remember that in the days of my boyhood when my father was away from home, it was sometimes my duty to lock up the house. I used to try every door and every window, but never went to bed with a feeling of peace. I never gained an assurance that everything was safe. I feared that some door remained unlocked, or, if I were sure about the doors, some window would haunt me through the night and disturb my rest. But when my father was the "watchman," and had gone round the house and seen to the doors and windows, I "laid me down in peace and slept." I could trust his vigilance and his care, and the trust was the parent of restful contentment. "The Lord is thy Watchman." Our Father does not leave us to our own self-discovery; He

tries the doors and windows of my being. He knows the state of the locks. He knows every room in my personality, and just what are the chances of each room being burglariously entered and despoiled. Our Father especially watches over our safety in the seasons of the night. When sorrow is in the home, when death is at the gate, when calamity blackens the sky, the heavenly Watchman is always near. "He keepeth watch over His flock by night." 2. He is not only my Watchman, He is my Defence. (1) Now let us remember that our Father is sometimes compelled to provide defences for us in ways that are not agreeable or welcome. Defences may sometimes seem the agents of cruelty. The cruelty, however, is only apparent. There is no cruelty in the act of a father who places barbed wire fencing round the edge of the precipice. There is no unkindliness when we put the barbed wire round the mouth of a perilous well. The thorny hedge may keep us from the more dangerous ditch. Have we not sometimes heard people speak in this wise: "Ah, well, his present illness is no doubt saving him from a greater one." Only the other day I heard a doctor say, speaking of a certain patient: "His fever was his salvation." In the feverish fire something was consumed that might have been productive of a more perilous disease. And our Father sometimes sends the fire into our life in order that He might keep us from something infinitely worse. The fire in the forest wards off the wild beasts; and in the fire which God sometimes permits to dwell in our life many things are scared away, and many things are destroyed. In the fire of tribulation superciliousness is destroyed, and so is callousness and every form of pride. The Lord is our Keeper, and in apparent cruelty He pours out the treasures of His heart. (2) Now let us mark the thoroughness of our Father's "keeping." "He shall keep thee as the apple of the eye." How wonderful is the figure! The delicate, sensitive organ, the eye, is protected by the bony framework like an encircling cave. The exquisite instrument is enthroned, as it were, in walls of rock. And just as the eye is protected with these strong encircling ramparts, so my Father will protect me. "He is able to keep you from falling." It is an exquisite figure; the mother is training her little one to walk, and while in great timidity and uncertainty it moves from step to step, the mother's arms almost encircle it, and most surely prevent it from falling. And I, too, am learning to walk, am learning to walk as a child of light; and my feet are so uncertain, and my resolution is so wavering, that I need the encircling care of the everlasting arms. "The Lord is thy keeper," and "He is able to keep you from falling." (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *God our Keeper*:—This verse refers to God during the day. For, oh, when we get out during the day, and go down to the town there, and go about our daily business, we are apt to think: Now, we do not need all that our minister has been preaching to us about—God's care, and God's keeping, and God being our nursing Father. During the day we will kind of "forge ahead" without Him. Nay; do not make that mistake, for you will not. Let God be your Keeper down in business there. I speak to you business men. Suffer the word of exhortation. On some grounds I have no right to speak to you. I stand here and speak for God, and say, when you go back to the office, before you take that budget of letters and open them, look up to God, and say, "Now, Thou art to help me here—here among these papers, and manuscripts, and these clerks, and this business of per cents., and I do not know what all." Aye, they are dangerous things—"per cents." Oh, Heaven help you! You need God among the per cents. You will lose your soul among the per cents. and the ledgers. Remember the overshadowing Presence, and, while it keeps you, may it also sanctify you. "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." Travellers in tropical countries know the great danger from a stroke of the sun, or a stroke of the moon, or from lying out at night in the mists and the damps. All the dangers of the way are met and forestalled by this great and mighty Keeper of His people. (John McNeill.) *Safety in God's keeping*:—The Lord is "thy Keeper," but not thy jailor. His keeping is not confinement, but protection. When you commit your ways to Him, He does not abridge your liberty; He only defends you against evil.

Vers. 7, 8. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil.*—Preserved from all evil:—Lawyers, when they are drawing up important documents, frequently conclude with some general terms to meet any emergency which may possibly occur. They do this on the principle that what is not in may be supposed to be intentionally left out. In order to guard against this inference, they are not content with

inserting a number of particular cases; they conclude with a general statement, which includes everything, whether expressed or not. A similar formula is inserted here. It is of great importance that the feet of travellers be kept from sliding as they pursue their journey. It is of great importance that they be preserved from heat by day and from cold by night. But other dangers await them, from which they require protection; and lest the suspicion be entertained that no provision is made for these being surmounted, they are all introduced in the saving and comprehensive clause. No matter what may be their character, no matter from what quarter they may appear, no matter when they may come, and no matter how long they may continue, the declaration covers them all. Divine grace changes the nature of everything it handles, and transforms everything it touches into gold. Afflictions are overruled for good; and the virtues of the Christian life are developed with unusual lustre. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil." (N. McMichael.) *Preservation in unguarded moments*:—"Guard me when I am off my guard," prayed one the other day. It was a wise prayer, for it is not the danger against which we have fortified ourselves, the temptations which we know and are watching, which are so likely to compass a fall as some unthought-of point where no peril was suspected. Look back over the days, and you will find that their failures have nearly always been in unexpected places. The task which seemed so easy that you scarcely thought of seeking help for it, the good temper which is yours naturally, the endurance manifested so many times that you were quite confident of finding it ready for any stress—just in these things came surprise and defeat, the weakness that wounded your self-respect and left you heart-sore. You gather your forces for the struggle you foresee, you arm against the enemies whose power you know, but, when human watchfulness has done its utmost, there is still a wide margin for that urgent petition: "Guard me when I am off guard." (J. R. Miller, D.D.) **He shall preserve thy soul.**—*Soul preservation*:—I. THIS SOUL PRESERVATION IS DIVINE. "The Lord shall preserve," etc. No one else can preserve it—1. In the right train of thought. Wrong thoughts are dangerous. 2. In the right objects of sympathy. Wrong affections are dangerous. 3. In the right course of action. One step out of the proper path is dangerous. II. THIS SOUL PRESERVATION IS COMPLETE. 1. It is a preservation guarding from all evil. 2. It is a preservation extending over all activities. In solitude and in society; in business and in recreation; in all engagements and in all scenes; the shield of His protection is over it. He is with it in all its "ins" and "outs" of life. III. THIS SOUL PRESERVATION IS EVERLASTING. From henceforth "even for evermore." Who shall tell the events, the ages, the requirements of the soul in that "evermore"? 1. The soul is to live a life of dependence for "evermore." 2. The Lord will be its support for "evermore." (Homilist.) **Thy going out and thy coming in.**—*The God of the threshold*:—The title of this psalm, "A song of ascents," is one which it holds in common with a small group of the Psalms. Its reference is to the ritual usage of the psalm by the pilgrims, as they made their way up to Mount Zion. And yet it is not inappropriate to its spirit. The author's thoughts are lifted up, and our hearts and eyes rise with them. The whole atmosphere of the poem is homely and domestic. It sees the world framed in a cottage doorway. The mountains are not peaks of vision; they are the boundaries and the horizons of his prospects. The threshold of home fills the foreground of the picture. "Going out and coming in" are its simple lines of motion. The hearth and the field are thus suggested to us. We see the labourer go out into the light of morning with an uplifting of the heart to the dawn-clad hills. We watch him returning to the homestead in the evening, and pausing with his hand upon the door for a last glance at the mountains, as they gather their grey cloaks upon them, the sentinels of his security. And as the psalm closes, one almost expects to see the light in the cottage window, shutting out that wizard world which is just suggested in the superstitious fear of the rising moon. This psalm might have been the work of some Hebrew Burns, following his plough, in glory and in pride, upon the mountain side. Its religion is very simple, and yet all his creed. "The Lord Himself is thy keeper;" that is the summary of his creed. "He that keepeth Israel shall not slumber nor sleep." The foot kept from stumbling, the head shielded from the heat of the noonday sun, the blessing and the preservation of the threshold, these are the simple promises of the psalm. And wrought into them there is the recognition of the spiritual dignity of man. The souls of His children are precious in His sight. And my mind dwells with satisfaction upon these elementary and

yet large outlines of life, as it is here presented to us. I am fascinated by the thought of the God of the threshold. As I said just now, the home is the centre of the picture. It is the beginning and the end of the daily journey. The motions of it are reckoned not by the points of the compass; its wanderings are not eastward and westward, but homeward, or away from home. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." For we, whose life moves in a somewhat narrow and restricted sphere from day to day, very easily form the habit of prosaic and dull outlooks, regarding our life as an ordinary, common affair. We go out without wonder; we return without surprise. We lose that fine fancy of our childhood, which made a journey into the next street an expedition, and brought us back from the woodlands as travellers from a far country. It is quite true that such a diminished sensitiveness saves us from many terrors that might otherwise play upon us. But it is equally true that that crippled imagination robs us of half the zest and joy that life might otherwise possess. How much is covered for us by these simple phrases, as we take them in their widest meaning—birth and death, sowing and reaping, expenditure and income, giving and receiving, earning and spending, adventure and peace—all of them may be summed up and expressed for us in those phrases, "our going out," and "our coming in." And if we were to take these symbolic suggestions of them, we might find the promise of the text applicable to them all. But let us dwell, at any rate to begin with, upon the simple and most natural sense of the text. Day by day we do actually and literally go out and come in. The phrase marks the ordered sequence of our ordinary existence—that daily life of the trivial round, and the common task of which we sometimes complain that nothing ever happens; that it is wholly commonplace. And yet the commonplaceness of it is surely in ourselves. The ordinary daily life that most of us live is, if we be spiritually alert, far less certain and far more adventurous than we conceive. It is only while we take a very superficial glance upon our life, that we can speak of ourselves as knowing the daily conditions under which we have to live. To the spiritually alert the street is as hazardous as the wilderness; and the office and the shop are to us as foreign lands. We may not meet a lion in the path, it is true; but we meet, every day, men and women who surprise us with the revelation of unexpected possibilities, and of unhinted thoughts, and whose action is a thousand times more difficult to forecast. We do not all pick up sovereigns in the gutter as we wander forth; but spiritual gold may wait for us at the corner of any street, and the words that alter the destiny of a life be spoken in the clamour and rumble of a railway platform. For the upbuilding and moulding of character the common events of ordinary life have a significance of quite unplumbed possibility. We may meet the spiritual adventure of our existence within a few yards of our own door. And God may come to meet us, supreme, in the street that our feet have trodden every morning. The path where we have enjoyed such quiet communions, may be changed in a moment into the scene of temptation and disaster. Any morning and any hour may bring to us the opportunity of either denying or entering into, and sharing the larger and fuller communion of our Lord. And it is just that which sets an expectation upon the threshold of the morning, and sends a man forth with a thrill that is partly of hope and partly of fear. Everything, anything, the supremest things may happen to-day. His going forth is always momentous. He knows that there is not the remotest likelihood that he will return again in the evening exactly the same man as he went forth. Changes will have come and impressed themselves upon his being; temptations will have been met and battles have been fought. And so he goes forth with trembling, with the awe of his hesitant and uncertain destiny upon him. The question prompts itself in one's thought whether all of us whom our Christian faith ought to have awakened to the intense possibilities of daily life in spiritual things—whether all of us do live that daily life with a sufficient seriousness, and the sense of its value in the moulding of our destinies. Do we go out, too, each day as to a spiritual adventure? To go out—as I fear some of us do—to go out day by day without a sense, a zest of hazard in life, to stumble through our daily temptation without the sense of what we are meeting, or what perchance we are avoiding, speaks, as I said just now, a dulled and crippled imagination. On the other hand, to be finely sensitive and responsive to the menaces and suggestions of life, if that were all, might be just as crippling to us. Hope and fear might simply neutralize one another, and the uncertainty of our destiny keep us hesitant and unwilling to adventure ourselves in such a hazardous quest at all. And if I would have you pause upon

the threshold, it is not simply that we may correct the thought which has been too carelessly and flippantly going forth to its daily life, but that we may take counsel of the God of the threshold and find our strength and assurance in Him. This word of the psalmist: "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in"—how rich and heartfelt it is in its quality! It was surely worth our while to pause to gather the richness of such a promise. This promise of the preservation of God over our going forth and our coming in, can only be realized by those whose purposes are in accordance with the will of God. The confidence of God's presence is not something that we can conjure up at will. It is not something which by constant reiteration we can impress upon our memory and get into our hearts, except it be confirmed by the testimony of our own conscience and by the assurance that the purposes and plans we have before us are holy in the sight of God. There is no promise of preservation for a Jonah fleeing from the purposes of God; for a Saul who is found to transgress and to fight against God. If we are to reap the rich promise that a text like this holds for us, then we must meet the challenge that it presents to our souls. And only as our purposes are clean and pure in the sight of God can its protection accompany us wherever we go. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." The returns of life are not less momentous than its going forth. There may be something of an over-sensitive morbidness in it, but I confess for one that whenever I have been away a few days from home, it is hardly possible to approach it again through the familiar streets without a vague sense of apprehensiveness. What may have happened in the hours of absence? And it is quite true that in the commonest day of our ordinary life, just as we ourselves do not return the same men that we went forth, so there have been changes in the home in our absence, which mean that the same presences will not wait for us there. The home also has its temptations, its spiritual disciplines, as well as the office and the shop. And it may be that our development during that time has not been upon the same lines, has not been even upon parallel lines; and so when we meet again there is a new point of contact to find. We may be coming home joyous and satisfied from a day in which everything has gone well to a home where the pressure of small tasks has weighed too heavily and has produced irritation and griefs. We have to readjust our relations. And how often is it true that we miss the point of contact. That instead of falling at once into a new harmony our moods strike a discord. So this second half of our text, while it means first of all to me that God, through the absences of our daily life, protects our home for us, and watches over those who dwell there, I think means more subtly that God has to protect our home from us sometimes. As we pass the God of the threshold to get into the street in the morning, we have, as it were, to pass through God on our return at eventide. Some of the things that have irritated, and bruised, and chafed during the day, and that ought not to be carried back into the home with us, have got to be slowed off, that so we may meet in peace, and our peace not return to us as a guest that finds no place. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore." (*W. G. Piggott.*) *Preserved in life and in death.*—It is a promise which should be kept in mind in all our business, in all our movements; amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life. We shall ever more be defended by that ready help, which supposes an eye that cannot close—an arm that cannot fail. But I know of a "going out" and of a "coming in," where we shall especially need the preserving care of our God; and to these, as to every other, may the promise be extended. There is a "going out" from this world,—there is a "coming in" to the next world: the departure through death from the present scene, and the entering on the unknown futurity. But "the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." Christ Jesus, according to His own declaration, has the keys of death and the invisible world; He, therefore, it must be, who dismisses the spirit from the flesh, and opens to it the separate state. And why should the believer shrink from the act of dissolution, as though it would be something tremendously awful, when he is thus assured that the Redeemer Himself will officiate (as it were) at the taking down of "the earthly house of this tabernacle"—be with Him at the "going out" and the "coming in," which he is so ready to invest with terror and dismay? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

PSALM CXXII.

VERS. 1-9. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.—*A pious patriot*:—I. REJOICING IN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ASSEMBLING FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP (vers. 1, 2). 1. One of the grandest social duties of religious men—to invite their neighbours to religious worship. 2. The delight that may be expected from the right discharge of this duty. II. HIGHLY APPRECIATING THE VARIOUS ADVANTAGES OF HIS COUNTRY (vers. 3-5). He rejoices in it because—1. It was a scene of material beauty. 2. It was the scene of religious worship. 3. It was the scene of civil justice. III. EARNESTLY DESIRING THE PROSPERITY OF HIS FATHERLAND (vers. 6-9). 1. He invokes for it the highest good—peace and prosperity. 2. For the strongest reasons. (1) Personal (ver. 6). (2) Social (ver. 8). (3) Religious (ver. 9). (*Homilist*.) *The communion of saints*:—I. BEFORE WORSHIP (vers. 1, 2). 1. The joy of a common purpose. Men cannot help approaching one another in approaching one common object. 2. The joy of a common hope. II. DURING WORSHIP (vers. 3-5). 1. The exceeding beauty of unity. 2. The secret of this admirable unity. (1) One object of worship. (2) One priesthood. (3) One ruler and king. III. UNITED WORSHIP ITSELF (vers. 6-9). 1. The invitation. "Jerusalem which now is" is not without faults, nor yet without foes. All the more need for her true children and friends to pray for her "peace." It is part of their duty. It is part, also, of their wisdom. "They shall prosper that love thee." When we meet to say "Our Father," let us say also, "Thy kingdom come." 2. The response to the invitation—to its request—to its reasonings. (1) The request is right, and we will gladly accede to it. "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." May all be right internally and externally too. (2) The reasoning also is sound, and we are prepared to act on it. "For my brethren and companions' sakes," and because I feel that good to them is good to myself as well, "I will now say, Peace be within thee." "Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God," in which house and its common worship this feeling is so especially realized, "I will seek thy good." (*W. S. Lewis, M.A.*) *The Christian's pleasure at being invited to God's house*:—Probably this psalm was composed for the use of the Israelites when journeying up to worship at Jerusalem on the great annual solemnities. We stand in one of the valleys of the Promised Land, whilst it yet flowed with milk and honey, and the children of Abraham had not been exiled for their sins. We see a company approaching: they are a band of one of the distant tribes, and they are hastening to be at Jerusalem on one of the grand anniversaries. As they advance, we catch the sound of their voices: they are beguiling with psalmody the tedious pilgrimage. We listen attentively, and at length we can distinguish the words, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Louder and louder grows the melody: the thought of the glories of the city, in which Jehovah specially dwelt, cheers the weary travellers; and the surrounding mountains echo the beautiful invocation, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." 1. Now, it is not required of us to undertake any wearisome journeys: we are not called to incite one or the other by holy melodies to the leaving of our homes, that we may seek the Lord at some distant shrine. But, nevertheless, we are still bound to the duty of public worship; the privilege is left us, though graciously freed from inconvenience; and it may be as necessary as ever, seeing that the removal of difficulties is not unlikely to produce indolence, that men should exhort one another with the words, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." We know, of course, that there is a sense in which the Almighty "dwelleth not in temples made with hands"; "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him"; how much less the houses which His creatures build! But, nevertheless, just as He may be said to dwell especially in heaven, though, in virtue of His omnipresence, He is equally everywhere, because in heaven He manifests Himself with greater brightness than in any other scene; so may He be said to dwell specially in our churches, if He there give extraordinary tokens of that presence which must indeed be the same in all departments of creation. And when a true servant of God goes up to the sanctuary, it is in the humble but earnest hope of gaining greater knowledge of doctrines which concern his salvation, of gathering fresh stores of that manna which "cometh down from

heaven," and of drinking a fresh draught of "the water of life." Neither is it only on account of the advantages derivable from the preaching of the Word that the sincere Christian is earnest in attending the sanctuary. There is a charm and a power to him in public worship, in the being associated with a multitude of his fellow-men in acts of prayer and praise, which would draw him to God's house. It is an inspiring and elevating thing when numbers join, with one heart and voice, to ask Divine protection, and celebrate Divine love. There is more of the imagery of heaven in such an exhibition than in any other to be seen on this earth. But we must not omit, in our survey of reasons, why a Christian is glad, when invited to the house of the Lord, that in this house are administered the Sacraments, those mysterious and most profitable rites of our holy religion. 2. We have hitherto enlarged on the motives to joy which are furnished by the ordinances of religion: we will now examine whether there be not also motives in the finding that others associate themselves with us in those ordinances, yea, incite us to their most diligent use? And what more evident than that, if it be a joyful thing to the Christian to go up to God's house, it must be yet more joyful to go up with a throng? Anxious himself to obtain spiritual strength, it will delight him to mark the like anxiety in others. For there is nothing selfish in genuine religion: on the contrary, it enlarges and throws open the heart, so that the safety of others is cared for in proportion that one's own seems secured. 3. It is one of the predictions of Isaiah in reference to those days when the dispersed Jews are to be restored, and Jerusalem made "a praise in the earth," that "many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountains of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." Who would not be glad to have it said unto him, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," when the saying implied that God had at length fulfilled His mightiest promises, that His banished ones were gathered home, and that there had broken on this creation days for which kings and righteous men had longed, days when "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," till earth, in its remotest tribes, yield homage to the Christ? We may not live to hear the summons thus applied; but we may show our desire for the glorious triumphs which Christianity has yet to achieve, by the earnestness of our endeavours to promote its diffusion. (H. Melvill, B.D.) *Gladness about worship*:—These words show us that the psalmist was thinking—I. About WORSHIP. "The house of the Lord." That, to the pious Hebrew, was the scene and symbol of worship. There are two aspects of worship, both of which are right. One is, that in the house of the Lord we get from God what, as sinners and sufferers and suppliants for others, we seek. The other is, that we give to God the adoration and praise He condescends to receive. II. About SOCIAL WORSHIP. "Let us go." The solitary worship in "the still hour" and in "the quiet resting-place" is good. But prayer has special promise attached to it when "any two agree"; and praise has special glory when "young men and maidens, old men and children" blend their hallelujahs. III. About INVITATION TO SOCIAL WORSHIP. There are times when, to the neglectful, or the depressed, or the sinful, this human invitation seems an echo of the Divine welcome. There is gladness (1) because God may be worshipped. (2) Because others are worshipping God. (3) Because others are caring for us. (U. R. Thomas.) *Gladness in the prospect of Divine worship*:—The house of the Lord suggests such subjects of thought as these—they may not come to us in this order, but they are such as these:—I. THOUGHTS OF THE LORD HIMSELF. The house of the Lord. A gladdening thought this to David, and to every man who knows God as Jesus Christ teaches His disciples to know the Father. There may be very little gladness through simply saying "there is a God"; but surely joyfulness must spring up in the soul when a man can add "O God, thou art my God." II. THOUGHTS OF THE VARIOUS GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD. III. THOUGHTS OF HIS MERCIES. IV. THOUGHTS OF THE EXERCISE AND THE ACT OF WORSHIP. How pleasant to praise! What relief is there in the confession of sin! How soothing is prayer! V. THOUGHTS OF MEETING GOD AS HE IS NOT MET ELSEWHERE. VI. THOUGHTS OF RECEIVING SPECIAL BLESSINGS FROM GOD. VII. THOUGHTS OF THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS. VIII. THOUGHTS OF ENJOYING A PRIVILEGE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTY. (S. Martin, M.A.) *The good man's joy in the engagements of the sanctuary*:—I. THERE HE IS WARRANTED TO EXPECT THE PECULIAR ENJOYMENT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. To an affectionate friend nothing is so delightful as his friend's society. To a fond child nothing is dearer than the embrace of his father. He delights when absent

to return to him. Such is the emotion with which a sincerely pious mind welcomes the coming of the Sabbath, and the returning solemnities in the house of God. And this is a state of feeling that must continually increase in proportion to the increase of his spirituality and piety. II. THE GRATIFICATION THUS EXPRESSED ON APPROACHING TO THE HOUSE OF GOD, SPRINGS ALSO FROM THE HAPPINESS OF A NEAR AND INTIMATE ASSOCIATION WITH OUR BRETHREN IN ALL THE EXERCISES OF UNITED DEVOTION. III. THE TRULY PIOUS MAN WILL REJOICE IN APPROACHING TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, BECAUSE OF THOSE SACRED AND SOLEMN EMPLOYMENTS SO CONGENIAL WITH HIS BEST FEELINGS THERE AWAITING HIM. For there may he freely, and in concert with his brethren, engage in those avocations, and delight himself with those pleasures, which are to be his business and his felicity for ever. IV. WE SHALL REJOICE TO ENTER AGAIN INTO THE HOUSE OF GOD, BECAUSE OF THE PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT IN ALL OUR CHARACTER THERE CONSTANTLY EXPERIENCED. And in order to the attainment of this advance in the Divine life, derived from all the engagements of the sanctuary, meditate much on their importance. Seek to approach in a state of sacred preparation. Think not of man, but of God. Remember that you stand immediately before Him. Call frequently to mind the account you must render hereafter, and ask with solemnity of spirit how you would be able even now to render it. Be not satisfied, unless you can discern, after each season of devotion, some benefit experienced; some grace attained or strengthened; the soul melted into deeper humility on account of sin, or else kindled into loftier exultation, and conscious of a purer love for all the joys of pardon, and the hope of glory. (R. S. McAll, LL.D.) *Happiness and worship*.—To know a real and undying happiness, the soul must be bent away from earth and bound back to God. This is religion. But how few know it to be so in this mammon-worshipping world. How few can catch at the sentiment of this text, and breathe it through the heart—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Tell the world it will find happiness anywhere but in religion, and it will go anywhere, and will never give up the hope under its vain search. But tell it that the springs of abiding gladness are here, in the house of the Lord, that they are within the reach of all, and you will immediately find its credulity changed into incredulity, and its activity into idleness. Now, why is this? The more I search into it, the more am I convinced that what is wrong are the false conceptions that have been steadily growing up in our midst as to what the Church is, and the mistaken relations we have been entertaining to it. To a great many people who have enough of religious sentiment left in them to forbid them wishing to see the Church entirely effaced, it is anything but gladness to be told to go into the house of the Lord. They have no inclination to be in the sanctuary, but a very strong desire to be anywhere else. All this is the fruit of a mistaken notion of what the Church is. They regard it very much as a schoolboy regards compulsory attendance at school, not as a privilege, but as a hardship; not as offering untold benefits, but only as so much restraint and drudgery that ought to be escaped from as much as possible. And so, when they do go, it is under a sense of constraint or decency, to bestow favour and not to expect good. But if these are glad to escape church attendance and to be let alone, there are also those who are really glad when the Sabbath invitation summons them to the church, but of whom it can, nevertheless, be said that they are not worshippers; they are simply sermon-hunters. But if people are glad to go to church sometimes because they hear clever sermons, just as if they are drawn to a hall to listen to some great political orator or candidate, so are there some who enter church neither to be instructed nor amused, but to bear themselves as critics and judges, and to take no other part in the service. This also grows out of a false conception of the Church. For it is not a place where man is at liberty to sit in judgment on his fellow, or where the instrument is greater than the hand that wields it; but the place where men ought to be humble and not presumptuous, and where they ought to serve and not judge. But if the influence of the Christian Church has been hindered and impaired because of the false notions with which we have so often entered it, we have also weakened it and prevented its power by the wrong relations we have borne to it. It has been to us too long no more than an earthly temple of stone and timber, with a human voice sounding in our ears, and human creatures like ourselves our only companions. It has been to us the resort of habit, and the place where by inherited faith we have been trained from childhood to repair to. But the stone and timber of the sanctuary are no more than the stone and

timber of any other building, neither are those we meet with here other than those we meet with in the world, nor yet is the habit acquired nor the faith inherited which carries us to the sanctuary of any value. Our true and sole relation to the place is not in the visible, but in the invisible. When we repair to it we ought to see nothing, and feel nothing, and desire nothing but God. For it is "the house of the Lord." We have to please God, and this is how we will please Him, by remembering, when we are in the house of the Lord, that He is there, to receive our praises, to hear our prayers, and to instruct us not after our own choosing, nor with the words of man's wisdom, but in the simplicity of the truth. This is worship therefore when we sing, and when we pray, and when we listen for spiritual edification, and not because we have an itching ear. Then shall carping criticism be dead, and the small shall become really great; for the poorest sermon shall have much in it then, and the best sermon shall have more spiritual momentum, and all the Church's service will be worship, and the Church shall awake and put on her strength, and God shall be glorified; and we shall find enduring happiness and salvation in the harmony of the new life. (*R. Sinclair.*) *Inducements to public worship*:—It should be a source of joy to us, even as it was to David, to be regular and punctual in our attendance upon the public means of grace—I. *WITH A VIEW TO GOD'S HONOUR AND GLORY*. If, on the one hand, the devout and humble worshipper contributes, as he most undoubtedly does, to that great end, then, I ask you whether it does not follow, upon the other hand, that his unnecessary or inexcusable neglect to attend the services of the sanctuary positively dishonours God? II. *FOR OUR OWN SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT AND EDIFICATION*. We have our own individual cares and anxieties, and our own hard struggles in the race of life, and oftentimes we feel so worn and fagged with the hurry and bustle of the world that we are well nigh ready to sink beneath the pressure upon us, and we experience an intense yearning for rest, an earnest longing for something—perhaps some of us scarcely know what—but something that certainly we find not in the whirl of business or the excitement of pleasure. Ah! thank God, that peace which the world cannot give is to be found here, here in the house of prayer. Every time these doors are opened for public worship, God awaits His hungry, and thirsty, and fainting people, and whispers to each poor, needy, longing soul, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." III. *THAT WE MAY BECOME EXAMPLES FOR GOOD TO THOSE AROUND US*. Let me assure you that when you give up for a time the sweet converse of friends and the cheerful glow of the bright fireside, and turn out, it may be, into the blinding snow, or the pelting rain, or the dismal fog, that you may go into the house of the Lord, you do far more by these your silent, but practical, examples than we can hope to accomplish by any amount of persuasion. It was a noble answer that an old saint of God who had been for years very deaf once gave to her minister when he asked her why she was so constant in her attendance at church:—"Though I cannot hear, I come to God's house because I love it, and I love the service, and I wish to be found in His ways, and He gives me many a sweet thought upon the text when it is pointed out to me. Another reason is because I am in the best company, in the most immediate presence of God, and among His saints, the honourable of the earth. I am not satisfied with serving God in private; it is my duty and privilege to honour Him regularly and constantly in public." (*J. F. Haynes, LL.D.*) *Gladness of God's house*:—Why glad? 1. That you have a house of the Lord to which you may go. David's zeal for God's house. The incident with Araunah. Removal of the ark to Jerusalem. His reasoning about a house for God. His large liberality toward building the Temple. That which costs us nothing we do not prize. When our money and labour and brain and heart go into God's house, we are "glad when," etc. 2. That any feel enough interest in me to say, "Let us go," etc. 3. That I am able to go to God's house. That my Sabbaths are my own. Sabbath and government and capital—the right of the working-man. That I have bodily health. That I have mental health. Able to-day, may not be to-morrow. 4. That I am disposed to go. "Where there's a will there's a way." Many excuses, but true of the mass of non-church-goers, that they have not the will. (*J. G. Butler.*)

Ver. 2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*—*Jerusalem*:—The psalm was probably written by a pilgrim to Jerusalem at some time previous to the Babylonish Captivity. On the one hand, it is clear that "the house of the

Lord," the ancient Temple, was still standing; on the other, the reference to "the house of David" and the anxious prayer "for the peace of Jerusalem," its walls, its palaces, seem to point to a later period than that of David. The pilgrim who composed the psalm would have belonged to one of the ten separated tribes; but he had remained after the general defection true to the divinely-ordered worship at Jerusalem, and his psalm may well have been composed on the occasion of his first visit. 1. Now, one thing that would have struck a pilgrim to Jerusalem who should approach the city, as was natural, from its north-eastern side, would be its beauty. Possibly this pilgrim had seen Damascus straggling out amid the beautiful oasis which surrounds it in the plain of the Abana, or he had seen Memphis, a long strip of buildings, thickly populated, extending for some twelve or fourteen miles along the western bank of the Nile. Compared with those Jerusalem had the compact beauty of a highland fortress, its buildings are seen from below standing out against the clear Syrian sky, and conveying an impression of grace and strength that would long linger in the memory. No doubt in the eyes of a pilgrim in these old Jewish times, as afterwards, the physical beauty of Jerusalem must have suggested and blended with a beauty of a higher order. The beauty of the world of spirit imparts to the world of sense a subtle lustre which of itself it could never possess. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks; set up her houses that ye may tell them that come after." And why? "For this God is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide unto death." 2. And secondly, Jerusalem was the centre of the religious and national life of Israel. Jerusalem was what it was in a good Israelite's eyes less on its own account than because it contained the Temple. "Yea," cries the pilgrim, as he looks out on the fair city beneath him—"yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good." And so, although the city of Solomon and its Temple passed away, and a new city and a new temple rose upon the ruins of the old, pilgrims still came up with the old psalm upon their lips and in their hearts: "Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem." 3. And a third characteristic of Jerusalem, which appealed to religious pilgrims like this psalmist-pilgrim, was, if I may so phrase what I mean, its unworldliness. This appears partly in its situation. Jerusalem was not on the sea, or on a navigable river. The little stream of the Kedron was dry for the greater part of the year in ancient days as now, and nothing but rude mountain-paths connected the city with Egypt on one side or with Syria on the other. It was thus cut off from those activities of commerce and intercourse with distant countries which are essential to the material well-being and development of a great capital. 4. As the centuries went on, Jerusalem, thus dear to the heart of Israel as being what it was in itself, became yet dearer to it by misfortune. Of all that is most beautiful in life, sorrow is the last consecration. Sorrow is the poetry, no less than the discipline of humanity. Certainly, if one thing is clear from Scripture and from experience, sorrows such as those of Jerusalem are the result of sin. And yet this could not kill out the sense of blessing which attached to the sacred spot in the eyes of successive generations of pilgrims. Thinking only of the sure mercies of David, thinking with the apostle of a later age, that the gifts and calling of God are indeed without repentance, again and again under Manasseh as under Hezekiah, under Jehoiakim as under Josiah, they uttered their song, "Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem." The events which make Jerusalem what it is in Christian eyes do not belong to the Old Testament. That wonderful self-manifestation of the Eternal Being among men which began at Bethlehem and Nazareth reached its climax at Jerusalem. On the hills around this favoured city, along its streets, in the courts of its great sanctuary, there walked in visible form, One who had already lived from everlasting, and who had folded around His eternal person the body and the soul of the sons of men. Just outside its walls, He condescended to die in agony and in shame only that He might rise in triumph from His grave, and on a hill hard by He went visibly up to heaven to reign for ever in glory. He conferred on it in Christian eyes a patent of nobility which will only become invalid when His Gospel disappears from among men. But the Jerusalem of Christian thought is no longer only or mainly the city of David. It is, first of all, the visible and universal Church of Christ. The towers and walls and shrines of the ancient city, as faith gazes on them, melt away into the outline of a sublimer prospect—that of redeemed humanity through all the Christian centuries gathered and harmonized into the city of God.

This was what St. Paul meant when, writing to the Galatians, he contrasted with Jerusalem "that now is which is in bondage"—that is, to the Romans—"with her children"; the Jerusalem "that is above," or, as we should say, "the spiritual Jerusalem that is free, and is the mother of us all." That vast society in whose ample bosom the souls of Christian men from generation to generation find shelter and welcome and warmth and nourishment is the reality of which the old Syrian city was the material type. This is the Jerusalem of the Christian creed—"I believe in one holy Catholic Apostolic Church;" this is the Jerusalem of, perhaps, the greatest work of the greatest teacher of the Christian Church since apostolic days—Augustine's treatise on "The City of God." There may be controversies among Christians as to the exact direction and extent of its walls, just as there are controversies among antiquarians as to the extent and direction of the walls of its material prototype, but as to its place in the thoughts and affections of all true Christian men there should be no room for controversy. No other association of men can have such claims on the heart of a Christian as the Church of God. What if sin and division have marred its beauty and its unity. The old Jerusalem did not cease to be Jerusalem in Jeremiah's eyes because of the sins of the priests, of princes, of peoples which he so unsparingly denounced. The factions which rent the city that fell beneath the legions of Titus did not kill out the love and the loyalty of its noblest sons. The true remedy for disappointment and sorrow on the score of shortcomings and differences within the sacred city is to be found in such prayers as those which we offer in our holiest service to the Divine Majesty, beseeching Him to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord. And this earthly Jerusalem suggests another city, a true haven of peace, with which the visible Church of Christ is already in communion, and into which all those true children of Zion who are joyful in their King will one day be received. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 4. Whither the tribes go up.—*The church the centre of union:*—The church is still the centre of union. To this sacred place the tribes of God are ever going up, in accordance with the Divine statute, "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." All local peculiarities, all national distinctions, vanish in the house of God. The Asiatic and the Esquimaux, the Red Indian and the Islander of the Southern Ocean, the African and the European, assemble here as one family; and, throwing aside all sectional feuds and rivalries, they worship on the same holy mountain. The great bond of union is Christ, and, joined to Him who is our living Head, we are members of one another. All one in Christ. There is one Father, one Redeemer, one Holy Ghost. There is one condemnation, and there is one redemption; one cross of atonement, one throne of grace, one home in heaven. Whenever believers meet, they can sing the same psalms, and repeat the same prayers. The New Jerusalem, the metropolis of the universe, where the Son of David is seated upon His mediatorial throne, is the eternal centre of worship and of union. To this true Holy of holies the tribes of Israel are always going up, "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Pleasant it must have been to witness company after company of pilgrims arriving at the earthly Jerusalem, to worship Jehovah at His solemn feasts. But how much more delightful to behold their disembodied spirits, borne upwards on the wings of angels, passing through the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, and placed in triumph before the jasper throne! They come from the east and the west, from the north and the south. Each day, each night, accessions are made to the number of the redeemed, and new voices added to their jubilant songs. And then, too, the assemblies never break up, and the festivals have no end. There is peace within the walls, and prosperity within the palaces: peace flowing on as a majestic river, untroubled with storms, and unchafed with any impediment: prosperity, ample as the desires of the glorified spirit, and immortal as its nature. (*N. McMichael.*)

Ver. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment.—*True worship and correct thinking:*—The words of our text are the very last we should expect to find in a psalm of praise and adoration. What had thrones of judgment, the place where disputes were settled, and deeds justified or condemned, to do with pilgrims who hungered for the living God? But a little reflection leads us to see that it was a true spiritual instinct that connects the sanctuary with the judgment-seat and worship with the criticism of life. Maybe there was a geographical proximity between the temple and the civil court, but we would fain believe that it was a much deeper

connection, a spiritual association, that dictated the words of our text. For, as a matter of fact, we cannot prostrate ourselves before God without seeing all the facts of life in their true light and estimate all our thoughts and deeds at their true value, for "there are set thrones of judgment." 1. True worship leads to just valuation and correct thinking. In the hurry of life God becomes a shadow, and in the controversies of thought He becomes a symbol; but when we bow our heads with adoration and awe, we place ourselves in an attitude to see the King in His beauty; and all the time we are engaged in worship, God is quietly reasserting His supremacy over our lives. In industry and commerce we are daily tempted to consider our fellow-men as means towards an end, bound to us by the cold relationship of a cash nexus or a business transaction. As we move in the social life around us we are tempted to group our fellows according to caste and class, to clique and circle, but when we escape to the sanctuary and turn to the great sacrifice of Christ for forgiveness, we see our fellow-man as he is, a fellow-sinner for whom Jesus died, a brother saint, heir of God and joint-heir of Jesus Christ. The sanctuary corrects the estimates of the world, and the thrones of judgment modify the rules and maxims of men. Outside the sanctuary property assumes vast dimensions, inside it dwindles into an incident of life. Outside sin is an inevitable trifle, inside it is the one tragedy of the world, crucifying Christ and wounding God. Outside, eternity is a guess and a chance, a dream and a shadow, but inside it is the great reality, the place of adjustment, reunion, and satisfaction. As men in a mist see every object disfigured and exaggerated, so in the atmosphere of worldliness we see everything out of its true shape and perspective, but in the sanctuary there are thrones of judgment. In worship we unconsciously escape from the dominion of maxims and thoughts that are merely worldly and material. 2. The reasons for this beneficent effect are not far to seek. (1) Worship brings a man to the right standpoint. Vision is so often a matter of position. To learn how to see is to learn where to stand. The attitude of worship is a vantage ground which commands spiritual prospects and unseen landscapes, the land that is very far off, the world in its need, and the King in His beauty. (2) Worship removes the disturbing element. Inaccurate judgments are due to passion and prejudice, to interest and greed, and all these are forms and modifications of selfishness. It is self that spoils the vision and upsets the balances. But worship is the surrender of the self, the renunciation of the great obstacle and the solemn repetition of our Saviour's words—"Not My will but Thine be done." Self is displaced and God is enthroned, and as the result the worshipper thinks as his Lord thinks, and his judgment is just and his valuation accurate. (3) Worship quickens all the faculties of a man's life. We often see amiss because we do not see with the whole soul. Our judgments are wrong because they are partially made. It takes a man in the full totality of his gifts to see God and to understand God's world. But there are many influences which rob us of this full-orbed activity. First of all there is sin. The man that has sinned away his purity has not only spoiled his character, he has mutilated his soul and robbed himself of the power of seeing God; and it is the same with the man who has become material, cynical, pessimistic, or self-sufficient. Then there is specialism. The age is more and more an age of specialization. Men are simply compelled to throw their whole energy into certain lines and to neglect certain parts of their nature altogether. You all remember the lament of Charles Darwin that he had lost the taste which once he had for music and poetry, and had become a mere machine for observing facts and grinding laws out of them. It is an undisputed fact that many men are in a parallel condition to-day, and to be in this state is to look at God and the world with half an eye and half a soul. The corrective for all this is worship, for reverence is the highest activity of the soul. Like the fly-wheel in a factory, it calls into movement all the multitudinous wheels of man's complex personality. Worship steadies the reason, chastens the emotions, vivifies the imagination, braces the will, spurs the spirit of inquiry, and gives unto man the full and free possession of all his faculties vitalized and alert. (4) Worship gives to the soul that hospitality which saves it from being deluded by dogmatism and self-sufficiency. There is more light to break forth from God's world and God's Word, and our hardest task is to keep our eyes open and our hearts hospitable towards the dawn. But this is the attitude of worship, for, as the shell on the shore is open to the waves of the sea, as the bud on the tree is open to the rays of the light, so is the soul of the worshipper open to the mysterious influences that perennially stream from the unseen and the unknown. (*T. Phillips, B.A.*)

VERS. 6-9. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.—*The good of the Church:*—I. **WHEREIN THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH CONSISTS.** 1. Peace. Not that which results from mere inertness or indifference, but that which co-exists with the highest degree of spiritual life and energy; a peace which springs from unanimity, all being of one mind and one judgment as to the great and paramount questions of Christian doctrine and duty, and displaying one toward another, with respect to minor points, the spirit of humility and kindly forbearance. 2. Prosperity. Not that which is implied in high worldly distinctions; but the gracious presence of God with His people, and the abundant continuous effusion of His Holy Spirit upon them. II. **THE MEANS BY WHICH THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH IS TO BE PROMOTED.** 1. "Love" to the Church is indispensably requisite in order to fit us for rendering to her any effective and acceptable service. Under the influence of this principle, we shall be always ready to engage in any service which may promote the glory of God and the prosperity of His cause; we shall not be discouraged or driven aside by the difficulties that may obstruct our course; we shall patiently endure the infirmities and faults of other men; we shall, in one word, be "steadfast, unmovable," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 58). 2. Prayer is one direct means of securing the good of the Church (Isa. lxii. 6, 7; 2 Thess. iii. 1). 3. There must also be corresponding exertion (ver. 9). Every person, however humble his station, possesses some degree of ability to promote the good of the Church: let his gifts and influence, of whatever kind they are, be prayerfully and assiduously devoted to this object. III. **THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD URGE US ONWARD IN THIS COURSE OF DUTY TO THE CHURCH.** 1. A regard for our own benefit. "They shall prosper that love thee." We may with absolute certainty take this promise in its spiritual import. The prosperity of the soul is, after all, our truest and highest prosperity. 2. Another incitement to seek the good of Jerusalem is supplied by philanthropy (ver. 8). Whatever concerns the welfare and salvation of our fellow-men concerns us. Our brethren and companions in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, as members of His visible Church on earth, are obviously and directly interested in all that affects its peace and prosperity. By conserving the peace of the Church, and promoting its prosperity, we therefore contribute to the personal happiness and social elevation and improvement of mankind, in the most direct way, and upon the largest scale. 3. Above all, piety to God should stimulate us in this course (ver. 9). All we are and have, and all the good we still hope to realize throughout the vast future of our being, comes from God. Our obligations to serve and glorify Him are infinite, indissoluble, eternal. And is the Church His house, wherein He condescends to dwell? Then with what unremitting solicitude and assiduity should we seek its good! (*W. Horton.*) *The prosperity of the Church:*—I. **IN WHAT THE PROSPERITY OF THE TRUE CHURCH CONSISTS.** 1. Doubtless, we must take, as a leading feature, though not to the disregard of others which are essential in themselves, that of a faithful and fully preached Gospel. 2. Purity of doctrines. 3. Strictness of discipline. II. **WHO ARE THE PERSONS WHO ARE COMMANDED TO PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM, AND SEEK ITS PROSPERITY?** They are Christians. III. **THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS END IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.** Our first duty is that of earnest prayer for the prosperity of all people in the Church of Christ, and then sedulous and vigorous effort in order to promote it. (*J. S. Elliott.*) *Prayer for the peace of the Church:*—I. **THE OBJECT FOR WHICH WE ARE TO PRAY.** 1. That saving peace may be given to many persons. 2. For the peace of the congregation to which we belong. 3. For the peace of that branch of the Church with which we are connected. 4. For the peace of the whole Church of Christ. II. **THE COMMAND TO PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.** "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 1. The persons to whom it is addressed. It is given to all the children of God. 2. Those persons who have broken the peace of the Church and who are to be overcome by prayer. Even good people, by an inadvertent word or deed, or by a mere blameworthy course of action, have done much to injure the cause of Him whom yet they love so much. 3. Him to whom prayer is to be offered. It is to be made to God. He is the hearer of prayer. He only can deliver the Church from the unhappy effects of the inadvertencies of friends, or from the malignity of enemies. III. **THE PROSPERITY PROMISED TO THOSE WHO PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.** They will prosper—1. By receiving an answer to their prayer. 2. In their souls. 3. According to the fulness of the meaning of the promise. It embraces our every interest, whether of body or of mind, or as connected with one's family, or with the congregation or Church to which we belong, or with the Church at large. It is a God-like promise. (*John*

McKay.) *Prayer for the prosperity of the Church encouraged*.—I. THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM. This implies—1. The piety of its members. 2. A spirit of inquiry, promoting conversion. 3. The prevalence of brotherly love; the spirit of union; the disposition to bear one another's burdens, relieve one another's wants. 4. Conscientious and diligent attendance on all the ordinances. 5. The due exercise of discipline. II. THE EXHORTATION TO PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM. There should be stated seasons of prayer for the Divine blessing on the Church: its prosperity will thus be secured, because it is His own concern; it is the sphere in which His glory is displayed; while it provides the only means of saving men. We should pray that He may set His hand a second time to His work, as it concerns the success of His Church. III. THE PROMISE, connected with the exhortation in the text, ensures their own prosperity to those who seek that of the Church. (R. Hall, M.A.) *A eulogy of the Church*.—1. God established it. The Temple of Solomon was builded by human hands and royal treasures. The king put his own money into it, but God was the real architect and builder. So the Church of Christ to-day is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. It is God's instrumentality to bring the race back to God. 2. The history of what it has accomplished is another ground of loving, loyal attachment to the Church. It is more than an idea, it is an influence; more than a mere plan, even a power and blessing. It has brought light into human darkness, joy to human grief; it has brought help to the weary and fallen, inspiration to those who were disheartened. 3. It is the only regenerative power to which we may look for the future. Break down the Church of Christ, what else can bring salvation? Education, philosophy, science, and commerce, all the material wealth of the earth cannot take the place of the truth of God, of which His Church is a witness and herald. Take away the Church and you take away the Gospel itself. In this materialistic age the Church exalts man's spiritual needs. Amid conflicting speculations, when men are saying, "Lo, here! lo, there," the Church of God points out the true way of life. The Church is the school of the soul. It defines real manhood. The Church aims at the "perfect man in Christ Jesus." In Him we are "complete," and by no other method of discipline and culture. 4. We should love the Church because it is our birthplace. When welcomed to heaven it will not be nationality or language that will characterize us. It is "in Zion" that this man and that man will say, "I was born." 5. The Church is our mother. She has fed us and nourished and taught us. We cannot but love her. She cared for us in weakness and spiritual infancy. Surely we should be base indeed to neglect her. 6. The Church is our home. This world is beautiful, but it is but the mere environment of our spiritual life, an incident in our absolute and eternal destiny. The soul can only find a home, restful and satisfying, in this fellowship with Him and His chosen ones we call the Church of Christ. (C. M. Griffin, D.D.) *The duty of praying for the peace of the Church*.—I. WHAT THIS PEACE IS. 1. The removal of evils. 2. The enjoyment of positive blessings. Jerusalem's prosperity is spiritual. It is produced by the light of God's countenance, and by the communications of His grace. When under these, the children of Zion grow in knowledge, holiness, and comfort, and enjoy all their privileges undisturbed; then Jerusalem hath peace. II. REASONS WHY WE ARE TO PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM. 1. Because God commands us not to hold our peace, till we see her peace. 2. Because of her relation to the God of peace. She is the house of God; the city of the great King; the object of His special providence. 3. Because of her relation to the Prince of Peace. She is His spouse, His body; she is built on Him. 4. Because her peace is purchased at a dear rate, even the blood of the Mediator of peace. 5. Because she has many enemies without, ready on all occasions to disturb her peace. 6. Because she has disturbers of her peace within. (T. Boston, D.D.) *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*.—I. THE NATURE OF THE GOOD CONTEMPLATED. The prosperity of a Church is seen in its—1. Spirituality. (1) Of ministers. (2) Of people. 2. Purity in discipline. 3. Unity and harmony. 4. Multiplication and extension. II. THE MEANS OF ATTAINMENT PROPOSED. 1. Prayer. 2. Love of Zion. 3. Exertion. III. THE MOTIVE. Many lose sight of their connection with Zion as a body; if so, you will never prosper in your own souls. (J. Summerfield, M.A.) *Prayer for the peace of Zion*.—The singer's emotion at sight of the city breaks into exhortation to his fellow-pilgrims to pray for its peace. Verse 6 contains a play on the meaning of the name of the city, which, as we now know from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, was called "The city of peace" before the Israelitish conquest. The prayer is that the omen of the name may be fulfilled. The returning

exiles were compassed about by foes, and the name seemed rather irony than prophecy. The Church, too, has enemies to confront, and needs ever to offer this prayer. It is a true instinct which has led the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland to close the annual general assemblies with singing this part of our psalm, in the version which touches deep chords in many hearts:—

"Pray that Jerusalem may have
Peace and felicity."

A similar play of words lies in the interchange of "peace" and "prosperity," which, in the Hebrew, are closely alike in sound. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **They shall prosper that love thee.**—*Love to the Church of God*:—I. THE SPECIFIED OBJECT OF PIOUS AFFECTION—THE CHURCH OF GOD. Here we include the whole body of believers, united under Christ their common head, together with the ministers, officers, laws, regulations, immunities, and designs of the Messiah's kingdom (Eph. iv. 11-16). This holy attachment is founded on the most reasonable basis. 1. Uniformity of character. Dante has somewhere said, "Conformity of character is the bond of friendship." Whatever may be thought of this maxim in its general application to human nature, it certainly is strictly true when applied to the Christian, in reference to his affectionate attachment to the cause of truth. 2. The exhibition of the Divine perfections. 3. The invulnerable security of the Church. 4. Its increasing prosperity and final glory. II. THE DISTINGUISHING EVIDENCES OF ITS EXISTENCE. 1. Sorrow in the time of calamity bears testimony to the sincere affection of the friends of Zion. 2. Pious exultation in the day of prosperity. 3. Zealous effort to promote the interests of the Church. Those who are sincerely attached to her, labour to extend her boundaries, in the earth, by the diffusion of Gospel light—the administration of affectionate reproof—the repetition of earnest entreaty—the breathing of fervent intercession—and the communication of pecuniary assistance, supported by a due consistency of character. These are so many additional proofs of pious affection (Jer. xxvi. 12, 15; 1 Cor. ix. 19-23; Exod. xxxvi. 4-7; Neh. iv. 15-23). III. THE DECLARED ADVANTAGE RESULTING FROM IT:—"They shall prosper." (1) In their reputation. Their ardency of affection—their deep humility—their unwearied patience—their unbending integrity—and the general consistency of their character, procure for them the esteem of all who are like-minded, and very frequently even the approbation and confidence of unconverted men (Acts xxvi. 28; xxvii. 43). (2) In their spiritual enjoyments: their capacities are enlarged—their faith increased—their union with Christ strengthened—and their anticipations of heavenly felicity multiplied (1 Tim. vi. 6-8). (3) In their benevolent enterprises: their children and households instructed and regenerated—the harmony of the Church promoted—the progress of impiety and profaneness impeded—and their ungodly neighbours and friends converted from the error of their ways (Ps. i. 3). (4) In their temporal pursuits: although the religion of Jesus Christ does not warrant the expectation of opulence and grandeur, yet it secures to its adherents a regular supply of necessary things (Ps. xxxvii. 25; Luke xii. 31). This subject teaches:—1. That our professions of religion are of a very suspicious character, if unaccompanied with a corresponding zeal for the cause of God. 2. The folly of lukewarmness in matters of a religious nature (Rev. iii. 16). 3. That genuine piety tends to promote the general welfare of its possessor (1 Tim. iv. 8). (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) **On the love of our country**:—I. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH LOVE FOR OUR COUNTRY RESTS. 1. As the seat of all our best enjoyments in private life. 2. As the seat of true religion. 3. As the seat of liberty and laws; a mild, wise and happy government. II. THE DUTIES TO WHICH LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY GIVES RISE. 1. As private men and Christians, let us cultivate those virtues which are essential to the prosperity of our country. The foundation of all public happiness must be laid in the good conduct of individuals; in their industry, sobriety, justice, and regular attention to the duties of their several stations. Such virtues are the sinews and strength of the state; they are the supports of its prosperity at home, and of its reputation abroad. 2. Let us join to the virtues of private men those which belong to us in a political capacity as subjects and citizens. These must appear, in loyalty to our sovereign, in submission to the authority of rulers and magistrates, and in readiness to support the measures that are taken for public welfare and defence. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) **On the love of our country**:—I. THE GENIUS AND NATURE OF USEFUL, TRUE, CONSISTENT PATRIOTISM. 1. It is a feeling

natural to the human mind; the simple, the noble effect of qualities that are amiable and engaging. 2. It is also strongly approved of, beautifully enforced, and solemnly recommended by the language and example of unerring truth.

II. How THIS DISPOSITION OUGHT ALWAYS TO BE CHERISHED AND INVARIABLY EXPRESSED. 1. By yielding a due obedience to her existing varied laws. 2. By carefully suppressing, not abetting, or encouraging, in the smallest degree, anything that wears a hurtful, seditious, inflammatory aspect. 3. By uniformly performing such actions as may best advantage the state.

III. SOME OF THOSE OBLIGATIONS, UNDER WHICH WE ARE LAID THUS TO THINK, AND THUS TO ACT. 1. We are inhabitants of Britain, subjects of a free constitution, of wise and happy laws. Encircle the constitution with your love and obedience. Crown it with your prayers, and be glad that you are Britons. 2. Another obligation under which we are laid thus to think and thus to act, naturally springs from that countenance and protection which our present Church arrangement has now for so long so happily enjoyed. (*A. Stirling, LL.D.*) *On the love of our country*:—It is incumbent on us to love our country, and to pray for the peace thereof, on account of—

I. OUR INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH ITS INHABITANTS. If it be natural to the human mind to contract an attachment to those with whom we are united by the ties of affinity and the intercourse of society, then the love of our country is a natural and well-founded affection. It seems to be as natural as the affection of mothers and children, or that between brothers and sisters. It arises out of the very constitution of man, as formed by the hand of God, and is one of the first principles of human nature.

II. OUR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WHO BELONG TO IT. For many generations past, this has been the land of our ancestors from whom we are descended, and whom we naturally venerate. Here are the sepulchres of our fathers and mothers, the objects of our first and purest affection, whose memories are still dear to us. This is the residence of our friends and neighbours, of our connections and relatives, of all those with whom we are most closely united, and in whose welfare we are most deeply interested. Their happiness, as well as our own, is connected with the public welfare.

III. THE CIVIL FREEDOM WE ENJOY. It is true there may be some defects in the constitution, which experience has discovered, and which time may remedy. And there may be some shameful abuses in the administration which provoke the indignation of the public, and call loudly for redress. Yet, in the midst of these grievances, our situation is preferable to that of almost all nations upon earth.

IV. OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. The rights of conscience are respected, and every man is at liberty to draw his own faith from the Word of God, and to worship the Supreme Being in his own way. (*A. Donnan.*)

Vers. 7, 8. *Peace be within thy walls.*—*The peace and prosperity of Jerusalem*:—The leading elements which constitute a prosperous Church are—I. PURITY OF DOCTRINE. It is fashionable to sneer at doctrine, to talk flippantly about "gnawing at the dry bones of doctrine," to endorse the sentiment of the poet who would hand over doctrine to bigots to fight about and would be satisfied with "the right life." There is a fallacy here. How can we tell what the right life is if we do not learn it from doctrine? As believers in the fact of a revelation, and that the Bible contains that revelation, we maintain that the man "whose life is in the right" is a man who knows what the doctrine of God's Word is concerning right living.

II. SPIRITUALITY. True religion is a life as well as a belief, a life founded upon a belief, but always a life. That life is produced by the Holy Spirit, who takes the things which are Christ's, and shows them unto us. True religion has to do with the spirit of man. It cleanses the fountain, and the streams which issue therefrom are pure. The man who has spirituality is a man of religious principle. He is the same whatever he does and wherever he goes. He is the same in politics as in ecclesiastics. He is a Christian in buying and in selling, a Christian at home and abroad, on land and on sea.

III. BROTHERLY LOVE. The Church is a family, the Head of which is Christ. The same spirit that is found in the Head is also found in the members of the family. Now, just as the members of a family love one another because of their blood-tie—relationship—so the members of the household of faith should recognize and exemplify their oneness in Christ. A minister was once asked what he thought of the doctrine of the mutual recognition of the saints in heaven. He replied, "I am much more concerned about the duty of my people to recognize one another here upon earth." The reply was caustic, but perhaps it was needed. Christians should love one

another. They have the same Saviour and the same Spirit, and they travel the same journey. Alike they have encouragements and discouragements, conflicts and victories, duties and trials, and at last they shall be received into one everlasting home. IV. **EARNEST WORK.** By exercise muscle is developed and the whole system is maintained in a state of vigour. Persons engaged in mental or sedentary employments cannot with impunity disregard this law of health. Just so is it in the domain of the spiritual. Exercise is necessary for spiritual development and spiritual strength. Here is another view: God has made Christian work imperative. He is pleased to employ His people in saying to them, "Go, work in My vineyard." As among them there is a great variety of talent, so in the vineyard there are many kinds of work. Every gift, no matter how humble, can find a field for exercise. (*John Currie, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.**—*Christian patriotism*.—I. **THE CHRISTIAN'S PATRIOTIC VOW.** 1. He will honour the King. 2. He will obey the laws, not merely for wrath, but for conscience' sake. 3. He will use his influence to promote obedience in others. 4. He will personally contribute with cheerfulness to the support of the government by which he is protected. 5. He will discountenance to the utmost all those arts of evasion by which the revenue is defrauded and diminished. 6. He will unite with those who sigh and cry for the abominations of the lands. 7. If Providence should call, he will fight as well as pray. II. **THE MOTIVE TO THIS VOW.** 1. It is our native land. 2. The excellence of its constitution. 3. We have a life-interest in our country. 4. We should aim to do justice to the memory of our ancestors, by transmitting, unimpaired, to our posterity, the invaluable treasure of civil and religious liberties which we ourselves enjoy. 5. The house of the Lord is the glory of the land. The ark of the covenant is with us. Our privileges as Christians are great and many. And this consideration will preponderate over all others in the minds of those who truly love our Saviour's name. (*W. Newman, D.D.*) *The house of the Lord*.—I. **GOD'S CHURCH AS HIS HOUSE.** 1. It is reared by Himself. (1) The wisdom of the Architect. (2) The firmness of the foundation. (3) The suitableness of the materials. (4) The efficiency of the work. The power is all His own. 2. God's house is essentially spiritual. There are spiritual capacities, spiritual desires, spiritual purposes, spiritual exercises. 3. The house of God is intended for His own use. (1) His dwelling-house. (2) His banqueting-house. (3) A house of births. (4) A house of sacrifice. (5) A house of prayer. (6) A house of praise. II. **OUR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP THEREIN.** Real godliness is kept up and maintained by secret communion with God, spiritual intercourse with the Most High, under the movings of the Holy Ghost, in the name and for the merits of the Lord Jesus, by sweet, familiar, filial addresses to God the Father. Yea, you want more? The Father's love-tokens in reply, the Saviour's kind word in support, and the influence of the Spirit, as green olive trees in the house of the Lord. III. **DEVOTEDNESS TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.** Seek her extension, her peace, and her privileges. (*J. Irons.*)

PSALM CXXIII.

VERS. 1-4. **Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes.**—*The prayer of the eyes*.—The prayer of the eyes. Have you never seen it in the eyes of patient poverty, of distress, of oppression, of the sick child? This prayer recognizes God's glory (ver. 1) and God's graciousness (ver. 3). It is the prayer of silence, of deference, of reverence, of trustfulness. It is beseeching, waiting, observant prayer. All this is implied in vers. 1, 2. It is the prayers of eyes that watch carefully the signs of "the hands" of the King. I. That watch for His **DIRECTING HAND.** 1. In things temporal. 2. To spiritual service. II. That watch for His **DELIVERING AND VINDICATING HAND.** He will avenge His people for the sorrow produced by the "scorn of careless souls," and by the "spite of the proud" (ver. 4). No law acts more surely than the law of retribution. III. That watch for His **SUPPLYING HAND.** What ministers wait on man! Even God becomes man's minister; and

employs all natural forces and all angelic beings, and all the agencies of grace on man's behalf. IV. That watch for His CORRECTING HAND. The contempt and scorn of the enemy are often His discipline, bitter disciplines that "exceedingly fill" the soul of the humble people of God with shame and grief. But eyes of prayer look beyond the disciplines to the glory which they forecast, and are patient. V. That watch for His REWARDING HAND. Alsted has called this psalm "The Eye of Hope." And an upward glancing expectant hopefulness is the very spirit of it. The prayer of the eyes is the prayer of expectation; and the vision of the King shall yet broaden into the vision of the inheritance which awaits His true people, who now have few friends and comforters. (R. Corlett Cowell.)

The devout suffering soul.—I. THE ATTITUDE OF A DEVOUT SOUL. 1. Up-looking (ver. 1). Physically, man is the only being on earth upon whom the Creator has conferred an erect countenance, as if his very physical formation were intended to teach him that his eyes should be raised towards the skies, and that he should hold intercourse with Him who dwells in heaven. Other animals look down upon the ground, their faces are bent towards the earth. Man is God-like, erect, with native honour clad. The heathen themselves recognized this seal of divinity on the brow of man, and, in the beautiful language of the Greek, the word "man" describes him as a being whose honour it is to look up. But mentally so conscious are we of dependence on God, that even the worst of men are forced at times to look up to Him in the heavens. "From Him alone cometh our help." This is the regular attitude of a devout soul, looking up to the Infinite. Is there a more sublime mood of being than this? The millions are looking down to worldly things and worldly pleasures, and the highest objects on which most look are the little social magnates of the hour. But the true soul looks up to the Infinite Father. 2. Up-looking for a practical purpose (ver. 2). The hand is the symbol of power, by the slave's eyes being turned towards his master's hand is meant that he watches carefully for the least intimation of his will. Or the hand may be taken as the instrument of giving, and the reference may be to the slave's absolute dependence on his master. Or it may be the chastising hand that is meant: as the slave looks with entreaty to his master's deprecating punishment (Isa. ix. 13), so the psalmist's eyes are turned wistfully to God, until He have pity. The tone of the psalm, however, indicates hopeful trust rather than humble submission. The future of His people is entirely in His hands: He will be sure some day to have mercy on His own. II. THE NEED OF A SUFFERING SOUL (ver. 3). Some suggest the circumstances narrated in Neh. ii. 19; iv. 1-5, as suitable to the composition of this psalm: others prefer the times of persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes: others, again, suggest, on the grounds of similarity of language, common authorship with Psalm cxx. What is the need of a suffering soul? Mercy—to calm, succour, strengthen, guide, and deliver. IV. CONCLUSION:—This psalm is a lesson of meekness. When we are fancying ourselves scorned or forgotten, what have we to do but to look up to God and entreat His favour? It is pity for ourselves, and not vengeance on our foes, that we should seek. At the same time, we must be ready to obey like slaves waiting for some token of their master's will. (Homilist.) *The habit of looking upward*.—Dr. Culross told of a Spanish fable about a family that had nothing very remarkable about them, but there was this which seemed to signalize them from other families in the neighbourhood—every member of the family had a peculiar habit of looking upward. They became scattered in the course of years, but wherever one of them went, somehow or other they were always known by their neighbours and friends by this one peculiar habit. That is a very good family to belong to, and I trust that all here to-night do belong to it, and live looking upward. You know that story about Michael Angelo. He was so accustomed to look up at the fresco ceilings of the various churches and cathedrals upon which he worked, that he actually got into the habit of looking up. His head seemed to get that peculiar direction given to it, so that even when he was walking along the streets of Rome, there he was, looking upward. Let us remember, then, this first thing that we are called upon to do in the motto—"Look up, not down." (J. S. Poulton.)

Ver. 2. **Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters.**—*Watchful eyes*.—The man of God, who wrote this psalm, had been taught to look to God in a very remarkable manner, and I call your attention to it, in the hope that many of you will do likewise. 1. His eyes were reverentially fixed upon the Lord. He looked to God's hand, wherever it was, with deep reverence: "as the

eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters." Travellers tell us that, when they go into the house of a wealthy person in the East, the master will give certain signs to his slaves, and refreshments are brought in; but, except when they are called, the servants stand at a distance, watching for the slightest motion of their master's hands; they do not have the liberties that we happily accord to our servants; but they are just nothing and nobody, mere tools for their master to use as he pleases. And, as to the maidens, I have heard that the women in the East have a harder time of it with their mistresses than the men do with their masters, and that the lady of the house is a more severe taskmaster than her husband is. So the maidens watch their mistresses very carefully, for they are sorely afraid of them, and they look with great care and fear to see what "Madam" would have them do. Now, casting aside everything of human fear out of the figure, this is the way in which we ought to look to God. 2. The truly sanctified man looks to God's hands with obedience as well as with reverence. Orientals, as a general rule, speak far less than we do, except when they sit around the fire, at eventide, and tell their tales. But an Eastern master seldom speaks. A gentleman went, some time ago, into an Eastern house, and as soon as ever he entered, the master waved his hand, and the servants brought in sherbet. He waved his hand again, and they brought dried fruits; then he moved his hands in a different way, and they began to spread the table; and, all the time, not a word was spoken, but they perfectly understood the motion of his hand. They had to look sharply to see how the master moved his hand, so that they might do what that motion meant. We have not very much of that dumb action amongst us; but, on board a steamboat, you may see the captain moving his hands this way or that, and the call-boy is ready at once to pass the word down to those who are in charge of the engine. That is just how the child of God should watch the hand of God, in the Bible, and in providence, so as to do at once whatever he plainly perceives to be his Lord's will. 3. Then, also, our eyes should be absolutely fixed upon our Lord. The eyes of servants ought to be so directed to their masters that they not only see the sign, but obey it, whatever it means. It may be a very little thing, but yet the little thing should not be neglected. The smaller the matter is, the more careful we should be to attend to it, if it would please the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be so clever, you servants who fancy that you know better than your Master, for perhaps He may find somebody else to be His servant if you behave like that. Suppose I was starting on a journey, early in the morning, and I said to my servant, "I should like a cup of coffee before I start," and suppose that, when I came down, she brought me a glass of cold water, I should ask her, "Why did you do that?" If she should reply, "Oh, sir, I thought that the water would be better for you than coffee!" I should say, "Well, I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me in that considerate way; but I shall have to engage another servant who does what she is told." So I advise you not to alter or judge God's Word, but obey it. 4. Our eyes are to be turned to the Lord solely. The Eastern servant is not allowed to think; it is no business of his to have his eyes upon his master's guests; they are to be fixed upon his master. And the maiden does not think it to be her business to watch the movements of the hand of the lady who calls to see her mistress; her eyes are to be on the hands of her mistress. She does not dare to take them off, for, perhaps, just when she is looking out of the window, or gazing in curiosity at some object, her mistress may be waving her hand, and she may not see it; and then there will be a serious scolding and possibly something worse when the mistress gets her alone. So you and I must not take our eyes off our God at any time; but His way, and His will must be our sole law; and for this we must live, that we may please Him whose servants we are, for has He not bought us with His precious blood? So we are not our own, we are "bought with a price." (C. H. Spurgeon.) **Until that He have mercy upon us.**—*Persuance in waiting God's time:*—A single glance will sometimes gain the blessing, as a single stroke will sometimes gain the battle. But this cannot always be calculated upon. The blessing sought for is sometimes delayed, as a trial of our faith. The blessing itself, much as we prize it, may be of less importance than the discipline, through which alone it is to be obtained. And hence a test is sometimes applied to believers, whether they can cling to God, and continue instant in prayer, even when He seems to turn His back upon them, and pay no heed to the voice of their supplication. This appears almost an invariable principle in the Divine government. At times the Church is reduced to a

very low condition, and religion has lost its vitality and power. A feeling of utter helplessness is produced, and fervent prayers are offered up, that the Lord would arise and have mercy upon Zion. And He regards the prayer of the destitute, and does not despise their prayer. He is raised up out of His holy habitation; He appears in his glory; the mountains tremble before Him; and large numbers are brought to a knowledge of the truth. Is not this the history of the Church, as recorded in the Sacred Volume? Is not this the history of the Church, since the canon of Scripture was completed? Is not this the history of modern missions? Bring the Church to a thorough conviction that none but the Holy Ghost can convince, subdue, and save the human soul, and revivals of religion take place as a necessary consequence. (N. McMichael.)

Ver. 4. **Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.**—*Man disregarding man*:—I. Man's disregard for man EXPLAINS THE SOCIAL SORROWS OF THE WORLD. Were all men lovingly interested in each other, would there be pauperism, fraud, oppression, persecution, war, etc.? II. Man's disregard for man reveals the MORAL APOSTASY OF MANKIND. The constitution of the soul, with its moral sense and social sympathies, as well as the Bible, assure us that man was made to love his brother, that no man should seek his own supremely, but each another's weal. Sin has broken the social bond, shattered the social temple, unstrung the social harp. III. Man's disregard for man PROVES THE WORLD'S NEED OF A REDEEMER. If men do not care for men, who is to help the world? There is only One who can do it, and that is Christ. He came for this purpose, He came to redeem men from all iniquity. (*Homilist.*) *Antagonism against God's people*:—The quarrel is very old, and easily explained. It is the antagonism between darkness and light, between sin and holiness, between Satan and Christ, between hell and heaven. And though it may not be pleasant to be mocked and calumniated by these men, what a humiliation it would be to receive their praise! How low would you sink in your own esteem, were they to make flattering speeches, and tell you that you had done famously! That is a patronage from which one would instinctively recoil. Be thankful that they can use no other weapons than calumny and contempt. The Jews had to contend at the same time with open violence. Were their power equal to their will, they would deprive you of your civil rights, they would confiscate your property, they would confine you in dungeons, they would burn you at the stake. In Athens, they would have condemned Socrates, the greatest and best philosopher of antiquity, to drink the cup of hemlock; and they would have banished Aristides, because they were tired of hearing every one call him Aristides the Just. In Jerusalem, they would have goaded on the senseless rabble, and swelled the ferocious shout, "Not this man, but Barabbas." In St. Andrews, they would have sat at the castle windows, and feasted their eyes when good Patrick Hamilton was consuming in the flames, and they would have gone in afterwards, and dined with an unimpeachable appetite. In slave countries, they would tar and feather the missionaries, who proclaim to the degraded negroes the unsearchable riches of Christ. The same satanic spirit still reigns; and can we be too grateful that these enemies of the Cross are kept in chains! We live in a land of civil and religious freedom; and they cannot go beyond the boundaries of misrepresentation and scorn. They may show their teeth and growl, but they cannot bite. They may curse you, but they cannot lay a finger upon you. (N. McMichael.)

PSALM CXXIV.

VERS. 1-8. **If it had not been the Lord who was on our side.**—*God in the troubles of the good*:—I. ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE DELIVERER FROM GREAT TROUBLES (vers. 1-5). 1. The words represent the great troubles from which the Almighty wrought deliverance, as springing out of the hostility of man. 2. The hostility of man is represented by two figures—(1) As the rage of wild beasts (ver. 3). (2) As the rage of rushing waters (vers. 4, 5). II. PRAISED AS THE DELIVERER FROM GREAT TROUBLES (vers. 6, 7). 1. Temporal. Israel in Babylonian exile. 2.

Spiritual. Without figure, the unregenerate soul is in thralldom, and the Gospel alone can deliver it. III. TRUSTED AS THE DELIVERER FROM GREAT TROUBLES (ver. 8). This trust is founded—1. On His past goodness. 2. On His glorious name. 3. On His unbounded resources. (*Homilist.*) *The Church in various aspects:*—I. THE CHURCH RIGHTLY ESTIMATING HER DANGER (vers. 3-5, 7). II. THE CHURCH RIGHTLY RECOGNIZING HER DELIVERER (vers. 1, 2, 8). III. THE CHURCH RIGHTLY EXPRESSING HER GRATITUDE (ver. 6). This psalm abounds with striking figures, which, intelligently explained, may be forcefully applied. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Ifs and thens:*—To this writer the nation's life had been full of "ifs" and "thens"—its saddening possibilities with their dreary consequences. If we had stood alone, if God had not been round about us, if unerring wisdom had not thought for us and worked for us when the calamity threatened,—then had we been as the bird in the snare of the fowler, then had we been overwhelmed! *Ifs and thens*,—possibilities and their consequences. I. HUMAN POSSIBILITIES MAY BE UNDER DIVINE CONTROL. Whenever God calls a life into existence, He fills it to the brim with "ifs" and "thens," with possibilities and their consequences. Take the first recorded scene in human life, remembering that it is highly symbolic. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it;" that was a life of far-reaching possibilities, which God made still clearer by laying down His "if" and "then": if man obeyed, then all would be well; if he disobeyed, then all would be ill. God has treated every life since upon the same broad, universal scale; and we need to bear in mind constantly, earnestly, that our life is arranged in the same fashion. II. DIVINE DELIVERANCE FOLLOWS DIVINE CONTROL. God has filled each life with its possibilities that there may ever be the supreme need for His guidance. God has not stereotyped life for us. Each sets up his life's story from founts of movable type; it may be in this way, it may be in that, as we set the type. This makes life so magnificent, so awful. But when God is on our side, when we have chosen Him for our controller, when we set the type of life as He directs, then the printed page comes forth at last fair and clear upon imperishable parchment; and God shall read its record before assembled worlds, and pronounce it "well done," for it will be His work done by us under His superintendence and by His strength. Let the life be under Divine control, and it must be crowned with Divine deliverance as surely as sunrise brings the light. (*G. Davies.*) *Why God's people are afflicted:*—Why should believers need to be rescued from the teeth of the wild beast: why not prevent the wild beast from laying hold of them? Why should they need to be delivered from the snare of the fowler: why not prevent the snare from being set? Why should they need to be snatched from the swiftly rushing torrent, which is just about to overwhelm them: why not keep back the floods of waters, and bid their proud waves be still? Afflictions are sent by God. I. TO PROMOTE OUR SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT. The branches are pruned, and they bring forth more fruit: the flowers are crushed, and they yield their precious perfumes: the gem is cut deeper, and it sparkles with new lustre: the gold is thrown into the crucible, and, purified from the dross, it shines with greater splendour than ever. Once, in company with a clerical friend in a rural district, I paid a visit to a member of his church, whose affliction had been severe and protracted. He was a stone-mason. His sufferings had evidently been sanctified; and, some remarks being made in connection with this, he said, "I must have been a very hard stone, sir; for I have needed a great deal of hewing." II. TO TEST OUR SINCERITY. Not on a review day can the brave man be distinguished from the coward. Amidst brilliant uniforms, and waving banners, and the sounds of martial music, and applauding spectators, you cannot discriminate the true man from the counterfeit. But the real character is known, when comes the tug of war, and the enemy is before you, and friends and companions are falling thick around you. So it is in the Christian warfare. Far more moral courage is demanded for a sick-bed than for a field of battle, where men are urged on to the work of mutual destruction. And who can tell what a hallowed influence may proceed from afflictions, when endured in an uncomplaining and cheerful spirit! (*N. McMichael.*) *The Lord on our side:*—1. The figures employed describe the situation of God's people in any place or age, when they suddenly find themselves overtaken by calamity, when sorrow bursts upon them like the mountainous wave on a ship, when floods of ungodly men make them afraid, when they seem to feel in their flesh the teeth of slander and malice, when they are unexpectedly entangled in perplexities and difficulties like the bird in the snare. So the early believers in

the Messiah were troubled by Jewish and Roman persecutors, saints in many lands have been worried by Papal wolves, the evangelists of the last century were mobbed by worldly men, and the Christians in Madagascar and British India were more recently assailed by heathen foes. So the man of business is smitten by misfortune, disease springs upon its unsuspecting victim, and a family is diminished by death. So the convicted sinner is stricken by the terrors of God's law, the convert has to fight against the world, the flesh and the devil, and the righteous soul is in heaviness through manifold temptations. All the cry is, what can be done? How may we escape? Who will help us? 2. If Christians, we can profitably call to mind many escapes from evil. 3. It becomes us carefully to trace blessings to their source. The poet is less particular to describe the danger and the escape than to proclaim and praise the great Deliverer. We did not save ourselves. It was not the stamp of our foot that quieted the earthquake, not the sound of our voice that stilled the tempest, not the might of our arm that slew the lion, not the power of our hand that rent the network. It was not any creature except as sent by God, armed with a portion of His strength, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, that in any degree accomplished our salvation. (E. J. Robinson.)

Vers. 6-8. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.—Thanksgiving for deliverance:—1. It is our duty after delivery from dangers to acknowledge not only God's power for us, but His goodness also towards us, and to acknowledge Him the fountain of all blessedness upon that occasion (ver. 6). 2. As the Church's enemies are superior to her in worldly strength, so also in policy, craftiness, and worldly wit, as the fowler is craftier than the bird. 3. According as the danger is fearful, so is the delivery sweet and joyful (ver. 7). 4. It is as easy for God to deliver His people out of their enemies' hands, even when they have the godly in their power, as to break a net made of thread or yarn, wherewith birds are taken. 5. The fairest fruits of our by-past experience is to glorify God by confidence in Him for time to come. 6. Then is our confidence in God to be delivered from evil well bottomed, when we consider the Lord's omnipotency manifested in the creation of the world, and held out by His Word unto us: for so much doth the psalmist teach, when he maketh mention of the name of the Lord, and the work of the Lord, in professing of his confidence. (D. Dickson.)

Ver. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird.—Soul manumission:—I. IT IS A LIBERATION FROM A MISERABLE BONDAGE. 1. It is a bondage of the man himself. 2. It is a bondage associated with a sense of guilt. 3. It is a bondage from which God alone can deliver. II. IT IS A LIBERATION INTO A HAPPY FREEDOM. The freedom of the soul consists in the freest exercise of its intellectual faculties and spiritual powers. The freedom of the soul consists in being unconstrained by any force but love for the infinite. "It is a glorious liberty." Glorious on account of the hero who achieved it—glorious on account of the immortal blessedness it secures. (Homilist.) **The bird escaped from the snare:**—I. The soul compared to a BIRD. 1. It is a little bird, too—a sparrow, or one of the sparrow kind. "Our soul is escaped as a little bird"—not as a great bird that could break the net and free itself by its own force. A little bird fitly represents our soul when we are lowly in heart. In our unregenerate condition we think ourselves eaglets at the very least, but we are not great creatures after all. We talk of great men: we are all little in God's sight. If He cares for sparrows, be sure He cares for souls, and when you think least of yourself, yet believe that the Lord regards you. 2. Again, our soul is like a little bird because it is so ignorant. Birds know little about snares, yet they know so much that "surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Even this slender wisdom is more than men display, for they fly into the net when it is spread in their sight; aye, into the selfsame net out of which, in God's providence, they have just been permitted to escape. So foolish are we and ignorant, we are as birds ready for the lure, till the Lord teaches us wisdom; and even then we need hourly keeping, or we are entrapped by the destroyer. 3. Our soul is often like a little bird because it is so eager and venturesome. How birds will trust themselves in winter around traps of the simplest kind if but a few crumbs are used as bait! Alas, men are equally foolhardy: they see others perish, yet they follow their ways. 4. The little bird, also, when once taken in the net, is a good comparison with the soul captured by sin,

for it is defenceless. 5. Souls are also like birds because they are the objects of snares. II. **THE SNARE.** 1. It is concealed. Always suspect that in a temptation to sin there is more than you can see. Never say that it is a little thing; for great evil lurks in a little fault. Death and destruction hide under apparently small offences. 2. Snares and traps are usually attractive. The poor bird sees seeds which he is fond of, and he goes for them, little judging that he is to give his life in exchange for brief enjoyment. So it is with Satan. He tempts us with pleasures, with the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life: we taste the sweet, and are pierced with the smart. 3. Satan's snares, like the fowler's, are sadly effectual. Multitudes upon multitudes are the victims of their own passions, victims of that hellish art which makes evil appear to be good. God save us from being taken in these most deadly snares! III. **THE CAPTURE.** How came the bird to be taken? 1. It may have been through hunger. If you are extremely needy, you may be tempted to do wrong to provide for your wife and family; I pray that you may never yield to the temptation, but trust in God, and He will deliver you without your putting forth your hand unto iniquity. 2. Other birds are taken merely by their appetite. They are not excessively hungry, but they enjoy certain choice seeds, and the fowler knows it; and he scatters such around the trap. Easy of body, indulgence of taste, the joy of being admired, the sweets of power and position, all these and many more have been the fowler's baits. 3. Some persons are entrapped by fear. Birds have rushed into the net for fear of danger; many persons have become great offenders against God through lack of moral courage. They are afraid of the laughter of fools. They cannot bear the sarcasm of the so-called wise; and so they suppress truth, and join in sin to escape scorn. 4. Some little birds are lost by love of company. The fowler has a decoy-bird which sings sweetly or coquettes pleasantly, and the other birds must needs follow it. In the Church of God we lose many members by ungodly marriages. IV. **THE ESCAPE.** 1. It is due to God alone. 2. It is achieved by power. "The snare is broken"—the meshes torn with a strong hand, the steel trap dashed to pieces. 3. The escape is complete. Our deliverance must be entire, or it is not true. V. **THE LESSON.** It ought to teach us—I. To sing. 2. To trust. 3. To watch. "Let them not turn again to folly," is one of God's own cautions to His people. He has brought you up out of the horrible pit; do not play near the edge of it. He has set your feet on a rock; what have you to do with the miry clay? Get away from the slippery ground, and on the rock let your goings be established. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The escape of the soul from danger:*—I. A MELANCHOLY FACT SUPPOSED. 1. The sources of temptation are various. (1) Inward. (2) Outward. Satan and the world. 2. The nature and limits of the power of temptation. 3. From no quarter, perhaps, are we more exposed to danger than from former habits of once-indulged and unrepented sin, because there is a constant predisposition, without great watchfulness, to yield again to pursuits upon which the sinner has once entered. 4. Our safety is found in early resistance. II. A JOYFUL TRIUMPH EXPRESSED. We may justify this joy in experiencing the Divine protection under those dangers which threaten the stability of our faith and hope—1. From our knowledge of the mournful results of temptation in the case of others. 2. Because evil resisted and overcome is an occasion of inward satisfaction and happiness. Temptation foiled is happiness begun. 3. Because every such victory is a pledge and precursor of final conquest. III. A PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT DEMANDED. 1. Rejoice that the power and grace of Christ are equal to the worst extremities of human character and condition. 2. Remember the power of prayer. 3. Importance of habits of watchfulness and self-denial. 4. Temptation is only for a season. (S. Thodey.)

Ver. 8. **Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.—The best helper:**—I. GOD IS EVERYWHERE PRESENT. Sometimes those who would help us are far off. Not so God; He is "a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xli. 1). II. HE HAS EVERYTHING WE WANT READY AT COMMAND. Is it money, grace, friends, comfort, guidance, strength? He has of these things more than we can possibly need. III. HE IS A VERY WILLING HELPER. He invites us to call upon Him in the day of trouble (Ps. l. 15). IV. HE IS A LOVING AND TENDER HELPER. His kindness is often called "lovingkindness" (Deut. xxxiii. 27). V. HE NEVER FAILS TO HELP HIS PEOPLE. VI. HE IS AN EVERLASTING HELPER (Ps. xc. 12). (R. Brewin.) *The Church's confidence:*—The confidence here expressed by the Church is founded upon two things. I. PAST DELIVERANCE. "Our help is

in the name of the Lord." When placed in perilous circumstances, one's faith is much increased by thinking upon the times of old, and musing upon the years of the right hand of the Most High. We learn there that affliction is no strange thing, and that God can afford us all requisite aid. He has done so before, and He can do so again. As to Himself, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." As to His agents, there is no diminution in their number, or decrease in their power. II. THE DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE. He who defends the Church is the Creator of the universe. Yes! He who hung those stars in heaven, and filled their lamps with everlasting oil: He who made the earth, with its golden corn, and its purple grapes, and its dark olives. My Father made them all; and a single look at the green earth, and the swelling ocean, and the burning stars, is enough to rebuke our distrust, and to infuse a serene gladness into our troubled spirits. Would that we had more of this holy confidence; and how much of the peace and joy of heaven would be ours, even when travelling through the wilderness to the land that is afar off. (N. McMichael.)

PSALM CXXV.

VERS. 1-5. **They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.**—*Trustfulness*.—I. TRUSTFULNESS IN ITS SUPREME OBJECT: "The Lord" (Jer. xvii. 5-8). II. TRUSTFULNESS SECURING INESTIMABLE BLESSINGS. 1. Stability (ver. 1). 2. Divine nearness (ver. 2). 3. Protection from the power and oppression of wickedness (ver. 3). III. TRUSTFULNESS SEEKING THE GOOD OF OTHERS (ver. 4). Its nature to do so, being unselfish, generous, and jealous for the glory of God. Others kept good for goodness' sake. IV. TRUSTFULNESS PRONOUNCING THE FATE OF APOSTATES, AND THE TRANQUIL EXPERIENCE OF ITSELF AND COMPANIONS (ver. 5). (J. O. Keen, D.D.) *The community of the good*.—I. THE SECURITY OF THE GOOD ENSURED (vers. 1-3). The good are "they that trust in the Lord." Such are—1. Firmly established (ver. 1). 2. Safely guarded (ver. 2). (Isa. liv. 10; Zech. ii. 4-15). 3. Ultimately delivered (ver. 3). "Rod" here means sceptre, and the "lot of the righteous" the land of promise. The generic idea is that the power of the wicked shall not always extend to the good; one day the community of the good shall be out of the dominion of wickedness for ever and ever. "He shall bruise Satan under our feet." II. THE PROSPERITY OF THE GOOD INVOKED (vers. 4, 5). 1. The invocation specifies the character of the good (ver. 4). "To be good" is to be "upright in heart," and to be "upright in heart" is to be right in our loves, our aims, and activities. The "goody" are common, the good are rare. 2. The invocation pictures the character, and foretells the doom of the wicked (ver. 5). (Judges v. 6; Ps. lviii. 8; cix. 23; Matt. vii. 22; xxiv. 51.) (Homilist.) *Divine surroundings*.—I. THE SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. Between them and all evil is—(1) The almightiness of God. (2) His unerring wisdom. (3) His unchanging love. 2. This Divine surrounding affects—(1) The spiritual interests of His people. (2) Their temporal necessities. (3) All providential experiences. (4) Their sorrows. II. THEIR STABILITY. Mount Zion cannot be removed, but abideth for ever; even so, they that trust. Having a hold of God, they cannot be permanently injured in their highest and eternal relations. Moved they may be, but never removed; "perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "The Lord is round about them even for ever." (J. M. Jarvie.) *The mountain-girdled mountain*.—This little psalm looks very much like a record of the impression that was made on the pilgrim as he first topped the crest of the hill from which he looked on Jerusalem. Two peculiarities of its topographical position are both taken here as symbols of spiritual realities, for the singularity of the situation of the city is that it stands on a mountain and is girdled by mountains. There is a tongue of land or peninsula cut off from the surrounding country by deep ravines, on which are perched the buildings of the city, while across the valley on the eastern side is Olivet, and, on the south, another hill, the so-called "Hill of Evil Counsel"; but upon the west and north sides there are no conspicuous summits, though the ground rises. Thus, really, though not apparently, there lie all round the city

encircling defences of mountains. Similarly, says the psalmist, set and steadfast as on a mountain, and compassed about by a protection, like the bastions of the everlasting hills, are they whose trust is in the Lord. I. THE SIMPLE ACT OF TRUST IN GOD BRINGS INWARD STABILITY. The word here translated "trust" literally means to "hang upon" something. And so, beautifully, it tells us what faith is—just hanging upon God. Whoever has laid his tremulous hand on a fixed something, partakes, in the measure in which he does grasp it, of the fixity of that on which he lays hold; so "they that trust in the Lord" "shall be as Mount Zion," that stands there summer and winter, day and night, year out and year in, with its strong buttresses and its immovable mass, the very emblem of solidity and stability. II. THIS SAME ATTITUDE OF REALIZING THE DIVINE PRESENCE, WILL, AND HELP, WILL BRING AROUND US THE ENCIRCLING DEFENCES. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people"—a very real defence, but a defence that it takes an instructed eye to see; no obvious protection, palpable to the vulgar touch, and manifest to the sensuous eye, but something a great deal better than that—a real protection, through which we may be sure that nothing which is evil can ever pass. Whatsoever does get over the encircling mountains, and down to us, we may be sure is not an evil but a very real good. Only we have to interpret the protection on the principles of faith, and not on those of sense. When, then, there come down upon us—as there do upon us all, thank God!—dark days, and sad days, and solitary days, and losses and bitternesses of a thousand kinds, do not let us falter in the belief that if we have our hearts set on God, nothing has come to us but what He has let through. III. SIMPLE TRUST IN GOD, IN SOME MEASURE, ASSIMILATES THE PROTECTED TO THE PROTECTOR. Mountains girdle a mountain, and so my trust opens my heart to the entrance into my heart of something akin to God. It makes us "partakers of a Divine nature." The immovableness of the trustful man is not all unlike the calmness of the trusted God; and the steadfastness of the one is a reflex of the unchangeableness of the other. "As the mountains are round about Mount Zion," God is round about the people that are becoming God-like. Mark further the significant repetition of the same expression in reference to the stability of the man protected, and the continuance of the protection. Both are "for ever." That is to say, if it is true that God is round about me, and that, in some humble measure, my heart has been opening to be calmed and steadied by the influx of His own life, then His "for ever" is my "for ever." And it cannot be that He should live and I should die. The guarantee of the eternal being of the trustful soul is the experience to-day of the reality of the Divine protection. And thus we may face everything—life, death, whatsoever may come, assured that nothing touches the continuity and the perpetuity of the union between the trusting soul and the trusted God. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Trust in the Lord, the condition of stability and safety*.—I. TRUST IN THE LORD IS THE CONDITION OF MORAL STABILITY. Such a soul is firm in its—1. Love. 2. Faith. 3. Purpose. II. TRUST IN THE LORD IS THE CONDITION OF DIVINE SECURITY. How often mountains protected nations! The free winds that sweep the summits, and thunder at the sides, seem to inspire the people with an invincible love of freedom. And mountains, too, have often proved the asylums of freedom. But no mountains have guarded a people as God guards those who trust in Him. The Eternal God is a refuge, and underneath are the "everlasting arms." He "is a fire round about" them, and their "glory in the midst" of them. (*Homilist*.) *Mountains trust in God*.—I. THE MOUNTAIN AS AN EMBLEM.—1. Of God's defence (Ps. lxii. 2, 6; xviii. 2; lxxi. 3). 2. Of God's strength. Those who have stood at some great height amid the sloping snow-field, bristling barriers of ice, and peaks of untrodden rock in the higher Alps, far from organic life, even of the smallest kind of vegetation, have felt some thrill of perhaps inexpressible awe. The grandeur of the vastness and power of the scene proves our own utter helplessness and littleness. Looking from ourselves and our little finite limits of thought and act out into the large unrealized infinity of God's great power, written in earth and sea and sky, and in the mind of man, the soul feels lost. But remember that all this expression of power is but the symbol of the strength of a Father's love. 3. Of God's everlastingness. II. TRUST IN GOD GIVES.—1. An inspiration of success. 2. A happy heart, in spite of everything. 3. Submissive decision of character. There is something supremely exhilarating and sublime in the spectacle of the good man who, in the strength of what he believes to be Heaven-sent guidance, goes intrepidly forward, noting little of what

opposes and may attack, though death itself hang its sword above his head, though the world seem to shake in ruins around him. Though, as it were, the very earth be moved and the mountains be carried into the heart of the seas, the regular, constant, unwavering pursuit of his ideal is the one motive of life. So Daniel braved in quiet reverence the decree which opened the den of lions; the three witnesses to God argued not a moment, though the flames and heat of the fiery furnace were in front of them. (C. E. Harris.) *The immovability of the believer*:—The metaphor in the text was drawn by the pilgrims from the hill before them; or, if the psalm does not belong to pilgrims, but to all Israel, they took the comparison from that mountain with which they were best acquainted. If they might not all see Lebanon, which lay at the northern extremity of the land, if they might not all behold the excellency of Carmel, or gaze upon the heights of Hermon, yet once in the year they must all look upon Zion, "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel." The emblem was therefore a familiar one, and I wish sometimes that we were more apt at sanctifying to holy uses the common objects which are round about us: these streets and houses, our own country, and our own home. I am afraid our eyes are open when we seek emblems of sadness and we find them on every hedge and in any garden-plot; but we should also look at home when we want metaphors of thanksgiving with which to set forth our security and our comfort in the Lord.

I. A LOWLY PEOPLE. They "trust in the Lord." A very simple thing to do. It needs no effort of intellect to trust, and it needs no laborious education to learn the way; trusting in the Lord is simply depending where there is unquestionable reason for reliance, believing what is assuredly true, and acting upon it. Trusting in the Lord is taking at His word One who cannot lie, or change, or fail; and certainly this is no great feat if we look at it from the carnal man's own point of view. At the same time, it is very right. Should not a man trust in his own Creator? Does He not deserve to be trusted? Has He not always been faithful? Moreover, is it not wise? What can be wiser? Those of us who have tried trusting in God have never found it fail, whereas when we have trusted in men we have been disappointed.

II. THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS. God's children undergo a variety of experiences. To-day their hearts are a place of sacrifice, and to-morrow a battle-field; by turns their soul is a temple and a threshing-floor; but whatever their ups and downs may be, they shall never be removed from their ordained and appointed place: by the grace of God they are where they are, and where they shall be. They shall never be effectually removed from that place before the Lord in which infinite love has fixed them.

III. THE EVIDENT REASON FOR ALL THIS. Why is it that they that trust in the Lord shall not be moved?

1. Because they are trusting in the truth. They have not believed a lie, and therefore they shall not be swept from their foundation. They are trusting in One who will not deceive them and cannot fail them. They have laid their foundation on a rock, have they not?
2. They are trusting where their reliance is observed and welcomed. God loveth to have many dependants about Him. It is His way of revealing Himself and manifesting His glory. If this is what He desireth, if He seeketh such to worship Him, who believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, why should He reject their suit?
3. It is not the nature of God to cast away any who rely upon Him; on the contrary, He is very careful that faith should never have less than she has expected. He respects the courage of faith: He never confounds it. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Steadfast trust*:—Believers are too often tossed about in their minds, and suffer great shakings and movings of heart because they do not trust in the Lord as they should. These things ought not to be, for we ought to be steadfast and immovable; but by reason of infirmity and immaturity many are tossed to and fro as with a tempest. Still, even in these, deep in their soul their faith is earnestly keeping its hold, and does not permit them altogether to drift. At the back of a great deal of grievous unbelief, when we are in a depressed condition, there lives a faith which is not moved, but in secret takes hold as for dear life, biding its time till better days shall come. It is only by realizing the everlasting, abiding love of God that they that trust in the Lord shall come to feel steadfast as Mount Zion which shall never be removed. The man of God may know that he is safe, and yet there may be such a rush and tumult in his experience that he may not be able to understand himself or realize his true position. This may happen even to more advanced believers; but as we grow in grace the tendency is to reach a more even and equable condition. Experienced believers are not to

be put about by every puff of wind; nay, they come at last to hold on their way in the tooth of all ill weathers, and, like hardy mariners, make small account of the lesser storms of life. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. **So the Lord is round about His people.**—*The Divine protection*:—The 125th Psalm is of the returning exiles. They are only about fifty thousand. They have made the difficult journey across the desert sands. They have reached Jerusalem. It is an utter ruin—walls levelled, Temple destroyed, everything in confusion. There are Samaritan enémies, too, and all sorts of obstacles, as they set about the enormous task of rebuilding, reorganizing. How unable, defenceless, they seem to themselves! But if, to-day, one stands in what was the Temple area at Jerusalem and looks about him, he will see, rising above him and around him, on the east the Mount of Olives; on the south, the Hill of Evil Counsel; on the west, the ridge beyond the valley of Jehoshaphat; on the north, the high ground about Scopus—all these loftier than Jerusalem. Well, one day the singer of this psalm did stand there amid the ruined Jerusalem, did feel his own helplessness and shelterlessness; but, seeing how Jerusalem was girded by the higher hills, he saw the only real refuge for helpless and shelterless man anywhere, viz. in God; and, getting figure for his trust in what he saw, he bravely sang: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Think, then, of the Divine protection of man, helpless and shelterless in himself. I. God stands about His people, as the mountains do about Jerusalem, with PROTECTING ATONEMENT OF SIN. II. God stands about His people, as the mountains do about Jerusalem, with the protection of DISCIPLINE ADMINISTERED WITH INFINITE AND LOVING WISDOM. For a forgiven man is by no means a perfect man. III. God stands about His people, as the mountains do about Jerusalem, with the protection of PROFFERED HELP FOR THE DAILY DUTY. IV. God stands about His people, as the mountains do about Jerusalem, with the protection of a FINAL AND TRIUMPHANT DELIVERANCE. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *The security of the Church*:—I. THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence, and she is castled within the faithful engagements of the covenant. How often has the Church been attacked; but how often has she been victorious! The number of her battles is just the number of her victories. Foes have come against her; they have compassed her about, but in the name of God she has destroyed them. 1. Persecution has unsheathed its sword, and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes. But has the Church been subdued? 2. But by and by the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God's Church, and he therefore adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. "I will not only slay them," said he, "I will malign them." Did you ever read in history the horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians? Never were men so fearfully belied. The very heathens, who revelled in vice, despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the liar had laid to their charge. A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast upon the snow-white garments of Christ's Church fell off from them, leaving them whiter than before. But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. But has the Church suffered through their slander, or hath ever a solitary Christian lost aught by it? No; the Lord God who set the mountains round about Jerusalem has so put Himself about His people, that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against us in judgment we shall condemn. 3. Again Satan learned wisdom, and he said, "Now, inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, this will I do; I will send into their midst wolves in sheep's clothing; I will inspire divers heretics, carried away by their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the Church promulgate lies and prophesy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance. In every era of the Church there have been numberless bands of heretics. Now, this is one of the attempts of the enemy to put down the truth; but he will never be able to do it, for "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." 4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks, in the last place, to put out the Church, is a device which has amazed me above every other. "Now," says Satan, "if I can quench the Church, neither by persecution, nor

slander, nor heresy, I will invent another mode of destroying her." And I have often marvelled at the depths of deceit which are centred in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the Church, to set us apart from one another, and not allow those who love the same truth to meet with each other and to work together in love, and peace, and harmony. But, despite all this, the Church is secure, for God hath set Himself round about her "even as the mountains," etc. II. The fact which relates to the Church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God has fortified His people; so that every believer is infallibly secure. The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O child of God, there be many that will seek to destroy thee, and thy fears will often tell thee that thou art in the jaws of the enemy. 1. Providence will often seem against thee; thine eyes shall be seldom dry; it may be funeral shall follow funeral; loss shall follow loss; a burning house shall be succeeded by a blasted crop. The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils which happen to manhood. Oh! child of God, it may seem that all things are against thee; perhaps all God's waves and billows will go over thee; but, oh! remember, that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt, can separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. 2. Again, you may be tempted by the world! traps may be set for you on every hand, you may be tempted by your flesh; your corruptions may have great power over you, and often stagger your faith, and make you tremble, lest you should be utterly overthrown, and the devil may set upon you with fiery darts; he may pierce you with foul insinuations, he may almost make you blaspheme, and with terrible suggestions he may drive you well-nigh to despair. 3. And thou mayest, too, be overcome by sin. Thou mayest fall. Conscience will whisper, "How couldst thou be a child of God, and yet sin thus?" And Satan will howl in thine ears, "He that sinneth knoweth not God." And so thou wilt be ready to be destroyed by thy sin. But do thou then, in the hour of thy dark distress, read this verse—"As the mountains," etc. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 3. *Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*—*Hands put forth to iniquity.*—The shepherd would keep his sheep from straggling. His distress is that all in Israel are not true Israelites. Two sorts of people, described by the poet, have ever been in the Church. The second class, instead of being at the trouble to "withstand in the evil day," will "put forth their hands unto iniquity." Rather than feel, they will follow the rod of the wicked. They will "turn aside unto their crooked ways," sooner than risk temporal and material interests. If they do not give themselves fully to the Egyptians or Philistines, Babylonians or Samaritans, they go far in compliance to gain their favour, and sometimes so far as to share in their plunder. Slipping from the King's highway into the tortuous by-paths of selfishness and compromise, they are without excuse. No sufferings in God's service are reasons for unfaithfulness and apostasy. His grace makes us able to drink whatever cup His providence administers. He adapts our trials to our strength, and proportions our strength to our trials (1 Cor. x. 13). The way of escape is never crookedly parleying with false friends, but always direct obedience to the will of God. At the worst, it is death; and then the worst is best. Whatever may happen from the rod of the wicked, it is of the greatest moment to shun the wickedness of their rod. The treacherous and pliable exchange the lot of the righteous for the portion of evil-doers. (E. J. Robinson.)

Ver. 4. *Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good.*—Two principles may be deduced from this prayer. 1. If you desire good, you must first be good. "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good." It is generally understood that if we would do good to others we should first become good ourselves. But it is here stated that human goodness, with all its imperfections, has an attractive power, and is the best possible condition for obtaining more good. The rule is universal: "Unto every one that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance." Grace once received, prepares the way for a larger supply. Having tasted and felt that the Lord is gracious, our desires are enlarged, and our capacities for knowing more of the fulness of God are increased in a corresponding degree. The nearer we approach perfection, the higher we would climb. The more conformed we become to the image of God's Son, the more do we long for a complete transformation, through the Lord, the Spirit. 2. The Divine promises furnish the best encouragement for prayer. The present intercession has its basis in the pre-

ceding verses. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed." "The Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Nothing can be clearer and more decided than the promise; and will any one assert that prayer is thus rendered unnecessary, if not presumptuous? Shall we say, The promise is made, and God may safely be left to accomplish His own designs? No! The argument runs in the opposite direction. Holy boldness in prayer proceeds upon the principle that God has a sincere desire to bestow the very blessing for which intercession is made. (*N. McMichael.*)

Ver. 5. The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.—*The time of trial*:—1. In the time of trial, there will sundry be found hypocrites, counterfeit dealers, misbelievers, who will shift for themselves, and turn aside from the obedience of faith, by their own crooked courses. 2. God will decipher hypocrites, who do not trust God, or do not adhere to the obedience of faith in time of trouble and trial, and will put them as compliers with the wicked, in the same reckoning with His open enemies. 3. To look upon the judgments of God, pursuing backsliding misbelievers in time of persecution, should be a strong motive to make professors constant in the obedience of faith, on all hazards in time of trial: for the punishment of the wily misbeliever is set down here to teach men to be honest and stout in the faith and obedience of God. 4. Whatsoever trouble the Lord's people shall be put unto in the time of trial, they shall still remain in God's favour and grace; and when the Lord hath purged His Church in some measure, by winnowing corrupt hypocrites out from among His people, the Church shall be restored to her peace. (*D. Dickson.*) **Peace shall be upon Israel.**—*The peace of God's people*:—There is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Tumult there may be without, but there is tranquillity within; and probably not the less so because there is tumult without. The music in a room does not fall with less pleasure on the ear, and less move the soul with its wondrous harmonies, because at times, during a pause, you hear the wind raging outside, and the rain rattling against the window-panes. What can disturb him upon whom the Divine countenance is shining, and who pillows his head on the bosom of Jesus! If there be wars and rumours of wars in the world, it is not the fault of the Christian. He has been at the foot of the Cross, and he has learned there, that he who loves God must love his brother also. "Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," he has no apprehensions as to its stability. He has no feeling except of pity to the poor victims, who are involved in fields of slaughter, in the shakings of nations, and the revolutions of empires. Their roots shall be as rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up as dust, who would dim the starry brightness of the Redeemer's glory, and keep back the world's regeneration. Peace shall be his at death. The Christian knows in whom he has believed. No unknown Redeemer stands beside his bed. No unknown hands are thrown around him. And there shall be peace in heaven. No jarring discords are there; but the delightful anthems of gratitude, which burst almost unconsciously from the hearts of the redeemed. How pleasant the murmurs of the crystal river of life, which glides so gently between its green banks! How softly the wind breathes, as it stirs the branches of the tree of life, distilling odorous dews! How sublime the repose of that magnificent city of our God! (*N. McMichael.*)

PSALM CXXVI.

VERS. 1-6. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion.—*A political fact that is emblematic, and a human experience that is common*:—I. A POLITICAL FACT, EMBLEMATIC OF MORAL RESTORATION. The political fact here celebrated is the return of the Jews from Babylonian thralldom, through the interposition of Cyrus. 1. The political restoration was great. It was a restoration from exile, bondage, and destitution of religious privileges. And are not souls in their unregenerate state exiles alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, slaves "carnally sold under sin," destitute of true religion, without God and without hope in the world? 2. It was Divine. Who else can effect the salvation of the soul? II. A HUMAN

EXPERIENCE COMMON TO MOST MEN. 1. A great difficulty to realize at once a great and unexpected event (ver. 1). There is mercy in this. Could we fully realize such events as they occur, our nervous systems would be shattered, our mental powers would be paralyzed. Thank God for this dreaming faculty, a faculty which weakens the force of terrible events. 2. The irrepressibility of strong emotions (ver. 2). There are emotions to which souls are susceptible that cannot always be suppressed; they are electric, and must break in thunder and flash in lightning. These emotions are useful, they clarify the atmosphere and bring in the sunny and serene. 3. The inspiring force of success (ver. 2). 4. Love for others increasing with increased blessings (ver. 4). He who practically appreciates the blessings he receives from Heaven will desire that others may participate in the same. He who is good will do good, he who is truly pious will be philanthropic. 5. True happiness comes out of suffering (ver. 6). (1) It comes out of the sufferings of others. How much of the enjoyments of the men of this age have come out of the sorrows and tears of the men of past generations! (2) It comes out of the sufferings of ourselves. Godly repentance is the essential condition of spiritual enjoyment. "Through much tribulation," etc. 6. Genuine work for others, however painful, will be prosperous (ver. 6). (1) Philanthropic acts are seeds. There is a germinic life in every noble act, a life capable of indefinite multiplication. (2) The sowing of these seeds is often very painful. "Sow in tears." Parents, ministers, missionaries, all will attest this. (3) However painful, their harvest will reward the sower amply. They will yield "sheaves." They fall into the soil of human souls, and this soil is fecundant and imperishable. (*Homilist.*) *Captivity and deliverance*.—I. OUR STATE BY NATURE. 1. Captivity to sin. 2. Captivity to the law. II. OUR DELIVERANCE. The regenerating Spirit does not create in us new faculties. He rather purifies the old. He gives a right tendency and direction to those which already exist, and causing the wandering affections to flow in their proper channel. One immediate result of this Divine work is that of our being "turned again" unto God. III. THE EMOTIONS BY WHICH THIS DELIVERANCE IS ACCOMPANIED. 1. The emotions which are produced in the bosom of those whose "captivity is turned again." (1) Surprise. To feel that sin which had hitherto exercised so powerful a sway over our hearts, and found us at all times so easy a prey, has now "no more dominion over us"; is not this matter of surprise? To find that Satan, that cruel taskmaster, who had so long led us captive at will, has lost his tyrant-power, and is now beaten down beneath our feet; is not this matter of surprise? (2) Joy. Because Satan is foiled. Because the soul is saved. Because the glory of God is secured. (3) Praise. 2. The emotion which is produced in the mind of those who merely observe this deliverance. (*John Gaskin, M.A.*) *Captivity turned*.—I. THE CAPTIVITY OF ZION. 1. A degraded state. 2. A wretched state. 3. A guilty state. 4. A helpless state. II. DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY. 1. Cyrus was a type of Christ, the great spiritual Deliverer; and if we are ever brought out of our spiritual bondage we must be content to owe our liberty to Him alone. 2. This deliverance is openly proclaimed and freely offered. 3. None are excluded. III. THE FEELINGS WITH WHICH THEY RECEIVED THE TIDINGS OF THIS DELIVERANCE. 1. Joy. 2. Manifested in praise. 3. Prayer. (*R. Davies, M.A.*) *A psalm of deliverance*.—Luther refers to the great and universal captivity of men under hell and the devil, and says it was a small matter for the Jews to be delivered from their bondage compared to our deliverance from these enemies. Sure I am that when the Lord so suddenly and wonderfully, and beyond their expectation, turned their captivity and took them home, our friends were, on that morning, "like men that dreamed," even those who had good understanding of the promises. To be delivered in the awful moment of death from sin, and sorrow, and pain, to enter in at the gates of the city with the sound of trumpets in their ears, must have seemed to them a too blessed dream. We know the men and women of whom we speak, and we know something of how happy they must be now. Loyal as they were to us and home, we know their roots were struck deep in another home than ours. While they sat with silent harps by the rivers of Babylon, they thought of the sweetness, the beauty and blessedness of that far-off city. We saw them as if they were in a dream, and we could not hide from ourselves how ripe they were to have their captivity turned. Neither can all the sorceries and incantations of the great Babylon so intoxicate and seduce us, but that we shall take our places with them. Can it be that they have forgotten us? Are they so full of joy and so happy that this world and those they loved before never come into their minds?

No, we cannot believe it. They have not forgotten us. They are now priests to God, and sometimes we can almost read our own names on their breastplates. As often as the High Priest says, "Father, I wish that they may be with Me where I am," we may hear them cry, Amen. While they were yet on this earth, when they saw a new sight, or read a new book, or heard a good sermon, have we not their letters at home where they write, "I thought all the time of you. I did not half enjoy them because you were not there. I must stand on that hill-top, see that gallery, read that new book again with you"? And as they walk the streets of the New Jerusalem this night thinking of us, they ask, How long shall it be? When shall it be? They think how our hearts will swell at the sound of the trumpets; and as they walk by the living waters, they cry, O that they were here to share my cup! Too literal critics find an enigmatical contradiction between the beginning and the end of this psalm; but there is no enigma here. The hands of the redeemed trembled on the harp-strings when they thought of those they had left behind. It was not for those who pined in their captivity for whom they feared, but for those who prospered. John Calvin says that Daniel raised his banner in Babylon that believers might hold themselves in readiness to return. Paul has given us a banner with words inscribed in blood and gold, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and as it waves in the wind, we see on the reverse scroll (2 Cor. v. 1). (*A. Whyte, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter.—*The rapture of deliverance:*—**I. THE JOY OF THE RETURNING JEW.** 1. Bewildering. (1) The suddenness of it. (2) The instrument of it. Cyrus—a heathen. 2. Rapturous. (1) Babylon left behind. (2) The exiles nearing home. 3. Reasonable. **II. THE JOY OF A RETURNING SINNER.** 1. Look at him before return. (1) A wanderer from his home. (2) In bondage. 2. Look at his Deliverer. 3. Look at the deliverance. **III. TO THE EXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN.** 1. Is your piety joyful? 2. Ought it not to be so? (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) *The laughter of the ransomed:*—God's glorious deliverance always seems too wonderful to be real. Even the apostle who finds his fetters dropped off and his dungeon door swung open, is like unto them that dream: "he wist not that it was true, but thought he saw a vision." So in modern times, when Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, the abolitionist, heard that the long fight was at last finished and every slave on British soil was a free man, he broke out instinctively into the joyful verse: "Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing." (*T. H. Darlow.*) **Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.**—*Heathen and Christian witnesses for God:*—**I. GOD HAD DONE MANY THINGS FOR HIS ANCIENT PEOPLE.** Their exile was a punishment for their great national sin, and their return meant a revocation of that punishment. But greater blessings are possessed by God's Church in these days. In place of mere ceremonialism we have truth itself—naked, transparent truth. Nor should we lose sight of our individuality. The Church is a congregation of individuals, and it may be said of these not only in their corporate condition as a Church, but separately and individually, "The Lord hath done great things for us." **II. THESE GREAT THINGS ARE OBSERVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY OTHERS.** The heathen recognized the blessings bestowed on the chosen people, while to the released captives their return to their old and beloved city seemed too good to be true. Our spiritual blessings are not so easily recognized by others as the return of God's people was by the heathen. But in looking at Christian countries the heathen could not but be struck with the benefits that civilization, liberty and Christianity afforded. It ought also to appear to the ungodly neighbours of Church members, that even in a temporal sense God had done great things for His Church, and that conversion had been followed with blessed consequences of a temporal kind, though they could not see the gift bestowed upon the inner life. But whether outsiders recognized these facts or not, it is your duty to be God's witnesses, and to tell relatives and friends and fellow-townsmen what great things God had done for us. **III. THESE GREAT THINGS DEMANDED A SPECIAL RECOGNITION, BOTH FROM OBSERVERS AND RECIPIENTS OF BLESSINGS.** There was danger lest the blessings were recognized and the Giver forgotten. Perhaps one of the tendencies of modern times is the exclusion of God from almost everything outside the Church—from education, from legislation, from civil and political and national affairs, from commerce, and from many other things besides. There ought to be a recognition of God not only within, but outside the Church. I am

thankful that there is a recognition of God in this country. The motto on the Royal arms—"Dieu et mon droit"—shows a recognition of God in the highest place in the State. I am thankful that the Imperial Parliament does not sit on Sundays. What is that but a recognition of the Divine law and of Him who said, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." Every time I pass the Royal Exchange in London I cannot help noticing the inscription, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." What a reminder is that place to the merchants, to the Bank of England, and to the Mansion House, the seat of the greatest of municipalities just opposite, that there is a Diviner God than Mammon. One of the most startling statements I ever heard of was that made by a learned scientist, that an examination of nature did not lead him up to God. Just think of some one saying that St. Paul's Cathedral, with its architecture and traditions, did not lead to a recognition of the great architect, Sir Christopher Wren. What are your acknowledgments to God? (T. McCullagh.)

Ver. 3. **The Lord hath done great things for us.**—*Great things for us*:—I. THE FACT PROFOUNDED. Note the personality of the statement. "For us." 1. As regards our country. Where is there country so fair or land so fertile as ours? Where is such freedom and peace enjoyed? 2. As regards our religious privileges. We have a pure faith, an open Bible, and freedom to worship God as we think best. 3. As regards our individual wants. Homes, friends, food, sustenance, health, etc. 4. As regards our spiritual welfare. We were vile—we are made pure. We were far away—but are now brought nigh. God has done His part in all this, and if our eternal happiness is not assured the fault is ours, not His. II. THE FEELING. "Whereof we are glad." These Jews had been deprived of their privileges for some considerable period, and then, in the desolation of their spirits and in the misery of their servitude, they began to realize the mercies they had so thanklessly enjoyed. Do we not often tempt God to take away our privileges and to deprive us of our mercies? (J. J. S. Bird, B.A.) *Grateful acknowledgment of Divine goodness*:—I. A PLEASING STATEMENT. What "great things" God hath done for His people—1. In redemption. 2. In conversion. 3. In the bestowal of Divine freedom. 4. The enjoyment of Church fellowship. 5. By providential interpositions and deliverances. 6. By spiritual advancement. II. A JOYFUL STATEMENT. This gladness implies—1. Sensibility. 2. Real enjoyment. 3. Heartfelt gladness. 4. Social gladness. "For us." III. APPLICATION. 1. Mourn your ingratitude and forgetfulness. 2. Pray for quickening grace. 3. Anticipate the time when you shall be made eternally glad. (*Helps for the Pulpit*.) *Great things*:—I. THE LORD'S WORK ACKNOWLEDGED. God is at the head of all our affairs. Many will not give God the glory. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30); Herod (Acts xii. 21, 23). II. ITS GREATNESS RECOGNIZED. 1. Greater things than we deserved. 2. Greater things than we knew. 3. Greater things than we expected. III. AN INTEREST THEREIN CLAIMED. What advantage is there if we cannot say "for us"? The Jews knew what God had done by the edict of Cyrus. They must take advantage of it. God only opened the way, and constrained them to walk in it. IV. JOYFUL GLADNESS EXPRESSED. 1. Why are we glad? (1) The work is so great. (2) The work is done. (3) The work is done well. 2. How should we show our gladness? (1) By a cheerful countenance. (2) By willing labour. (3) By generous gifts. V. APPLICATION. 1. Has the Lord done aught for you? 2. Have you acknowledged His hand? 3. Has it made you glad? 4. What are you expecting in the future? (*The Study*.) *Christian gratitude for the goodness of God*:—I. WHAT THINGS HAVE BEEN DONE FOR US? 1. National. 2. Domestic. 3. Personal. II. WHO HATH DONE THEM? III. HOW CAN WE, FOR WHOM THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS, MOST PROPERLY EXPRESS OUR JOY, AND MOST PROFITABLY EVINCE OUR GRATITUDE? Those, certainly, may rejoice in benefits received whose consciences only testify to them of judgments deserved. Every one whom God has spared may warrantably believe that he has been spared for purposes of mercy. (T. Dale, M.A.) *Personal experience forceful*:—In most of the reviews of Mr. Morley's "Life of Gladstone" attention has been called to the fact that whilst the whole work is a literary masterpiece, the third volume is far above the two previous ones in picturesque and stirring power. The events it records took place under the writer's own eye, and in them he took a prominent part, and this has given an ease, a freedom, and a force of description that no secondhand reports or most reliable documents can give. That which we have for ourselves seen, tasted, and handled is

the part of our testimony that tells and brings conviction to others. (H. O. Mackey.)

Ver. 4. **Turn again our captivity, O Lord.**—*The thankful pray:*—For they have proved the use of prayer. As prayer found cause for praise, gratitude sees reason for renewed supplication. "The Lord turned Himself to the turning of Zion." God returns to His people when they return to Him (Deut. iv. 30, 31; xxx. 1-3, 9, 10; Neh. i. 9; Job xlii. 10; Ps. cxlv. 18, 19; Isa. x. 21, 22; lv. 7; lix. 20; Jer. xxxi. 8, 9; James iv. 8). He liberated the exiles when they repented and offered supplication. If they have reached Mount Zion, there is still need for them to pray. Jehovah's gracious hand has so lifted them a degree higher on the footsteps of His throne, that they may be nearer His inclined ear with their petitions. Let them say to Him, in the language of humble dependence, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." Thou art to the soul like rain and fountains to the fields. Drought disappears before Thy breath; and the touch of Thy merciful feet clothes earth with beauty and plenty. And, from their past experience, from the constancy with which God has kept His word, from His demonstrated and eternal unchangeableness, they expect that for which they pray. Faith pleads the promises of Him who cannot lie (Gen. viii. 22; Ps. lxxxv.). "Thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy." Thy sure mercy we look for. A praying and praising heart is ready for showers of blessing (Joel ii. 21). (E. J. Robinson.) **As the streams in the south.**—*The streams in the south:*—In the East the rivers in the dry seasons are little more than fleeting streams, and sometimes they are entirely evaporated by the powerful action of the sun's rays. The rainy season comes, and the beds, forsaken of the ancient river, begin to receive their annual tribute from the fruitful clouds, and the mountain-torrent, rolling in its accustomed channel, causes the streams to return again, changing the sandy waste into the majestic river, raising the sower's hopes, replenishing this parched land with the long-desired verdure, and man and beast again rejoice in the earth's abundance. Thus prayed the pious psalmist:—"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south": that as the inhabitants of these sultry regions rejoice in the return of the reviving streams, so we, restored to our beloved country and temple, may rejoice in the long-expected deliverance. (W. Brown.)

Ver. 5. **They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.**—*Sowing and reaping:*—Painful work often finds pleasant reward. The way through the Red Sea and the howling wilderness leads to a fair and fruitful land flowing with milk and honey. Such is God's law of compensation, always and everywhere working out its infallible result in the experience of His chosen people. Trace this principle—I. IN THOSE WHOM GOD ORDINARILY EMPLOYS IN EFFECTING THE GREATEST GOOD OF OTHERS. Those who gain liberty for a nation, who achieve great things in art or literature, who are the leaders of great movements. They did none of these things, nor are such things ever done, without great personal self-sacrifice. They have had to sow in tears ere they, or any whom they sought to help, could reap in joy. Did Moses, or Joshua, or Gideon, or any of the old prophets sow without tears? or, having sowed in tears, did they fail in due time to realize the joy of harvest? Did not Athens poison her greatest philosopher and expatriate her grandest orator? Was not the most eloquent advocate of the Roman cause that ever raised his voice in the Roman Forum banished by the authority of a Roman senate, and beheaded by the perfidy of a Roman triumvirate? Did not the Copernican system of the universe long hang trembling on the lips of hated and persecuted men before it dared to stand forth and speak boldly to the world? and was it not afterward in the person of Galileo imprisoned, and in his books made to pass through the fire to Ignorance? Did the great discovery of Harvey cost him no pain or weariness? or were the works of Bacon, Newton and Shakspeare fully appreciated while they lived? And the artists who live for ever in their productions—the painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, who have filled the world with the triumphs of their genius—did they not toil, for the most part, in disappointment, and poverty, and sorrow, little esteemed during life, to be almost deified after death? The pioneer settlers of this new continent sowed the wilderness with their tears, and the heroes of American independence fattened her soil with their blood. II. IN THE SPHERE OF RELIGION AND MORALS. Whenever any great evil has been averted, or any signal triumph of truth and righteousness achieved, it has ever been at vast

personal cost. See the Bible histories of all the heroes of the faith. Read St. Paul's account of his sufferings. And thus it was that Christianity, whose throne was a manger, whose diadem a thorn-wreath, whose victory the crucifixion of its Author, whose triumphal pageant a funeral procession to a borrowed tomb, whose earliest champions a little band of despised and persecuted fishermen, is now filling the earth with its voices of jubilee, and peopling paradise with the subjects of its redemption. What painful sowing was there in the dark and dismal catacombs of Rome, in the gardens of Nero, and the Flavian amphitheatre. But the blood of the martyrs has ever been the seed of the Church. In the days of the great Reformation the life of Martin Luther was a perpetual conflict with error, but it filled all Continental Europe with God's blessed evangel, and on the same ground Dollinger and his noble compeers have lately renewed the good fight of faith. But look we higher. Who are these arrayed in white robes, with palms, and lutes, and starry diadems, and whence came they? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne," etc. They are all witnesses that the seed which your fathers scattered fell not all upon the rocks, among the thorns, and by the desert wayside. And this is your consolation—that however hard the toil, and however unpromising the seed-time, and however tardy the advent of the genial spring, an unweeping eye shall watch the field, and a celestial dew shall water the soil, and a creative power shall quicken the germ, and in due time the whitening grain shall summon the reaper's sickle, and the harvest of joy shall have come. (*J. Cross, D.D.*) *The connection between present duties and future reward*.—I. SOME OF THE OCCASIONS ON WHICH WE ARE CALLED TO GO FORTH WEEPING. 1. Over our religious profession. There are many struggles between light and darkness; many battles between sin and holiness: nature and grace are at enmity one with another, and must be so till "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." 2. In the discharge of our duty. 3. When under the marked displeasure of God. II. THE PRECIOUS SEED WHICH WE ARE EXPECTED TO BEAR. 1. The seed of cheerful self-denial. 2. The seed of patient perseverance. 3. The seed of perfect submission to the will of God. 4. The seed of genuine holiness. III. THE HAPPY RESULTS EXPERIENCED. Even here we taste the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of Divine love, and we become partakers of that happiness which the world cannot give, and which it is not in the power of the world to take away. But however much we may gather here, and whatever be the satisfaction which we experience from the blessedness of the harvest of Christianity in this world, the day of judgment will be the great harvest when we shall reap the labours of all our sowing. (IV. *Yate.*) *Spiritual husbandry*.—Consider the text in its application to—I. THE JEWS AS A NATION (Deut. xxxii. 3; Jer. xxi. 9; Lev. xxvi. 41, 42). When they are thus brought to "sow in tears," they shall undoubtedly "reap in joy." This seems to be the favourite theme of the prophets, especially of Isaiah (lx. 1; xxxv. 10). This is the event which the Jews themselves ardently long for; it is that for which they earnestly pray on the day of atonement; "O our Father and our King, discover Thy glorious majesty to us speedily; arise, and be exalted to the eyes of all living, and gather our dispersions from among the heathen, and assemble us that are scattered from the extreme parts of the earth, and conduct us to Zion Thy city with songs, and unto Jerusalem, the city of Thy sanctuary, with everlasting joy." II. OURSELVES INDIVIDUALLY. Sorrow and suffering are the result of sin; and sin is interwoven with our very nature. But the Christian has not done with sorrow and tears, although through faith, which is of the operation of the Spirit of God, he has been led to trust in that Saviour who died for him, and the burden of transgression has been rolled from his oppressed spirit. Could the veil which now separates us from futurity be drawn aside, and those regions of everlasting happiness and sorrow which strike so faintly on the imagination be presented fully to our eyes, it would occasion, I doubt not, a sudden and strange revolution in our estimation of things. Many are the distresses, for which we now weep in suffering or in sympathy, that would awaken us to songs of thanksgiving; many the dispensations which now seem dreary and inexplicable, that would fill our adoring hearts with thanksgiving and joy. III. THE MISSIONARY'S LABOUR AND REWARD. As the poor missionary stands on the boundary of the vast wilderness, or goes forth to its culture "bearing the precious seed," he must needs "weep" to think how little of the territory he can occupy. But though he weeps, yet shall he "rejoice." As surely as the grain sown in the earth shall

vegetate and bring forth fruit in its proper season, so surely may we expect the principles of the Gospel to spring forth in rich luxuriance, proving incorruptible seed, and yielding fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold. (W. Carter, B.A.) *Sorrowful labour*.—I. WE ARE OFTEN CALLED TO LABOUR IN WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE JOY. 1. The call to labour, for instance, may continue when those whom we hoped to gladden with our diligence and fidelity are gone. 2. All earnest labourers are liable to fits of despondency; Christian labourers certainly not less than others. Overwork, perhaps, is followed by reaction, or the too eager hope is disappointed because we see not any results for all our doing. We think that our fellow-labourers are not as earnest as we, that we alone are bearing the burden and heat of the day. Then there comes up the question, what is the use of all our toil? 3. We may be called to work in which we feel but little special interest; work which is to us perpetual self-denial. Our hopes may all tend to one sphere of effort; duty may sternly compel us to another. 4. We have often to work amidst ungracious men, with no hope at all that our labour shall be successful. There are other and happier labourers in other and more promising fields; why should we be here toiling to no avail? II. GOD REWARDS US ACCORDING TO OUR FIDELITY, AND NOT ACCORDING TO OUR GLADNESS. 1. Christ has never said, according to your gladness be it unto you; not even according to your hopefulness be it unto you; but according to your faith. And faith's triumph is seen in that it can live and labour when the light of joy is quenched; that it can call off the hopes that hover round an earthly brightness, and bear them up through darkness to the throne of the Invisible. 2. Our confusion of the reality of faith with the eagerness of feeling, our making so much of the cheerfulness of work instead of the work itself, shows that we are expecting the increase of ourselves rather than from God. The work is done; it leaves our hands, henceforth it is in His. The seed is sown; His seed is under His own care. He gives the dew of His benediction, the fruitful force is that of the ever-working Spirit. Not for nothing is it that God's great ceaseless call to us is to do the work which He has given us; for, indeed, this is all we can do. We can be faithful to His call of duty, He is faithful to His promise. III. OUR TEXT SPEAKS NOT ONLY OF SHEAVES FOR THE SOWING, BUT ALSO OF REJOICING FOR THE TEARS. The very tears are a seed that shall have a joyful springing; the sorrow shall return again in joy. The sorrowful sowing is a testimony for God, and this shall bear its fruit in joy. There is a striking contrast between the taunt of those who carried the Jews away captive, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion"; and this saying among the heathen, "The Lord hath done great things for them." The patient labour of the exiles, the quiet toil of those who could not sing, won the heart of their oppressors. They were glad when the captives were restored, and sent them away with kindly gifts. Israel's patience was the patience of faith; and Israel's faith was a witness to the fidelity of Israel's God. The patience and faithful effort of sad but trusting souls, Christian faith abiding unshaken though joy has gone out of the life; here is a lesson which cannot fail of impressiveness. It reaches to the unbelieving, and constrains them to thought concerning the Gospel; it cheers the heart and strengthens the faith of all believers. Each new revelation of God's grace that comes on us as a surprise reproves us that we did not always rejoice as those who might be sure that all God's ways are love. But it is blessed to feel ourselves reproved that our God may be exalted; we welcome the humbling lesson about ourselves which makes us more fully know how good He is. The joyful reaping that follows a tearful sowing prepares us for new trials of our faith. There may come again to you a time of tears, a time of sorrowing toil; but you know whose hand will at length wipe away all tears; you know that there is no seed-time but will at length yield its rejoicing sheaves. (A. Mackennal, D.D.) *Weeping and reaping*.—I. AN INSPIRED PROVERB. A proverb is often helpful; an inspired proverb ought to be to us an inspiration. Write it down at the head of all your difficulties and in the midst of all your struggles; it is one of God's own pithy sayings, a maxim He Himself has made—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." II. A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. It is as though one shouted of his success, and announced Jehovah's triumph. By this he would record his gratitude, and encourage his hearers. If the moss in the desert could stimulate the fainting traveller, if a flower outside the prison wall could speak comfortably to the prisoner in his dreary dungeon, if a solitary star shining through the blackness of the night could bring hope and guidance to the storm-tossed mariner, may I not believe that this experience of David, or whosoever the psalmist may have been, long years ago, will be as a

ministering angel to such as are tempted to think that the seed is wasted, that the harvest can never be, that their hopes are dashed to the ground to rise no more for ever? III. A PREVAILING PRINCIPLE. 1. In everyday life. Scientists and inventors have toiled, and moiled, and thought, and struggled for many a long year. They have, for the most part, received little help from others. One or two perhaps espoused their cause and helped them through, but the rest either jeered and sneered, or else looked on complacently as if to say, "We shall see what we shall see, but we do not think it will come to very much." It was a sowing season; aye, and if we had been behind the scenes we should have seen that it was a weeping-time as well. Some of these sowers died in obscurity. Many of them did not live to see their talent and their skill appreciated, but there was a harvest-time for all that, or if it has not yet arrived it is yet to be. On the other hand many of them did reap the reward of their talents; the proverb held good in most instances. So with philanthropists, and merchants, and discoverers; so indeed with all of every class. There are exceptions, of course, to this rule, but the exceptions proved the rule. Sometimes another reaps where one has sown, but for the most part the maxim holds good. Those who are honest, and earnest, and self-denying in their toil, those who wait awhile shall live to see success, and to reap reward. 2. In spiritual matters. (1) Was it not just so in the matter of our conversion? Oh, for more sorrow of a godly sort! Oh, for more of the repentance that needs not to be repented of! May the tears flow till Jesus dries our eyes! (2) The same is true of the matter of backsliding and restoration. If you have wandered, come back, but come with streaming eyes and wounded spirit, come with firm resolve that, God helping you, you will never do the like again. (3) Apply the same truth to Christian service. 4. And to suffering. IV. The proverb, the experience, the principle is also a PRECIOUS PROMISE. We have here—they make my eyes to shine with gladness—two of God's "shalls." These are absolute affirmations from the lips of Jehovah, who speaks, and it stands fast. (T. Spurgeon.) *Seed-time and harvest*.—I. THE SOWER. 1. He recognizes a field of labour. 2. He employs his activities in the field. 3. He often toils with few co-operatives. 4. He mourns over his arduous work. II. THE SEED-TIME. 1. It only lasts for a limited period. 2. It is often marked by adverse influences. 3. In anticipation of the seed-time the necessary seed must be secured. III. THE HARVEST. 1. It is certain. 2. It may be sometimes late. 3. It is sometimes bountiful. 4. It is compensating. (H. Peach, B.A.) *The agriculturist a picture of the Christian reformer*.—I. IN THE NATURE OF HIS OPERATION. The work of each is—1. Necessary. The Creator does not do for the creature that which He has given the creature power to do for itself. The life of the world depends upon the work of the agriculturist. The work of the Christian reformer is equally necessary. If ignorance, error, and wrong are to be replaced by knowledge, truth, and right—if righteousness is to spring out of the earth—the Christian reformer must work. 2. Righteous. 3. Divine. 4. Productive of wonderful results. II. IN THE MODE OF HIS OPERATION. 1. Both have to disseminate a divine thing. The "seed" of the one is like the doctrine of the other; both are charged with life, and both are capable of indefinite expansion; both require suitable soil for their germination and development; both are perfect in themselves. 2. Both have to work in faith. 3. Both have to work under trial. The agriculturist sometimes "goeth forth weeping." This was often the case with those oriental farmers who lived in neighbourhoods infested with those wandering herdsmen who neither sowed nor reaped themselves, but obtained what they required by plundering the cultivators of the soil. Such farmers, therefore, often carried their seed from their houses with anxiety and fear, and very often they found it necessary to have armed men to protect them in their operation. The Christian reformer has trials in his work. How much distress does he experience, not only from the opposition of the world, but from the apathy, narrowness, and inconsistency of its professors! III. IN THE ISSUES OF HIS WORK. 1. The manner of their return. They shall come with all the fruits of their labour. The pious parent, the Sabbath-school teacher, the missionary, the minister,—all shall return with the fruit of their labours. It shall be found then that none ever laboured in vain. 2. The certainty of their return. The traveller who goes abroad in search of undiscovered lands, like Franklin, may return no more; the merchant who goes to foreign markets in quest of gain may return no more; the hero who goes out to chastise a foreign foe, like Raglan, may return no more; but the true Christian reformer shall return. His harvest must come. Yes; when the battles of the world shall be over; when the markets of the

world shall be closed; when the governments of the world shall be dissolved; when the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world; when the purpose of mercy shall be fully realized; then, "doubtless," the men of every age and clime, who have wept, and toiled, and prayed for the spiritual cultivation of the world, shall return. (*Homilist.*) *Sowing in tears*.—I. **SOWING AS COMPARED WITH REAPING IS A VERY LABORIOUS PROCESS.** The land must be cleared, the soil broken up, the stones and rubbish removed, etc. That which is reaped in a few hours has cost him in the sowing many long weeks of toil. It is so in the spiritual life. The hard labour is at the beginning. The fallow ground and the stubble are to be broken up. The agony is at the gate that opens into the narrow way of a religious life. All after experiences are comparatively facile and pliant. II. **SOWING AS COMPARED WITH REAPING IS A LONELY WORK.** The reapers go in bands with shout and song; but the sower goes alone. And so in those spiritual processes connected with the new birth, each heart "knoweth its own bitterness." Over those inner furrows of the soul goes no sower but the man's own conscience in the sight of his God. III. **SOWING AS COMPARED WITH REAPING IS IN AN UNTOWARD SEASON.** The sower must be out in the rough winds of March, under the dark, leaden sky, and upon the cold, clammy earth. It is so in spiritual things. The harvest is in revival periods of warmth and enthusiasm, but the sowing must be in times when the church is cold and everything looks discouraging and gloomy. IV. **SOWING AS COMPARED WITH REAPING IS A SELF-DENYING WORK.** The farmer takes from his granary corn which he needs for his present supply, and scatters it that it may fall into the ground and die. The initial processes of religion involve self-denial. Man must be grown up. Many selfish aims and ambitions fall into the ground and die, that out of them may spring a higher and nobler life—the life that we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth.—*Tearful sowing and joyful reaping*.—All life is a sowing. Some sow to the lusts of the flesh. A chosen company sow to the spirit. These often sow in sadness, for such sowing involves self-denial and struggling against the flesh. But their reaping will compensate them. Now this holds good in regard to the whole spiritual life, but it applies also to individual incidents in that life. To prayers offered amid tears. To the daughters of affliction, the sons of pain. But we take the text in regard to every Christian worker. I. **DESCRIBE HIS SERVICE.** It is said of him, he goeth forth. What does this mean? This, that he goeth forth from God. God has sent him. It is a sin beyond all others to take up the ministry as a mere profession. And this going forth is from the place of prayer. Our true strength lies in prayer. But the word tells of the whither as well as the whence. And this going forth is away from the world, "without the camp," aye, and beyond the range of ordinary Christian labour. "He that goeth forth," not he that sits at home, shall win the reward. "And weepeth." What means this word? As the former word told of the mode of service, so this tells of the man himself. A man who cannot weep, inwardly if not internally, cannot preach. He must be sensitive, tender-hearted, a man in earnest. Some one asks, "Why does he weep?" Because he feels his own insufficiency, because of the hardness of men's hearts, because he is often disappointed. Blossoms come not to be fruit, or fruit half ripe drops from the tree. Next, we read, "he beareth precious seed." This an especial point of success. There is no soul-winning by untruthful preaching. The Gospel, and that only, will serve. Tell it out as those who know it is precious, not flippantly, or as though we were retailing a mere story from the "Arabian Nights." And as those who know that the truth is a seed. Do not speak of it and forget it, or think of it as a stone that will never spring up. Believe there is life in it, and something will come of it. II. **THE WORKER'S SUCCESS.** "He shall come again" to his God whence he set out, come in thanksgiving and praise. "With rejoicing," yes, even in his very tears, but mainly in his success. Many have asked whether every earnest labourer may expect to have this. I have always inclined to the belief that such is the rule, though there may be exceptions. It seems to me that if I never won souls I would sigh till I did. I would break my heart over them if I could not break their hearts. I cannot comprehend any one trying to win souls and being satisfied without results. With sheaves. As an old expositor says, he comes with the wains behind him, with the wagons at his heels. They are his sheaves, for though all souls belong to Christ, they yet belong to the

worker. God puts it so, "bringing his sheaves with him." III. THE GOLDEN LINK OF "DOUBTLESS." The promise of God says so. The analogy of nature assures you of it. God mocks not the husbandman. And Christ assures you of this. Think, too, of those who have already proved it. See the triumphs of missions. Therefore be up and doing. You who are not saved, I ask you not to sin, but to come to Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sower and his harvest:—*

I. THE QUALITIES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE SUCCESSFUL SOWER. 1. He "goeth forth." This shows a set purpose, a fixed and definite design. It also suggests that the work is done at some personal cost, some self-denial. 2. He "weepeth." The burden of souls is laid upon him. A trifler must fail; this thorough earnestness is essential to success. 3. He "bears precious seed." The seed is the living word for a lost world; truth for souls wandering in fatal error; "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." It is precious, because it is the gift of God's love by Jesus Christ; because of the price paid for it; because of its fruit, peace, love, joy in the Holy Ghost. How does he bear it? Best of all forms, the only perfect mode is in the heart; so that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth may speak. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE HARVEST PROMISED. 1. It is abundant. For seeds in the hand there shall be sheaves on the shoulders. 2. It is gladdening. The sower goes forth weeping; he returns rejoicing. 3. It is sure. (*J. McTurk.*)

*Sowing and reaping:—*I. THE SEED. 1. Its origin is Divine. 2. Its vitality. 3. Its value. "Precious." (1) Because it is a Divine gift. (2) Because it meets human necessity. (3) Because of its blessed, practical results. (4) Because it is adapted to all classes. (5) Because it has no equal, and nothing can take its place. II. THE SOWER. 1. His energy—"goeth forth." He does not waste his precious time in berating other sowers, or in telling what wonders he is going to do in the future; nor does he allow his zeal to evaporate in sentiment or song. But he "goeth forth." We have a sufficient number of word-critics and analyzers; we want more men who would rather scatter the seed than argue about its constituent elements. 2. His emotion—"weepeth." Why? (1) Felt responsibility. (2) Discouragements in the way. Poverty, ignorance, drunkenness, sensuality, a disposition to cling to sins and force their way to perdition. (3) Lack of appreciation and sympathy. (4) Meagre results of former sowing. (5) Inability to reach the masses, who need us most. 3. His errand—"Bearing precious seed." The bread of life for a perishing, famine-stricken world. The God-sent sower is a man of one work and one kind of seed. He is not a drawing-room evangelist; he "goeth forth." He is not a man of business, he is not a politician, he is not a scientist. He is a worker for God, a sower of the seed. He preaches Christ, not himself; God's thoughts, not his own. III. THE SUCCESS. 1. Certain. 2. Inspiring. 3. Remunerative. 4. Individual ownership. "Their sheaves." 5. Palpable results. "Bringing." Then to sow is to reap. (*T. Kelly, D.D.*)

*The home and foreign fields compared:—*Some think the mission cause is less popular now than formerly. This opinion may be true to some extent. There may not now be the excitement which, we are told, prevailed at first. For this several reasons may be assigned. The novelty has passed away. Other institutions have sprung up to divide public interest. But the chief reason no doubt is, that experience is bringing out the real nature of the work undertaken as it was never brought out before. Does not very much of the disappointment and complaint which we sometimes hear expressed at the result of mission work arise from wrong expectations? I. AS TO THE SOIL, what a contrast this presents to that at home. 1. Look at its extent. Those who know nature and mankind only in small countries like our own cannot conceive the proportions they assume in the world's great continents. There is not a greater difference between the hills which we call mountains, and the streams which we dignify as rivers, and those elsewhere, than there is between humanity here and humanity there. It may be thought at least the moral greatness is with us. As to superior civilization, much of this is prejudice, which a wider acquaintance with the world dissipates. I confess that the only indisputable point of superiority in us, as far as I know, is in the possession of a pure and true religion. Take this away, and we should be no better than the rest. But as to material size and numbers, we are comparatively insignificant. Place a man on a peak of the Alps or Himalayas, and what an overwhelming astonishment comes over him. A like feeling is experienced by one who finds himself moving among the world's great populations. In this country we have thirty millions to deal with—thirty millions to save, one by one. But you might divide China alone into twelve such countries, with twelve times

thirty millions. You might cut up India into six such countries, with six times thirty millions. The mind is lost even amid such numbers; but what would it be in measuring entire continents? The number of mission-converts is often compared with the total population of the world. But it would be fairer to make the comparison with the number actually brought under Christian influence. Missions, though universal in spirit and aim, are not so in fact. Compare the ground gained with that actually attempted, and the disproportion will appear less. 2. Contrast, again, the nature of the two fields. In this respect the conditions are as opposite as they can be. At home Christian agencies are more nearly adequate to the work to be done. It is true there is much religious destitution. But what sort of destitution? Not so much destitution of ministers and sanctuaries as of the religion which would make more ministers and sanctuaries necessary. Must there not be more religious success and growth before more of these outward products of religion will be seen? But Christian churches are not all. Our whole country is professedly Christian, and has been a thousand years. A thousand years of history are in our favour. Our doctrines are the doctrines generally received. Besides a powerful Christian literature, the general literature of our country is Christian in spirit. The stamp of the Bible is on our national character. All this is an incalculable gain to the cause of truth. The way of the preacher is made easy. Directly you go into a heathen country, this state of things is reversed. When we speak of the wickedness and spiritual apathy of heathen lands, we may seem to mention nothing special. Are these unknown at home? Bad as the state of morality may be here, we assure you there is worse than your worst. Heathenism makes the same sins blacker. If there is so much wickedness where so many checks are at work, what must there be where most of these checks are unknown, and religion herself becomes the patron of vice? Converse with the priests, read the lives of the deities, observe the images of impurity and cruelty—"lust hard by hate"—which surround you in worship. As to the practical effects of idolatry, its very nature is degrading. In judging of mission work, then, many forget that abroad we meet with all the old hindrances, and others still more formidable.

II. Let us look also at THE SOWERS. In this respect we may think there is no room for difference. The same agencies will suit either field. Let us see. What is the state of things at home? First, the language is the preacher's own. He has not to plunge into the difficulties of a new tongue and literature. Again, the machinery is provided to his hand. In both respects how different abroad! In many parts a difficult language, imposing long and hard toil, blocks the very threshold. The labourer may be full of zeal. His soul, like Paul's, may be stirred by what he sees. But he is dumb. For long he is a child learning to speak. Take the other point. Suppose you have a system of agencies formed and at work. Many could most efficiently keep it going who would not be equal to originating it. It is evident that on both grounds the mission-field requires special gifts—mental adaptation, a spirit of enterprise, skill to create and organize. There must be these special qualifications for the special work which lies before us in other lands. Even the best labourers must often lament their insufficiency. They often feel the terrible disadvantage at which they labour. Every seed as it falls into the earth is wet with tears wrung from earnest, anxious souls. The sun goes down on a life of faithful toil, and little impression is made on the waste, few ears are gathered. What a contrast between the present beginnings and future destiny of the Gospel! The Church goes forth weeping; she returns with sheaves rejoicing. Now wrong has the majority; the triumph seems to be with error; faith struggles for mastery in one place, for existence in another. All this will be reversed. Instead of sowers weeping, you will hear shouts of reapers rejoicing—shouts which ring louder and sweeter for the years of working and waiting which have gone before. Instead of a few bright patches of fruitfulness, enough to keep faith alive, the world's wide field shall stand thick with sheaves—sheaves of souls dearly ransomed and hardly won. Meanwhile what is our duty? To sow on. Let not weeping hinder sowing. Sow money, sow sympathy and prayer, sow lives of earnest work for Christ. (J. S. Banks.) *The hope of the spiritual sower*:—If it takes six months for nature to restore to the farmer his reward, how much do you think is needed before this world is made to rejoice and blossom like the rose? We must be patient, we must be generous, we must be far-seeing; and we must remember that all the money that is sunk in schoolrooms and sunk in good teaching, all the money that seems occasionally to be flung away—I do not mean anything foolish—in this field of education, will be bearing fruit when we are dead.

And upon the thoroughness of the education in England during the years to come will depend our prosperity and our position amongst the nations of the earth. We ought to be thankful for our army and navy, but in the future nations are to depend less upon armed men and more upon intelligence. Or if you take the case of social reform in any of its departments, why, it is over fifty years since men began to work at the temperance cause, and sometimes it does not seem to have advanced greatly. But it is advancing, and habits of temperance and self-restraint are spreading amongst the people. We may not in our days see a sober and thrifty nation; but some day, when this land is delivered from the curse of drunkenness and the improvidence which follows it, people will rise up and bless the sowers in the sleet of past days. And, if that be true of education and morality, what will you say to religion—to recast a single soul in the character of Jesus Christ? To recast a whole race will take centuries; but it is going to be done! He that works for a speedy return works for a passing return; he who works for eternal ends must work deeply and wait patiently. He may die before the vessel comes into harbour, but he is going with the tide that is to carry her into harbour. The throne of God is established in righteousness and not in unrighteousness. Did not Christ, living and dying, triumph over this world? It is with such that this man allies himself, whom you may think so foolish and short-sighted. He places himself beside the throne of light; he places himself beside the throne of Jesus Christ. If he is beaten, he is beaten, when every one of us is beaten, and the whole human race is beaten, and nothing remains but ruin and chaos. If there be order, he wins; if there be righteousness, he is going to come out conqueror. "Well," you say, "I like to see a little." Well, then, my friend, will you remember that your life is not the whole life of the Kingdom of God. And although the class you are going to teach this afternoon in that back street is just a little bit of heaven begun, as well as you can begin it, it is not the whole kingdom of heaven. What do you think of the prophets now, and especially the prophets who prophesied the Messiah in heathen Babylon and decadent Jerusalem, and who died and never saw the promise, and never saw the prophecy fulfilled? And now, behold, we have seen everything they said come true, and generation after generation has blessed them for their words. Courage yourselves with the Psalms, with Amos, with Hosea, and the second of Isaiah! What do you say of the prophets? They gave up all they possessed and went out and preached the Gospel. And some preached in heathen cities, some in Europe, some Asia, and we do not know where some of them preached. And they died. So far as we know most of them were martyrs. (*John Watson, D.D.*) *Harvest joys*:—We are just in the middle of harvest. We are reaping; we are bringing our sheaves home: and we, too, reap with joy, more or less; we bring our sheaves home with rejoicing. There are many good reasons for this. The harvest, you all know and feel, is the end and crown of the year,—the end, not in the same way in which winter is the end of the year, as closing its eyes, and laying it in its grave, but as being its consummation and fulfilment. It is the end for which the seasons roll round in their busy course. It is the end for which the earth opens her womb, and pours out her fatness. It is the end for which the sun looks down with his fostering fatherly smiles upon the earth, and cherishes her day by day more and more, according as she can bear it. Moreover, here, too, there is need of tears: there is need that the bosom of the earth should be torn up by the ploughshare. She likewise must go forth on her yearly way weeping, when she bears her precious seed; or she will never come again rejoicing, bringing her full sheaves with her. God has blessed the work of your hands: He has given you a good harvest: it will bring you in much profit. Let it be your care then that the poor shall also be partakers in the blessings, which God's bounty has poured out for them as well as for you. When any prosperity betides a household, it is right and fitting that all the members of the household, from the highest to the lowest, should partake in that prosperity, that all should be invited to a fellowship in the same rejoicing. So may the servants in a household be encouraged to feel that they are united to their masters by some other bond than the iron chain of necessity,—that there is something in their faithful services beyond the worth of money, and which no money can repay,—that they are moral beings, with hearts and souls, with consciences and affections,—that they are to show this in their conduct, and that their masters also are to show their conviction of this in all their dealings with them. In this manner does it behove you to show your thankful conviction that the harvest is indeed a blessing, and not to thwart God's gracious

purpose, that it should be a blessing, not to you alone, but to all men, of every class and condition. For this is what renders it truly precious. The earth rejoices because she is made God's minister to pour forth her treasures for the support of mankind. And this is a further reason why you also may lawfully rejoice in the harvest. Joy for any outward good that befalls ourselves is narrow and selfish and barren. But joy for any good we may be enabled to do to others is of a right kind. It is a joy which has the purifying spirit of love in it, a joy such as the angels feel when they are sent on God's errands of mercy. This is the great privilege granted to you whose calling is to till the ground. You are employed by God as His ministers for the good of your brethren. It is through your means that the race of man is sustained and enabled to live from year to year. It is at your hands that God gives us our daily bread. For this thought, moreover, should be always present to your minds; that that which you do, you do not of yourselves and by yourselves, through any strength of your own arm, or any wit of your own head, but only through the power of God, as His servants and ministers. When we look at the harvest as the gift of God, then it becomes a ground of pure and unmixed rejoicing. As he who is truly suffering from want and distress is thankful if you give him a small alms, and is the more thankful if your alms be large, so, if we are really convinced that the harvest is the gift of God's bounty, then, even if the harvest be a scanty one, we still rejoice and are thankful to God, from whom we had no right to claim or expect anything richer; and if the harvest be abundant, we are the more exceeding thankful. Indeed this, you will ever find, is one among the many benefits which arise from the habit of looking at all the events and dispensations of this world as the appointment and ordinance of God. You will be confident that, whatever their immediate appearance may be, they are good, and are designed for good. You will be delivered from all repining on account of them. Whatever they may be, you will be thankful for them. If the dispensation be grievous, you will discern something that required to be chastened and corrected: and for that chastening and correction you will be thankful to Him whose chastening is a sure proof of His love. If, on the other hand, the dispensation be such as even the natural heart welcomes with delight, your rejoicing on that account of it will be doubled, when you look on it as a token of your heavenly Father's bounty. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*) *The certain reward of good works*:—Our text, taken in its largest significance, is to be classed with those passages which speak of the reward of good works, and use that reward as a motive to their performance. There can be nothing clearer from the Bible than that though man can expect nothing for his works, so that his best actions, if tried by their own merit, would produce only wrath; he will, nevertheless, be judged by his works, and receive a recompense, of which these works will determine the extent. It is impossible that man should gain any reward, if you connect with reward the notion of merit; but it is quite possible that while that which is bestowed is of grace and not of debt, yet there may be a rigid proportion maintained between his actions and his condition, so that his final allotment will be dependent on his works, as though those works could establish a right to some portion of happiness. And when this principle has been settled—the principle that though we cannot merit from God our actions will decide our condition—we may speak of good works as to be hereafter rewarded, because they shall as actually regulate our portion as though that portion were a recompense in the strictest sense of the term. If, then, it be lawful to speak of reward, we may certainly speak of the husbandman who "goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed," as coming "again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." It will frequently happen that we have no means of ascertaining that any beneficial results have been produced by our most earnest and disinterested labours; and it is quite possible that no such results have yet followed, and that they never will follow. The minister may have toiled in vain; the parent may have striven in vain; the philanthropist may have been generous in vain. Not only may it be true that none of these parties can discern any fruit of their exertions and sacrifices; it may be further true that no fruit whatsoever has been yielded; so that minister, and parent, and philanthropist have apparently spent their strength for nought. And yet, even in this extreme case, you can only suppose that the retributions of eternity will abundantly prove the statements of our text. The "precious" seed has been sown; the man perhaps "weeping" as he sowed it, and our decision must be, if we shut out the appointments of the future, that it is utterly lost, and will never, in any fruit, return to its original proprietor. But, if you bring those appointments of the future into the account,

you presently discover the falseness of such a decision. You show that God has kept an exact register of our every effort to promote His glory and the welfare of our fellow-men, and that whatever may have been the success of that effort, it will receive a recompense proportioned to its zeal and sincerity. There must be no such thing as the giving up in despair, because hitherto we seem to have been toiling in vain. We cannot tell that it has been in vain. We know that the remark is often made that the children of religious parents turn out worse than those of worldly; but we have no faith in the historical accuracy of this remark. Now and then there will be striking and melancholy cases; and these cases the more noted because occurring in families upon which many eyes have been fixed, are taken as establishing a general rule, and that a rule which concludes against the worth of religious education. But we are persuaded that the sum total of the evidence from fact is immeasurably the other way; and we have no hesitation in appealing to this evidence as corroborating the gracious description of our text. It will sometimes happen that the parent's efforts are frustrated, so that neither during his life, nor after his death, is the prodigal child reclaimed from his wanderings. But ordinarily you have the spectacle of the old age of a father and a mother cheered by the piety of their offspring. If the sons and the daughters have been carefully trained in the way they should go, then adherence to it will be generally amongst those rich consolations which God ministers in their last days to parents. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Better plant than build*:—If a man builds, Nature straightway sets to work to undo his building. Rust eats into the iron and decay into the wood, and little by little time ravages and destroys. But if a man plants, Nature proceeds to complete his unfinished work. He sows a seed, and behold wheat; he plants a cutting, and behold a tree. Such is the difference between working alone and working with God. He who sows truth in human hearts works with God. The seed drops into the heart; lies there; is long hidden; sprouts; pushes forth the blade and ear, and finally the full corn. Not at once, often only after long delay; but it fails not. Heaven and earth shall pass away; all things material decay. "But My words shall not pass away;" truth is imperishable. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*)

PSALM CXXVII.

VERS. 1-5. Except the Lord build the house.—*Authorship of this psalm*:—Various considerations taken together require the opinion that this middle Song of Degrees was composed by Solomon. It suits the time of peaceful house-building and civil settlement and progress during which he reigned. It uses a word answering to his name, Jedidiah, meaning beloved of the Lord, and seems in connection with it to refer to the promise of "a wise and an understanding heart," unasked "riches and honour," and, if he should prove faithful, length of days, made to him "in a dream by night." So "He giveth His beloved sleep," or "to His beloved in sleep" (2 Sam. xii. 25; 1 Kings iii. 5-15). It appears to suggest that the claims of the temple to the efforts of builders are superior to those of any other intended erection. And it agrees with Solomon's sententious style in his Proverbs, one of which exactly expresses its substance and teaching: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it," or, "and labour adds nothing thereto" (Prov. x. 22). (*E. J. Robinson.*) *Blessedness in labour, in rest, and in fatherhood*:—I. **HUMAN LABOUR WITHOUT GOD.** 1. Its possibility. 2. Its fruitlessness. (1) It does not secure the approbation of the great Master. (2) It does not yield moral satisfaction. II. **HUMAN REPOSE** (ver. 2). 1. A generally recognized blessing. (1) Bodily. The labouring world hails the hour when its exhausted frame can lie down to sleep. (2) Mental. To have the mind free from the harassing cares and painful annoyances of life. All desire this. 2. The repose of a true worker is a special blessing. The bodily repose He gives to His "beloved" in the stillness of the night has a special value—the pillow so soft, and the bed so guarded. The mental repose He gives is also of a far higher kind. It is the repose of conscience, the repose of a soul centring all its loves and hopes in Him. III. **HUMAN OFFSPRING** (vers. 3-5). The tutor of

Alexander the Great once proposed the question, whether a large family be a good or an evil? And he answered his own question thus, "Everything depends on the character of the children. If of an excellent disposition, blessed is the father that hath many of them, if of a bad disposition, the fewer the better, and, still better, none!" (*Homilist.*) *The true source of success*:—I. NO HOUSE STANDS THAT GOD DOES NOT BUILD, whether the house signify the home, the business, the character, or the church; for human sufficiency is a foundation of sand (Prov. xiv. 11). II. NO CITY IS SAFE THAT GOD DOES NOT KEEP, whether interpreted politically as belonging to the State, or religiously as being that of the heart: for the arm of flesh is a bulwark of mud (Prov. xi. 11; xxix. 8). III. NO LABOUR IS PROFITABLE THAT HE DOES NOT BLESS, whether it be manual or mental: for without grace it increases sorrow or multiplies wickedness (Prov. x. 16). IV. NO SLEEP IS PEACEFUL THAT HE DOES NOT GIVE, being broken by scaring dreams or prevented by devising schemes (Prov. iv. 16). V. NO FAMILY IS BLESSED THAT IS NOT A HERITAGE OF HIM (Prov. iii. 33). (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *All things are of God*:—1. Nothing is here said against labour. The Bible has no sympathy with indolence. We are commanded to be diligent in business as well as fervent in spirit; to work with our own hands, that we may have lack of nothing ourselves, and have something to give to him that needeth. (1) Labour is a necessity. (2) Labour is honourable. (3) Labour is pleasant. It promotes cheerfulness, preserves our faculties in healthy exercise, and gives elasticity to both mind and body. 2. Nor is there any censure of watching. A city contains property that is valuable and lives that are dear; and, should there be external enemies, it is surely an act of common prudence to station sentinels on the walls, lest an unexpected attack be made. 3. What, then, is the evil here condemned? It is placing an undue confidence in our working and in our watching. The spirit rebuked is the presumption which ascribes success to our own exertions, and which carefully excludes Jehovah from all consideration. A house is built; but the Lord is never thought of. Watchmen are appointed to protect the city; but no reference is made to the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. An enterprise is entered upon, involving important issues; but in all the calculations there is no more place left for God than if He were asleep in the depths of the heavens, and took no cognizance of human affairs. What is this but atheism? (*N. McMichael.*) *The Divine Builder*:—The Lord builds the house. This is our first great consideration: we are very apt to forget it; we think it is our work, but "He that built all things is God." The Lord builds the State. Civil society is a house not made with hands: its component parts show the finger of God; language, sympathy, law, are of God. But how true is it that the Church is a house built by God! Men may persecute or aid it, but "except the Lord build," etc. The Church of God is like a house for security and strength. As you have never heard of men living anywhere without houses of some kind, so we have never heard or read of Christians living anywhere without forming communities, families, or churches. Dissolve the family, and society would perish; dissolve the Church, and Christianity would perish! Then let us consider how the Lord builds the house. "Upon this rock I will build my Church," etc. "Other foundation can no man lay," etc. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (*B. Kent, M.A.*) *The Lord, the Builder*:—The old Latin maxim, "Ex nihilo nihil fit," "From nothing, nothing comes," is the starting-point in all our reasonings concerning God's work on earth. It cannot have sprung from nothing, it must therefore be due to some positive force acting first upon, and then through it. That force must have intelligence in order to impart intelligence to the work of its hand; and all the wise, and curious, and intricate phenomena of the universe testify that nothing short of an infinite intelligence could have poured such streams of power and wisdom along the channels of creation. That infinite intelligence we call God. The methods by which God brings about the accomplishment of His purposes on earth—since those purposes include and shape matter and mind—are simply the methods by which He shapes matter and mind, so as to elaborate from them separately, and from their interworking, whatever result it is His pleasure to secure. 1. When God wishes to accomplish any purpose, He shapes toward the result which He desires, all those blind forces of nature which have in them any co-operation with it. When He wishes to give the peace of plenty to any land, He sendeth forth His commandment into the air, and up to the sun, and forth to the winds, and out upon the seas, and along the furrows of the soil; and His word runneth very swiftly to all genial and fertilizing influences, and they obey His behest with their

marrow and fatness, and so He fills its borders with the finest of the wheat. And when the rigours of winter are a needful preliminary to any work of His, He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes, and casteth forth His ice like morsels, until no man can stand before His cold. And when that work is done, and milder airs are more salubrious for His designs, then He sendeth out His word and melteth them; He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow. And so fire, and hail, and snow, and vapour, and stormy wind fulfil His word; and mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl praise the Lord by performing His decree which they cannot pass. 2. When God wishes to accomplish any purpose on earth, He sways that intelligence which needs to be brought into co-operation with His design by motives. This influence is exerted in innumerable forms. Sometimes it is by direct pressure, and by the presence of the immediate and most obvious motive of which the subject will admit; as when He secures the choice, by the sinner, of "that good part which cannot be taken away," by urging upon his soul the guilt of disobedience, the beauty of holiness, the joy of forgiveness, the danger of delay, or the awfulness of death in sin. Sometimes it is by a circuitous and indirect approach that the work is accomplished. Some meteor, in the eventide, flashes its sudden and vanishing brilliance across the arch of heaven; or some white-winged cloud trails its evanescent shade along some sunlit slope, and the mind—so often dull to all teachings—is opened to snatch the moral of the scene, and goes away, sadly reflecting on the dangers that accompany a life that is fitly emblazoned by the falling star, and the fleeing shadow. Or the sight of a coffin, or a hearse, or a cemetery—it may be, in some moods, of a church, or even a Bible—will start the mind upon a train of meditation which the gentle and gracious Spirit may cherish into a motive strong enough to overturn and overturn within the soul until He is enthroned there whose right it is to reign. 3. This being so—the empire of matter and the empire of mind being alike in subjection to His pleasure—it follows, since He who can absolutely and entirely control all matter and all mind must be invincible—that God can do anything which He pleases to do, whatever it may be. He can make a word, or make an unwilling man willing, just as easily as a carpenter can drive a nail—because He knows how to do it, and has the means with which to do it, and the power by which to do it. So it follows, also—since God's control covers all things, and His volitions are the cause of all things—that nothing can be done in this world which God is not pleased to aid, or, at least, to permit. (*H. M. Dexter.*) *The Master-Builder*:—"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." 1. That is true even about a house of stone and lime. To build a house is the most interesting thing almost that any mortal man undertakes to do for himself. When a man does set about building a house, he is usually settled in life as far as it falls to him to make a settlement. The house he builds is very likely the house in which he means to live and to die. If he does not literally rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, nevertheless he is sure to have an extraordinary amount of interest in his house, and most men who do build a house for themselves worry the architect and obstruct the workmen with their anxiety to have everything in it just according to their mind. But, for that very reason, because building a house is such an interesting and serious thing in any man's life, surely he ought to feel then, most of all, that his life is in God's hand, and that it depends on God whether this great undertaking in which he is engaged is going to turn out well for him. 2. It is true, also, if we take the house in the sense in which it is so often used in the Bible, of a family. To build a house, in the Bible, often means to found or bring up a family; and further down in the psalm we have a reference to that sense (ver. 3). "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," and the most anxious fatherly and motherly care can come to nothing, indeed, is likely to come to nothing, just in proportion as it forgets God, and in forgetting God becomes nervous, and fretful, and repellent, where it ought to be able to attract. 3. Then, again, this text is true if we take the house in the sense that it is often used in the Bible, of a nation. "Except the Lord build that house, they labour in vain that build it." There is a place, and there are duties for statesmen and for town councillors, for all persons who take the responsibilities of the public upon them; but it is not the anxiety of statesmen, it is not their own wisdom and their own intelligence, it is not their own plans for enlarging territory, or opening up new markets, or anything of that kind on which the security and strength of the people are built. There is just one thing on which a nation can be built up, and that is

the goodwill of God which is given to the righteous. Righteousness exalts a nation. 4. But this text is true especially when we think of the house of the Church. We often speak of the Church as the house of God. In the New Testament we read of Christ as its foundation, of the Church being built upon Him. One of the great picture-words of the New Testament is the word "edification," and "edification" means the act of building, or of being built. It is truer of the Church than of anything else in the world, that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (1) For instance, we want to build the Church up in numbers. We want to see the Church grow. We want to see those who are outside coming in. Now, we might wish that in quite a selfish sense. We might be members of a very small congregation where half the pews were not let; or we might be members of an ecclesiastical party that was in a very small minority in the country, and might want new recruits. If these were our objects, then, of course, we would have to achieve them out of our own resources. It would not be a thing in which God had any interest. But if we want to build up the Church in numbers in a real sense; if we want to bring those who are far away from Christ near; if we want the love of Christ made known to those who do not know it; if we want those who are lonely and solitary, and, perhaps, selfish, to be brought into the home and family of love, and to give and receive all kinds of loving services and to find a home for their lonely souls in the house of God and the family of God—if that is what we are striving for, surely we feel at once that we cannot do that ourselves, that the only power that can reach people for that end and bring them into the Church is the power that God Himself bestows. (2) We want to build the Church up not only in numbers, but in security. We want the Church to be a safe place. The Church ought to be a house so secure, so defended, so vigilantly guarded that it would be impossible for any assault to prevail against it and impossible for any of its members to be lost. Now the only way in which we can get the right spirit of watchfulness, the spirit that will enable us so to watch that we will not lose any, is to get it from the Lord Jesus Himself. "He that keepeth Israel slumbereth not, nor sleepeth." It is only when we come to God, and get the Spirit of God put into us by God Himself, it is only then He uses us to build up His house into a safe, secure dwelling for the children, out of which they cannot be lost, that the house will be built up as it needs to be. (3) We want to build up the Church, not only in numbers and in security, but, above all things, in character, in holiness, and in love. I have no doubt that in every Church there are many people deeply dissatisfied with their own characters, knowing very well that judged by any standard of holiness and love they are very far from what they should be. I have no doubt there are plenty here who are striving against their sins, sometimes rude, gross sins, evil lusts and passions, falsehood, slothfulness, selfishness, greed, envy, pride, self-will, and sins like that, and not only striving against them but failing, and being disappointed and defeated in their struggle. And even people who have not got any harsh, rude offences like that to strive against at the beginning, may be striving for finer and more beautiful parts of the Christian character, and just with the same sense of being defeated and disappointed. And the reason of it in almost every case is this, they are doing it alone, and it cannot be done alone. "Except the Lord build that house, they labour in vain that build it." "Work out your own salvation," not because God leaves that for you to do, but because it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, in furtherance of His good pleasure. (*J. Denney, D.D.*) *Co-workers with God*.—I. WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT, namely, that God will build the house without our labouring, that God will keep the city without the watchman's waking, or that He will give us bread without our toiling for it. This principle may be applied to—1. Our ordinary life. One of the things which Christianity cannot bear is laziness. If in business I am not diligent I cannot expect to prosper. If I wish to be a man of learning, I cannot get it simply by praying for it; I must study, even to the weariness of the flesh. If a man be sick, he may trust in God as much as he wills; that should be his first thing, but let him also use such remedies as God has given if he can find them out, or learn of them from others. 2. The great matter of our salvation. 3. Our spiritual growth. If a man will not feed himself upon the bread of heaven, can he expect that he shall grow strong? 4. Our Christian work, in trying to bring souls to Christ. We cannot expect to see men converted if we are not earnest in telling them that truth which will save the soul. It is the work of the Spirit to convert sinners; to regenerate must be over the sole work of God; yet the Lord uses us as His instruments. II. WHAT

WE MAY EXPECT; we may expect failure if we attempt the work without God. We may expect it, and we shall not be disappointed. III. WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO. 1. In our ordinary affairs we should not fret, and worry, and grieve. 2. In the matter of the soul's salvation a man should be anxious, yet his salvation will never come by his working, and running from this one to that and the other. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," for to those who are in Christ, to those who simply believe on Him, "He giveth His beloved sleep." 3. Now, with regard to growing in grace, I believe that it is much the same. It is foolish to be always fretting and worrying, and saying, "I am not humble enough, I am not believing enough, I am not this or that"; go to Christ, and rest yourself on Him, and believe that what He has begun to do for you and in you He will certainly perform and perfect. 4. Here comes in again our working for the Lord. It is a sweet way of working for Christ "to do the next thing," the next that needs to be done to-day,—not always forecasting all that we are going to do to-morrow and the next day, but calmly and quietly believing that there are so many days in which a man shall be able to walk and to work, and while we have them we will both walk and work in the strength of God. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The building of the house of life*:—Man's history upon earth is mainly, alas! the history of a struggle to establish lives, homes, and States on a basis which is not God's foundation, and by a rule which is not God's law. This is the enterprise of man's self-will, his perverted and prostituted freedom, through all the ages; and God from on high has never ceased to confound it, to write on it Babel, and to lay it by the shattering shocks of His providence in the dust. The concord of man's thought and activity with God's is the secret upon earth of all true, real and abiding work. The human builder and workman may be masters of their art and zealous in their craft, but the fundamental question is, are they building by the rule that God has made known to them, and on the lines which He has laid down? And it is equally the test of all lofty and noble art. The poet is a maker, it is the exact meaning of the word; it matters not whether he works in word, in colour, in clay, the principle is the same. Is it a dream of his own vain fancy, or is it a vision of God; is it what the Lord hath said or shown to him that he is interpreting to his fellow-men? Man, of all beings, is made for this lofty fellowship, this high co-operation of thought and will with his Maker. Man, made in God's image, can understand God's plans, meanings, and ends. A Newton can think out after Him the thought by which He made the creation; a Paul can grasp and expound the plan by which He redeemed and will renew the world. Man is so constituted that God can work in him without marring his freedom; nay, thought, word, and work in the human only rise to their full completeness when they are the fruit of inspiration; that is the effectual in-working of that living Spirit who quickens all that lives in all the worlds. First, let us look at the bearing of this principle on the building of the house of life. By this I mean those principles and habits of moral judgment and action which are the true house of the soul, wherein it dwells, and from which it comes forth to work benignly or malignly for itself and mankind. Of that house man is the architect, not God; that house he is daily building, and that building will abide and be the home or the prison of the soul through eternity. Nature and the world furnish the materials; the form and the substance of the structure you create for yourselves, it is yours, your own, your work, the product of your being, your shame or your crown while that being endures. A nature with certain temperaments and tendencies comes to you, how you know not, whence you know not, save that it is God's gift to you, your endowment, your talent, your capital in life, by wise trading with which your wealth will grow. I speak of this as God's gift; by His various endowment of men, the rich diversity of original gift and faculty, He maintains that splendid variety, that action and reaction of widely diverse agencies and influences which it is His aim to secure both in the physical and human worlds. And thus He keeps the constant pressure of His hand on both. From God, too, comes the will and the power to work upon the original endowment, and to give it the shape and the form in which the inner heart delights. Character grows like a picture or a statue by innumerable light touches on the rough substance of the nature. Moral habits of action are beaten out like a path by the multitude of light footsteps which pass to and fro. There must be the will and the moral judgment to determine the direction, and then it is the daily footsteps which form the habit of the life. And it is a terrible power, this power of framing fixed judgments and habits of action, vast and awful are the issues to which it tends.

You may make holy, beautiful, blessed activity as easy and natural as the outflow of light from the sun; you may make them as hard, as impossible as courtesy in a churl, or a generous impulse to a base miser's heart. Daily the house is being built, daily the soul is becoming clothed or cased in its habit, and is settling the form and possibility of its future. And first, if you would build wisely, look to the foundations. And build daily in conscious, blessed dependence on the co-operation of a higher hand. Remember that in this matter you are the fellow-worker, the fellow-helper with God, whose interest in your building transcends your own. Daily, hourly, let there be a guiding of your choice, a strengthening of your hand, a blessing of your work from on high. Let the Divine Spirit dwell in your spirit as in His temple; let Him fill your life with the light of His wisdom, let Him touch your heart with the glow of His love. (J. B. Brown, B.A.) **Except the Lord keep the city.**—*God keeping the city*.—I. "EXCEPT."—**GOD MAY NOT KEEP THE CITY.** Can anything be more false than to attribute human wretchedness in our towns and cities to causes outside men themselves? Without self-restraint, without the high virtues of temperance, purity, and providence, gold, if it could be picked up in the streets, would only feed disease instead of bettering life! That man is a mere charlatan who hides the great truth that the drinking saloons, the music halls, and the gay Alhambras of our great towns are ruining the moral excellencies and energies of our people! II. "EXCEPT THE LORD."—**MORAL LIFE IS THE STRENGTH OF A CITY.** Can anything so demand our sympathy in this age as the movements which have to do with moral life? And we must remember all elevating movements have to do with moral life. Christianity works in detail, and Christian life is itself preserved by care for detail. Given impression at the house of God, given conviction of sin and coming to Christ, then come the after years, the idle hours, the temptations, the innumerable besetments, and if you can thus provide for the healthy development of character, you are doing much to save the England of the future, to bless your country, and to hold up the pillars of the State. And where all our æsthetic and intellectual pursuits have the shield of Christianity cast over them, when the genius of the Gospel pervades our institutions and inspires our efforts, we may look for that keeping of which our text speaks. III. "EXCEPT THE LORD KEEP."—**ALL CITIES NEED KEEPING.** Can anything be more secure than a city kept by God? Whether it is applied to a kingdom, or to a people, or to the wonderful heart of man, the word is suggestive. A city, a place where wealth is, where treasure is, where active, ænergetic power is. We seem to see the watchmen on Jerusalem's gates! Men able to sweep the horizon and to note the advancing cavalades. We are taught in the text that all watching is vain without God. IV. "EXCEPT THE LORD KEEP THE CITY—THE WATCHMAN." Can anything be so mistaken as to suppose that God's keeping excludes human care? We must watch, although God keeps. This truth is familiar to us all. We act upon it in the world, though we are mystified by it in the Church. God keeps the rain in the great reservoir of the clouds, and the winds in the hollow of His hand, and regulates them with a view to the preservation and productiveness of the land. He keeps the seasons! He keeps watch over all the processes of nature, and He says to us, break up the fallow ground, plough, harrow, and sow. So God would not have us watchless because He is watchful. No! this fact is to be an incentive to us to activity, not an excuse for negligence. We are reminded by our Saviour to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation! and when we have done all, we are to rest on Christ as our only sure protection. V. "EXCEPT THE LORD KEEP THE CITY, THE WATCHMAN—WAKETH BUT IN VAIN." We can never do without God! We may be what the world calls awake, wide-awake, but our own skill, or cunning, or craft will not save us. I was wise, says the man; I secured the best, the ablest physicians for my children. I was wise, says the voyager in the Cunard line, they never had a shipwreck yet. Stay, stay, "Except the Lord," oh! do we think enough of that; we have been kept in going out and in coming in, but who has kept us? (W. M. Statham.)

Ver. 2. To eat the bread of sorrows.—*The bread of toil and the fruit of righteousness*.—Labour is the law of life, and to this law nothing in God's Word is opposed. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening" is a description good for all time. "Active in business," if we may believe St. Paul, is a truly Christian habit. But the question is, What form ought this activity to take? Work may be done in two moods or tempers, as is hinted in the text: it may be done in spite of God, or it may be done through Him; it may be done in a spirit

that regards Him not, or it may be done in a spirit which leans upon Him. In the first case, the bread of toil is not secured at all, or when secured is verily "the bread of carefulness," anxiety, disappointment. In the other case the bread of toil is not "the bread of carefulness" or anxiety, but the bread of peace. God gives it to His beloved in their rest. I. **THE BEST RESULTS OF ANY THOUGHT OR ANY EFFORT OF OURS ARE REACHED UNCONSCIOUSLY.** Sir Isaac Newton, lying on his back in an orchard, and gaining a perception of the great law of gravitation from the sight of a falling apple, is a familiar type of the principle I am describing. Yet it offers no premium to idleness! The watchful calculations have been made; the inevitable reasonings have been faithfully traversed, but at last the result, the reward, the "bread" of all has dropped, as it were, upon the faithful worker out of heaven. You have heard, perhaps, of the great musical composer who always slept with a pencil and paper within reach, that at the very moment of waking he might register the inspirations of harmony that had visited him in his slumbers? And many of us, who are neither musicians nor philosophers, have had experience of the very same thing. We have gone to bed perplexed with tangled reasonings, embarrassed with ill-marshalled cogitations; we have looked away from them all, and committed ourselves and our thoughts to God; and lo! we have risen in the morning to a clear perception or an unquestioning resolution. It was in vain that we delayed taking rest to eat the bread of carefulness. God has given it to His beloved in their sleep! II. **IN, THROUGH, AND YET BEYOND THEIR LABOURS, GOD GIVES TO HIS OWN PEOPLE THE ASSURANCE OF PEACE**—a peace which, while it may be manifested in the success of their plans, is not overthrown by the failure of them. To those who know of a surety that the "never-failing providence" of a Father "ordereth all things both in heaven and earth," the desire becomes an assurance that things "profitable" shall be all given, and things "hurtful" put away. III. **OF ALL GOD'S GIFTS THE HIGHEST AND BEST IS PEACE.** If we take the text according to the common reading, we do no violence to the word "sleep" by interpreting it as spiritual restfulness. If we read it as declaring the condition under which God's people have their bread given them, we are near the same truth. If God feeds His own as they sleep or rest in Him, then that sleep or rest, whether as given or as used, may be regarded as hallowed of God, as even appropriated by Him to be the channel or vehicle of His benedictions to the soul. "The fruit of righteousness is peace," and in the fruit have we, as wrought up and comprehended, the gifts of earth and heaven, the fatness of the soil and the warmth of the sunlight, the soft showers of the morning and the dews of the eveningtide. So does this Divine peace, which "passeth all understanding," alike in its source, channels, and influences, carry to the spiritual life of the Christian the highest evidence of the near presence of God. (*A. S. Thompson, B.D.*) **So He giveth His beloved sleep.**—*Sleep*:—During sleep the brain becomes inactive, consciousness and volition are in abeyance; in the body the expenditure of energy is curtailed, the constructive forces dominate the destructive. It is a time of building up the system after the tear and wear of a day. God is the great giver of sleep. I. **THE SOUND SLEEPER.** Exercise of body and mind in the day promote sleep at night. II. **THE BAD SLEEPER.** 1. There is the ambitious man who sits up late at night planning for to-morrow; by and by he goes to bed, his mind still full of business. You can see this man rolling from side to side of the bed. What is he doing? Is he formulating some great scheme for the benefit of his fellow-men? No, not likely; he is planning how he can make money. He has the "gold fever," and when people have fever of any kind their body is diseased and they cannot sleep. Such an experience is the first step to a lunatic asylum. 2. The man with the evil conscience. Sin, like a terrible worm, is gnawing his inner life; the fire of sin is raging within, and the hot flames drive sleep away. III. **THE GOOD SLEEPER.** Our text should read—"He giveth His beloved in sleep," as if He imparted a gift to them in the quiet hours of the night. Sleep itself is a precious gift; it helps us to forget the cares and worries of daily life. We could not live amid life's great anxieties unless God came to us night by night, breathed upon us the spirit of peace and rocked us to sleep; as the mother rocks the tired child to rest, so does God stand by the bedside of His beloved and give them sleep. The beloved of the Lord can lie down at night without fear; the day may have been hard and trying, enemies plotting and slandering, but in the arms of God His beloved find peace. (*W. K. Bryce.*) *God's beloved*:—Here there is a beautiful blending of two opposite yet not wholly dissimilar elements. The love of earth rises towards, and is crowned by, the love of heaven. The absent husband

and father in his affection and gratitude sees not only the fond wife, or dutiful child fulfilling his wish in the work of the house, or the tillage of the field, or the care of the vineyard. He has another, a fairer, holier vision. When every voice in that distant home is hushed in the stillness of the night, when each busy hand or foot is at rest beneath the potent spell of sleep, he sees "the angel of God's presence" as constant in his guardianship of that sacred dwelling and of those loved ones as amid the busy hours or varied needs of the day. He sees how those sleeping ones are nestled beneath God's protecting wing more gently and faithfully in their defenceless, unconscious moments, than when they were astrid in the house or diligent in the field. He learns how the God of all grace loves his wife and children more and better than he; that the Perfect Father sheltereth and blesseth His beloved even while they sleep, even when they cannot be actively doing His will, or returning His goodness, or chanting His praise. I. Let us try to realize a little more fully the beautiful significance of the fact that THOSE WHOM WE LOVE AND LIVE FOR ARE, IN DEED AND TRUTH, VERY MUCH MORE "GOD'S BELOVED." One of the deepest roots and sublimest fruits of the Christian religion is this: the conviction that all earthly things at their truest and best are but shadows, types, symbols of the heavenly; that the love of earth is but the reflection or parable of the fairer, diviner love of heaven. Hence to a pure-minded, noble-hearted man, the love of wife or child is next to the influence of God's unspeakable gift—the Christ, the deepest baptism or sacrament in holy things which Heaven bestows. Statistics furnish many suggestive hints in this direction, telling how wedded life tends to lessen coarseness and crime in the homes of the people. Keen observers of life note these sacred facts, as did she who penned those almost idyllic words: "In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's." I say we trace these helpful conditions of the better life, but only the Searcher of hearts, only the Father of our spirits can fully know what founts of blessing, what angels of mercy, what sacraments of heaven are found amid marital, parental, filial ties, winning men from ways which are selfish, and hard, and low, and uplifting them towards whatsoever things are pure, and just, and true. And what follows, when men are thus sensible to these higher claims, alive to these holier voices? Do men interpret these messengers of good only in the light of their own welfare or gratification? Are they not rather prepared thereby to believe and understand how all these earthly affections are but the disclosure and the promise of those that are heavenly and eternal? II. Let us call to mind TWO OF THE CHIEF INDICATIONS THAT WE ARE "GOD'S BELOVED." 1. There is one which by its very nature stands foremost in all reasoning on this subject. I mean God's estimate of children. Jesus—the only adequate explanation of whose wondrous person seems to me to be this, that He was the very love of the Father "manifest in the flesh"—Jesus in nothing gave so much God's estimate of our being, our nature, our destiny as in His tribute to the greatness and sacredness of each child. Now, what Jesus thought of the infancy or the childhood, that, by parity of reason, and the very nature of the deep underlying relationships, He thought equally of the youth, the manhood, the womanhood, the old age. 2. Again, we find the strongest assurance that we are "God's beloved" in the general scope and spirit of the Gospel of His Son. Every age that Gospel becomes more literally and explicitly "glad tidings" to the world. They are glad tidings which tell of endless ages upon ages, to which centuries are but as days or moments, in which God has means and room to satisfy the cravings of His good nature in the good of His children. Oh what founts of goodness, of care, of sympathy do these purposes reveal in the Divine nature! What confirmations they afford of the eternal love which shone so brightly in the face and cross of Jesus Christ! What assurances they should inspire within our hearts that none among us, however unknown, however forlorn, however despised, will ever be able to reproach his Father with neglect or unkindness, or to charge God with having made him an outcast or an orphan! III. Let us seek to comfort one another with SOME OF THE PRACTICAL HOPE IN THE PRESENT WHICH THIS FACT OF OUR BEING "GOD'S BELOVED" ALLOWS AND DEMANDS. It tells of tokens, of alleviations, of compensations from the heart of the Perfect Father to the hearts of His needy, suffering children, far beyond the measure of our sympathies or the spirit of our prayers. The poor brain may

be beclouded, and reason have lost its reign, yet what calm moments, what lucid intervals have been known to come at the hour of prayer, or at the mention of the name of God. The poor sufferer in his prostration may have become unconscious, and seem to be deaf to all around, or have passed beyond our power to comfort or to aid, and yet what endless communications there may be within the soul, what soothing glances from "the angel of God's proseuce," what gentle foldings of the protecting wing, what sweet foreshadowings of the meaning and the end! (*J. T. Stannard.*) *God's gifts in sleep*:—I. PROTECTION (Ps. cxxi. 3, 4; xci. 1, 5, 9, 10). II. REFRESHMENT (Eccl. v. 12; Jer. xxxi. 26). III. ENLIGHTENMENT (Gen. xlvii. 2; Dan. vii. 1; Acts xvi. 9; xviii. 9). No one is foolish enough to think that there is a Providence—a voice from God—in all our dreams. Perhaps most of them are self-originated. But unquestionably there are gifts of God—revelations of God to His tried, and sorrowing, and faithful ones in sleep. There are, perhaps, few of His children who have not heard His voice in the night. He not only protects and refreshes us, but enlightens us. Let us not despise those good and perfect gifts which come from above in the hours of gloom and loneliness. Let us thank and bless God for all those precious things which He giveth to His beloved while they sleep. (*A. G. Mailland.*) *The peculiar sleep of the beloved*:—The sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds, and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God; and not a man would close his eyes, did not God put His fingers on his eyelids; did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there be some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well nigh to death, and then call it sleep; but the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it; He rocks the cradle for us every night; He draws the curtain of darkness; He bids the sun shut up his burning eyes; and then He comes and says, "Sleep, sleep, my child; I give thee sleep." I. There is a MIRACULOUS SLEEP which God has sometimes given to His beloved—which He does not now vouchsafe. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam, when he slept sorrowfully and alone; but when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which He had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had, when it is said that a deep sleep came on him, and he laid him down, and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 12–15); Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 5–9); Daniel. II. He gives His beloved THE SLEEP OF A QUIET CONSCIENCE. I think most of you saw that splendid picture, in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy—the Sleep of Argyle—where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him almost with compunction; the jailor is there, with his keys rattling: but positively the man sleeps, though to-morrow morning his head shall be severed from his body, and a man shall hold it up, and say, "This was the head of a traitor." He slept because he had a quiet conscience: for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage where it is said that Herod intended to bring out Peter on the morrow; but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? Sleeping between two guards, when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear; he had committed no ill. He could say, "If it be right to serve God or man, judge ye"; and, therefore, he laid him down and slept. III. There is THE SLEEP OF CONTENTMENT which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever need fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man; for if any one came to claim the reward, he would, of course, prove his discontent. We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot; the great majority of mankind are always on the wing; they never settle; they never light on any tree to build their nest; but they are always fluttering from one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that is not high enough, this is not beautiful enough, that is not picturesque enough; so they are ever on the wing, and never build a peaceful nest at all. How few there are who have that blessed contentment—who can say, "I want nothing else; I want but little here below—yea, I long for nothing more—I am satisfied—I am content." IV. God giveth His beloved THE SLEEP OF QUIETNESS OF SOUL AS TO THE FUTURE. O that dark future! The present may be

well; but ah! the next wind may wither all the flowers, and where shall I be? The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God giveth to His beloved a happy sleep with regard to the events of coming time. V. There is **THE SLEEP OF SECURITY**. Solomon slept with armed men round his bed, and thus slumbered securely; but Solomon's father slept one night on the bare ground—not in a palace—with no moat round his castle wall,—but he slept quite as safely as his son, for he said, "I laid me down and slept, and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." VI. The last sleep God giveth His beloved is **THE SLEEP OF A HAPPY DISMISSION**. Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that "so He giveth His beloved sleep"? Oh! happy sleep! (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Gifts in sleep* (to children):—The beginning of the psalm is plain enough. Many a house has been built beautiful and strong; and perhaps the very night before the family were to go into it a fire burned it all down. The same with a city; the guards kept watch, but the enemy got in and the town was burned and destroyed. When people see things like that they say, "We can't prevent accidents happening; it is God that does it; it is all in God's hands." Then the poet goes on to say something more. "You toil as hard as you can; you rise early and sit up late; and you are doing all that in order that you may get bread to eat; and do you know that in all that work of yours you cannot do without God's help? It would never get you your food if God didn't give it you. God is not asleep when you are sleeping." It is not only our food and our houses God gives us when we are asleep, but the better things He gives us too. When I was not thinking of it many of the sweetest friendships that have made life better and brighter have come to me—they were not sought for. Where men give themselves to be guided by God the best things come to them. I didn't plan them; they were dropped into my life somehow. When people are converted it is constantly most unexpectedly. (W. G. Elmstie, D.D.)

Vers. 8-5. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.—Children—Divine gifts:—Children come not into the world by chance or fate. God sends them as His gifts. I. They are gifts of **GREAT VALUE**. 1. They are of great value in themselves. (1) The intellectual possibilities of a child. In the babe which the mother for the first time presses to her bosom, there may be powers that will work out into the greatest of poets, sages, apostles, reformers, even angels. (2) The emotional possibilities of a child. What capabilities of love and hate, wrath and tenderness, rapture and misery. 2. They are of great value to the parents. (1) Look at the influence of a child on the mind of a parent. It unseals a new fountain of love. It creates a new world of interest, it supplies new motives for diligence, sobriety, and virtue. (2) Look at the power of a child to bless the parent. It comes with the filial instinct deeply planted in its nature, an instinct which, as it rightly develops itself, makes the parent the object of its strongest and purest affection, its most loyal and devoted service. When God gives to parents a loving and loyal child, He gives that which is of more worth to them than lordly estates, or even mighty kingdoms. II. They are gifts **INVOLVING GREAT TRUSTS**. III. They are gifts that may **BECOME GREAT CURSES**. Man has a faculty of perversion. In nature he can turn food to poison, make the quickening sunbeam his own destroyer, and transform the blessings of Providence into curses. Thus he can deal with his own child, his choicest gift from God. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *About children:—*I. **CHILDREN ARE A DIVINE TREASURE**. God prizes children because they are—1. His images. 2. His instruments. From a holy child the Most High can let His glory shine forth as truly as from an aged saint. In the goodness which He can form in the young, there is an attractive beauty by which all hearts are melted, and which is fitted to convince the proudest gainsayer. It is not the largest flowers which the gardener cherishes most tenderly, or to which he points his visitors as the best proof of his skill and taste. II. **CHILDREN ARE A DIVINE GIFT**. 1. One of inestimable value. They are to take our places when we go away—to repair the losses caused by the removal of others—to labour in that with which we are now busy—to carry on and to carry further whatever of noble and useful effort we have begun—not merely to replace but to surpass us. 2. One of happy influence. They diffuse a Divine harmony over the hearts of those who take them as from God, and train them as for Him. They keep alive our noblest feelings. To them we owe much of that tenderness of heart, which is so imperilled by the business, and cares, and wickedness of the world. They are a witness from God which we cannot suppress. III. **CHILDREN ARE A DIVINE TRUST**. 1. We must strive to show them a right

example. 2. We must give them a careful training. 3. We must show a kindly interest in them. 4. We must give them our fervent prayers. (A. MacEwen, D.D.) *Children—God's gift*:—What we want is for every father and mother to be moved to say when a little one is put into their arms, "This child is a heritage from the Lord, a sign of the Divine favour towards us, a precious charge of love to be brought up in His nurture and admonition." I. TRY TO ESTIMATE THEIR WORTH. As God's gifts they possess an inestimable value. Nothing He sends can be worthless. The humblest flower which He pencils into beauty by a ray of sunlight is not to be overlooked. Of every work that bears the mark of His creative touch, however insignificant, the exhortation may be uttered, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." How much more shall it be said—and said by the Master of men Himself—of those little flowers of humanity that spring up and bud and blossom in our homes. The hopes of two worlds, of time and eternity, meet in every child born into our homes. Have we ever realized as completely as we might do what they are and may become? If we have attempted this, then all relationships in which they may stand to us are as nothing compared with this, that they may become heirs of immortality and eternal life. II. TRY TO UNDERSTAND THEIR INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS. A family is a little world. Each member of it has a personality of his and her own. But what that is who can tell? There is no magic method of discovering it. God has not intended to save us the trouble of constant watchfulness by sending with each child a tabulated description of its character. Everything is unformed, yet there is a distinct individuality lying and working underneath, and that manifests itself as education and circumstances develop the mind and heart. What we have to do is to wait, and watch, and guide; acknowledging the existence of variety, yet training it in wholesome ways. III. TRY TO APPRECIATE THE POWER OF YOUR INFLUENCE. Do they learn from us to honour and to attain the highest principles? Do they see that we as Christian men and women esteem godliness and truth above all other things? Let our influence be such as to nurture in them a fervent love of what is right because it is right, and a profound abhorrence to all that is mean, selfish, double-minded, impure, un-Christlike, and then will their minds respond with quick sensitiveness to all forms of goodness, and turn with spontaneous hatred from that which is contrary to uprightness and truth. (W. Braden.) *The pleasure given by children*:—There is a pathetic passage in the autobiography of Herbert Spencer, which was published some time ago. At the age of seventy-three he wrote, "When at Brighton in 1887, suffering the ennui of an invalid life, passed chiefly in bed and on the sofa, I one day, while thinking over modes of killing time, bethought me that the society of children might be a desirable distraction." And so he wrote to a friend, "Will you lend me some children?" The children were sent to him, and of them he wrote, "instead of simply affording me a little distraction . . . afforded me a great deal of positive gratification." And the great scientist who had no children to love longed for the gifts that had not been bestowed upon him.

Ver. 4. **As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of the youth.**—*Children likened to arrows*:—1. An arrow is small, but powerful. One slew Ahab. Latent capacities of a child. 2. An arrow must be sharpened. A child must be educated, its faculties developed. Note its natural sharpness. 3. An arrow travels far. Who can measure the influence of a child? 4. Its power depends upon the strength and judgment with which it is sent. A lesson to parents. 5. It is firmly imbedded. As the twig is bent, so it will grow. 6. Let us not send into the world poisoned arrows. (Homiletic Review.) *Children as arrows*:—Children, you may perceive here what is the duty which you owe your parents. You are to protect them in their old age, and be to them as arrows in the hands of the warrior. Protect them from the assaults of poverty, should they require your assistance in this respect. Poverty and old age are unsuitable companions: let it be your pleasure to alleviate this distressing yoke as far as you can. They did not leave you to the cold charity of strangers when you were more feeble than they now are. Why should you act differently towards them, and pay back your debt with an immense ingratitude? You are to protect them under all the infirmities of declining years. If you cannot bear with the fretfulness of disease, and with the deepening shadows of those to whom under God you owe your existence, and who toiled for you and watched over you when you could do neither for yourselves, what sympathy can be expected from others? (N. McMichael.)

PSALM CXXXVIII.

Vers. 1-8. Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord.—*The blessed tendency of true piety*:—The subject is the blessed tendency of true piety, and the truly pious man is described as one that "feareth the Lord" and "walketh in His ways." I. Its tendency is to make **BUSINESS PROSPEROUS** (ver. 2). This stands in splendid contrast to the terrible threat which Moses addressed to the Israelites of old, should they break God's law (Exod. xxv. 35; Deut. xviii. 40). II. Its tendency is to make **THE FAMILY HAPPY** (ver. 3). Ungodly families are stars wandering from their orbits, but a truly pious family, small though it be, is an orb rolling round the eternal Sun of Righteousness, and from it deriving its life, its light, and its harmony. III. Its tendency is to make **THE COUNTRY BLESSED** (vers. 4, 5). "Righteousness exalteth a nation." 1. In material wealth. Truth, honesty, integrity, in a people, are the best guarantees of commercial advancement. Credit is the best capital in the business of a nation as well as in the business of an individual, and credit is built on righteous principles. 2. In social enjoyments. According as the principles of veracity, uprightness, and honour, reign in society, will be the freeness, the heartiness, and the enjoyment of social intercourse. 3. In moral power. The true majesty of a kingdom lies in its moral virtues. IV. Its tendency is to make **THE LIFE LONG** (ver. 5). There should be a full stop after the word "Children," and the word "and" is not in the original. Genuine piety tends to long life. 1. Long life depends upon obedience to the laws of our constitution, physical, mental, and moral laws. 2. In order to obey the laws of our constitution, those laws must be understood. 3. In order to understand those laws, man must study them. They will not come to him by intuition, inspiration, or revelation. He must study them, study nature. 4. In order to study them effectively he must have supreme sympathy with their Author. (*Homiliat.*) *The labour question and Christianity*:—Prevailing distress among the poor, calamitous conflicts between Labour and Capital, call for earnest thought, and wise and faithful utterance from the Church of Christ. Working-men claim their right "to secure the full enjoyment of the wealth they create," and they certainly have a right to a larger "share in the gains of advancing civilization." How is this to be realized? I. Not by Socialistic revolution and Communistic confiscation and redistribution. These methods are contrary alike to nature, reason, revelation and experience. II. Organization, bureau registration, co-operation, arbitration, legislation, etc., are largely empiric and artificial expedients, productive at best of only partial and superficial amendment. III. The Christian religion will secure whatever is good in the above, and, besides, will produce the only radical and permanent cure. 1. It teaches and realizes a Brotherhood of Humanity, embracing rich and poor, in which, if one member suffer, all suffer. 2. Its golden law strikes at the selfishness of the rich in refusing to consider the poor, secures the immediate relief of Christian philanthropy, and the permanent improvement of "things just and equal" (Col. iv. 1). "A fair day's work, etc., fair day's wage." 3. It gives best promise of regulating the labour-market by checking over-crowding in the easier callings, substituting conscientious choice and providential guidance for the unreasoning selfishness which makes time and means for pleasure the great consideration—e. g. City factory and sewing-room always crowded, farm and domestic service rarely if ever fully supplied. 4. It imparts dignity and self-respect through union and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, a brother mechanic, and the only perfect model of what the working-man may be and ought to be. Thus alone can he realize his ideal aristocracy of "industrial and moral worth," instead of wealth and birth. 5. It secures him the best of all help, self-help, and puts him in the way of working out his own salvation. The fruition of such culture will be, from his own stock, trusty and efficient representatives who "shall stand before kings." 6. It will make his home the scene of highest comfort, purest and most stable domestic happiness and family welfare. (*W. M. Roger.*) *Piety in its principle, development, and blessedness*:—Here we have—I. Piety in **PRINCIPLE**. The love to God that constitutes piety is characterized by two things:—1. Predominancy. Most men have a kind of love for the Supreme, that flows through them with other natural emotions, but attains no ascendancy over other sentiments, no control over the other faculties. The love to God that constitutes piety must be the controlling disposition. 2. Permanency. Perhaps, in most

minds, the sentiment of love to God, of gratitude, adoration, and even of reverence, arises at times: especially when moving amidst the grand and beautiful in nature, or experiencing the enjoyment of some special blessings. But this sentiment, to become piety, must be crystallized, and settled as a rock. It is the embryo of all excellence in all worlds. It is a seed out of which grows all that is beautiful and fruitful in the Eden of God. II. **PIETY IN DEVELOPMENT.** How is this principle rightly developed? Not in mere songs and hymns, and prayers, and ceremonies, but in conduct. "That walketh in His ways." "His ways," the ways of truth, honesty, purity, and holy love. True piety is not a dormant element sleeping in the soul, like grain buried under the mountains, it struggles into form, and takes action, it walks, and its walk is onward and upward. III. **PIETY IN BLESSEDNESS.** (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *On religion*:—I. RELIGION IS PLEASANT. No man ever performed an action which was wise and good, such as supplying the wants of the industrious poor, relieving the distress of the orphan, or vindicating the character of the worthy from unmerited detraction, without meeting the reward of beneficence in that very hour. He will feel a secret satisfaction, which can never be equalled by the pleasures of sense. He may not be able, it is true, to execute all his laudable designs; but the very consciousness of good intention is more delightful than the triumphs of successful iniquity. "This is the way of religion—walk thou in it." II. RELIGION IS PROFITABLE. The very duties which religion inculcates, it cannot have escaped your observation, have a natural tendency to procure the comforts and conveniences of life. Health, honour, riches, and that good name which is better than riches, are, in many cases, part of the recompense of religion. Religion embraces both the temporal welfare of individuals, and the prosperity of states and of empires. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways." Blessed are the young; blessed are the aged; blessed are the prosperous; and blessed the afflicted. (*T. Laurie, D.D.*) *Relation of gladness to godly fear*:—G. K. Chesterton remarks—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of pleasure." When life ceases to be a mystery it ceases to hold the secret of joy. The world that has banished awe has banished wholesome laughter. The ages that have known most of religious fear are the ages from which have come the most lyrical notes of Christian joy. Those older ages lived and breathed and rejoiced in God amidst their dark theologies. Bernard of Clairvaux had stern, stupendous ideas of the Deity, and yet it was he who sang—

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
With sweetness fills my breast."

Samuel Rutherford was steeped in all the rigours of a Calvinism which touches the very springs of awe in the human breast, and yet from him came the love letters of Christianity—letters too sacred for any except our most solitary moods. The moment we cease to tremble before God we cease to know joy. (*W. C. Piggott.*)

Vers. 2, 3. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.—*Piety the charm of the poor man's home*:—Here are three things which are essential materials to make a good home. I. A **GODLY AND INDUSTRIOUS FATHER.** He is blessed—1. In himself. 2. In his business. 3. In his family. 4. In his Church. 5. In his country. II. A **GODLY, HOME-KEEPING MOTHER.** Here are two features of a Christian wife: what she is—"a fruitful vine"; and where she is—"by the side of her house." As the fruitful vine afforded shade as well as grapes, the figure imports comfort as well as a family. III. A **CIRCLE OF GODLY AND HOME-LOVING CHILDREN.** What is it to be like "olive-plants"? The olive-branch in Scripture is the emblem of peace, and the olive oil is the emblem of grace. Peace and grace are lovely features in a child, and when peace and grace take possession of the heart of a whole family, Christian people love to visit their dwelling. (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) *The morality of business*:—It is most likely that the psalm was written shortly after the return of the Jews from their exile in Babylon; when the nation was once more, in a sense, mistress of its destinies, and could look out on the beloved native land as its own again. We can all understand what an impulse this feeling would give to the cultivation of the soil; how cheerfully the husbandman would go forth to his daily task, expecting literally to "eat the labour of his hands"; and with what fresh interest and dignity his work would be invested, when he could look forward to enjoying the fruit of his toil in freedom and peace.

But if those were, as it is likely they were, the associations of the moment,—still, there is nothing that should prevent our giving the words the widest possible application. The dignity and the happiness with which the commonest hand-labour was associated in the eyes of the psalmist, are the privilege and the glory of labour always and everywhere. To suppose that we gain in true dignity and real happiness by ceasing to labour and studying to idle easily and gracefully through life, is the greatest folly that ever possessed the brain of man. We know who it was who said, "Six days shalt thou labour,"—and, doubtless, it was said in the interest of the individual, as well as of society at large. And certain it is, that he who would rest with real enjoyment on the seventh day, must labour on the six. When I speak of "The Morality of Business," I give to the word "business" the widest possible meaning, as that which occupies a man's energies, whether of mind or of body, and makes him busy. In considering the morality of business, then, I think we may lay it down as an invariable rule that, so far as the employer is concerned, his business should be so conducted that he himself, and every honest workman under him, shall be able to take a real interest and pleasure in it; and that, so far as the workers are concerned, they shall be dissatisfied with themselves unless they do really feel such an interest, and take such pleasure, in their work. The workman has a just ground of complaint against his employer, if he is required to do anything which tends to destroy an honest man's pleasure in his work. I have often wondered why Trade Unions do not turn their attention to this point, and support their members in refusing to do fraudulent and dishonest work,—work which, if traced out in its results, can be proved to be ultimately in the highest degree hurtful and disastrous to the whole community, as well as to the particular employers and workpeople who are guilty of it. Such a matter as this would surely be far more worthy of the efforts of Trade Unions, as well as far more beneficial both to their members and to society at large, than are some of those which frequently claim and occupy their attention. On the other hand, if the workman has a just ground of complaint against his employer, should he be required to do anything which can destroy an honest man's interest in his work,—undoubtedly the employer has an equally just ground of complaint against his workpeople, if, whilst he is doing his part by them, they fail to throw into their work that interest, and to take that pleasure in it, which will both further their own happiness and at the same time promote his success. A great deal of the mischief from which we are suffering is due to the fact that we overrate enormously the worth of money, and still believe, in spite of our Saviour, that "man's life does consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses." Money can command much; but it cannot command the happiness which makes life sweet, and worth having, to us. This must be sought in quite other ways;—through the daily labour, of which our psalmist says, "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be;" through patient continuance in well-doing; through the diligent discharge of our daily duties in all the various relations of life. (*Canon D. J. Vaughan.*)

Vers. 3, 4. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine.—*A pattern wife*:—There are trailing slatterns, like brambles and nettles, who leave conspicuous in a dwelling what they should conceal, and choke with unsightliness and discomfort what ought to be kept clear; who cause what would be attractive to offend, render what is repulsive more so, and, themselves the most forbidding objects, drive their toil-worn husbands to the seat of the scornful and the bower of sin. The woman pictured in the song is not to be seen lounging at the door, an idle gossip, with something to say to every passer-by, but attends to her duties in the interior of the dwelling, and, like her husband, fears the Lord (Prov. ix. 13, 14; Amos vi. 10). The clinging vine is a symbol of attachment, grace, and fruitfulness, dressing the props and walls to which its curling tendrils hold, with leaves that shade the verandah and cool the house, and enriching them with clusters of juicy fruit "that maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. civ. 15). The pious and loving wife, the screen, the adornment, and crown of the God-fearing husband who is her support and strength, so spreads the table that, however plain, it is a feast; so pours the water that it turns to wine; so smiles that all the room shines with comfort and pleasure; so speaks that the house is full of charming music; so lives that the master is happy everywhere because most happy when at home. (*E. J. Robinson.*) *Wedded happiness*:—Dr. Cuyler, who has just celebrated his golden wedding, says he has made up his mind that there is no place like home. At a

meeting he said, "I have just returned from my delightful golden wedding trip. And I have no desire to depart. In fact, I have the fullest sympathy for that eccentric, eloquent preacher who, during his last hours, tossed about in uneasy pain, and then summoned his family, who said to him, 'Don't be troubled. You will soon be among the angels.' 'What do I care about that?' he answered; 'I am satisfied with the good woman, who is better than any angel I have ever read of.'"

Vers. 5, 6. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion.—Blessing out of Zion:—

1. What measure soever of things temporal the Lord shall give to the man that feareth Him, He reserveth unto him all the promises of righteousness and life which the Lord's Word holdeth forth to the Church, and of those he shall be sure. 2. The godly man shall not want succession, if God see it good for him, or if not children of his body, yet followers of his faith and footsteps in piety, whom he hath been instrumental to convert. 3. Whatsoever estate the Church of God be in during the godly man's life-time, he shall behold in the mirror of the Lord's Word, and in the sensible feeling of his own experience, he shall perceive and take up the blessed condition of the true Church of God, and rejoice therein all his days. (*D. Dickson.*) **And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.—Religion the highest good:—**Is Christianity a good thing for man? Has it fulfilled worthy ideals? Does it give a satisfying revelation of God? Is it pitilessly opposed to all fresh light which comes from nature and science? Would the world get on as well or better without it? I. **THE GOOD OF JERUSALEM IS SEEN IN THAT IT SPEAKS GOOD OF MAN.** The Christian revelation stands supreme in the honour, worth, and dignity it puts on man; he is sacred from the first, as having been made in the Divine image; sacred, so that even in solitude, where he can do no harm to others, he can sin against himself, by sullying the Divine image in his soul. Take away the Christian ideal, and human life becomes altogether a different thing in kind!—an altogether inferior thing, a mean thing enough, something which may be made more or less civilized, more or less worth living, but bereft of loftiness and grandeur. The Gospel alone in this great universe reveals man to himself, and in doing that it transfigures all else. Walking in the light of Christ, under the influence of His Cross and under the inspiration of His Spirit, life has a noble purpose, sorrow a sweet sanctity, suffering a sublime consolation, and death itself is a stinging transition to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. II. **THE GOOD OF JERUSALEM IS SEEN IN THAT IT IS A PRESENT GOOD.** It is unfair to the Gospel to represent it as a system of future felicity, to be purchased at the surrender of present good, as profitable only for the life that is to come. The Christian morality has its seat within the soul. It is not a righteousness built up from without, but makes the good man out of the good treasures of the heart. Christianity rests alike its morality and its religion on the answering convictions of the great soul within us. Because we have the truth within us we can hear and know God's voice. Thus, too, the Christian nations have had a morality of the Home, as well as of the State; a morality that has condemned slavery, even when it was sleek and profitable; a morality that has made divorce an evil; a morality that has made the thought of evil and the imagination of vice guilt before God. The Gospel has been tested, lived, and tried enough to make us say, "Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." III. **THE GOOD OF JERUSALEM IS SEEN IN THAT IT IS THE HIGHEST GOOD.** Its ideal of good is not mere outward prosperity and pleasure. It can sacrifice these. It can feel a thrill of higher joy, as these, if needs be, are trampled under feet. It can bring a deep delight even when the crown of thorns is on the temple, and when the sword of human power is at the heart. We can get no joy of heroism, in the mere utilities and expediences of earthly life. The highest good may be to drain the cup of sorrow; the highest good may be in bearing a cruel cross. Whether you think of the good of Jerusalem as meaning a restful conscience, a life at peace with God, or a joyful hope of immortality, it is the higher good, and could the sainted heroes and martyrs of old time come back to earth from the felicities of heaven, they would choose the good of Jerusalem to all other good which this world could offer them, did it exclude conscience and Christ. IV. **THE GOOD OF JERUSALEM IS SEEN IN THAT IT IS A UNIQUE GOOD.** None can present aught like it to us, in type or kind. It stands alone. We cannot, I know, exactly analyze the morality, the honour, the civil integrity, the home fidelity, the philanthropic charity, the moral earnestness of English life; something may come from custom,

something from native instinct, something from public estimate, but he must be impervious to truth who does not acknowledge how very much we owe to what my subject means by Jerusalem. There is a might of influence at work in it which has no other fountain so high, no other channel so deep, no other onward flow so vital and Divine. V. THE GOOD OF JERUSALEM IS SEEN IN THAT IT IS A PROSPECTIVE GOOD. All that goes to make a saintly character here, goes to make heaven there! The innumerable array of saints, who walk in white, surround us, like the snow-clad mountains around Jerusalem, and with them we look to enjoy through eternal ages the good of Jerusalem all the days of our life, where there are pleasures for evermore. (W. M. Statham.) *The happiness of a godly life*:—In every age the practice of religion and virtue has appeared to all prudent inquirers the likeliest and surest way to avoid the miseries of life, and secure the enjoyments of it. The first advantage which the psalmist promises to the pious comprehends in general health and success in their affairs (ver. 2). The next is a particular blessing of the nearest concern; the possession of domestic and conjugal felicity in the midst of a large and well-ordered family (ver. 3). But still, as good persons can never thoroughly relish their own private welfare, if the community suffers at the same time, or calamities are likely to befall it soon, an assurance is given them in the last place that their exemplary obedience to the laws of God will, through His mercy, contribute to their being witnesses of the prosperity, both of their country and their descendants, during a long course of years (vers. 5, 6). In which concluding part of this most pleasing view even of the present condition of religious and virtuous persons, we have it signified to us—I. THAT A LARGE PORTION OF THEIR HAPPINESS CONSISTS IN THE FLOURISHING STATE OF THEIR COUNTRY. Everything hath an influence on our enjoyments, in proportion to the share which it hath in our affections. And affection to the public never fails to be remarkably strong in worthy breasts. It shows a rightness and greatness of mind, capable of being affected by a common interest: it shows the most amiable of virtues, love, towards a large part of our fellow-creatures, and implies nothing contrary towards the rest. For the real good of every people in the world is compatible with the real good of every other. To rule and to oppress is no good to any: and peace and liberty and friendly intercourse for mutual convenience all the nations of the earth may enjoy at once. II. THAT THE HAPPINESS ACCRUING TO GOOD MEN FROM THE FLOURISHING STATE OF THEIR COUNTRY IS GREATLY INCREASED BY THE PROSPECT THAT THEIR OWN POSTERITY WILL CONTINUE TO FLOURISH WITH IT. How strongly must such a hope induce them to secure by good example and instruction this highest honour and blessedness to such as are to inherit their dignities! And how warm a return of most affectionate gratitude will they merit and receive from mankind, if virtue and liberty shall not only be supported by them in the present age, but transmitted to succeeding ones, by their pious care of forming their progeny to the knowledge and the love of public good! The prospect only of "children's children" would have little joy in it without that of "peace upon Israel": without a reasonable expectation of their contributing to the true glory of the family, from which they spring, and the true happiness of the nation over which they are to preside. But when due provision is made for this, both sovereign and people may take up the words of the psalmist (Ps. cxvii. 4, 5). III. THAT BOTH DEPEND ON THE DIVINE BENEDICTION (Ps. cxvii. 1, 2, 4). It is not indeed possible for us in many cases to discern particularly in what manner the providence of God conducts things: but we may plainly discern, in general, that as the whole course of nature is nothing else than the free appointment which He hath been pleased to make; as the motions of the inanimate world proceed from those which He originally impressed upon it; and all the thoughts and actions of intelligent beings are doubtless absolutely subject to the influence of their Maker; since we see they are greatly subject, and often when they perceive it not, to that of their fellow-creatures; it must be in His power by various ways—perhaps the more effectual for being unknown—to dispose of everything so as may best answer His wise purposes of mercy or correction. And as He evidently can do this, it is likewise evidently worthy of Him to do it; for the highest of His titles is that of the moral governor of the universe; and therefore we may firmly believe the Scripture assuring us that He doth it in fact; that He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him, and curses the very blessings of those who love Him not. (T. Secker.) *Seeing the good of Jerusalem*:—The good of Jerusalem was an universal benefit; and it is a source of rejoicing to every believer. His interest is identified with the welfare of the

Church; and God blesses him when He blesses Zion. Is it not so? There is no security for national peace, no security for domestic happiness, except through the diffusion of that truth of which the Church is the depository. Wherever Christianity appears, she waves the olive-branch to the shouting nations, and elevates those affections which make home the scene of quiet, enduring bliss. Mankind are all lying under the curse of a broken law; and it is the belief of the Gospel alone which reconciles man to God, delivers him from the plague of his own heart, makes him holy and useful on earth, and prepares him for the blissful activity of heaven. These things being so, the Christian is delighted to see the Church raised up from the dust, and enlivened with the presence of the life-giving Spirit. A burden is taken off his mind when he beholds a breach made in some huge wall of heathenism or Mohammedanism, through which the minister of Christ may enter, unfurl the banner of redemption, and scatter abroad those leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations. He watches with intense interest the operations of Divine providence, and loves to trace the majestic steps of Him who is making all things subservient to His own glory and to the salvation of the world. For this he labours, and for this he prays. His work sends him to his prayers, and his prayers send him to his work. (*N. McMichael.*) **And peace upon Israel.**—*Peace upon Israel*:—O happy land, where Home and Church and State are one system of which the common life-blood is religion! No other nation thrives like that in which piety is pure and prosperous. Through one rejoicing citizen or household God makes many happy; and the good man is blessed in the blessedness he diffuses. It is a circle of blessing, the Lord, the saint, and the neighbour; closet prayer, family worship and temple service; the Home, the Church and the State. Like the cloud falling upon the earth, the river running to the sea, and the ocean rising to the sky, it is a perpetual round of fertility, beauty and thanksgiving, regarded with complacency by the radiant Artificer enthroned in the heavens. All goes on together. It is not the Church blest now, the government next, and then the citizen, but each supporting and supported by the rest, and all depending on God's unfailing blessing. The Christian country is His habitation, His vine is the branching Church, and His olive-plants are God-fearing people. The profitableness of walking in the ways of the Lord is not the brightness of a transient summer. No winter comes to chill the felicity, and check its circulation. "Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." Those days shall not be few. Nothing so surely as holy wisdom and understanding prolongs life. It is interesting to see some aged statesman toiling for the public good, though he must soon leave all the work to others. A more beautiful and useful sight is a Christian still cheerfully praying and labouring for the Church's and the country's welfare as he draws near the grave. Work on, old pilgrim. Thou mayest not live to enjoy the results of philanthropic movements in which thou art taking part. The longest life closes at last; and prosperous Israel outlives the happy Israelite. Do not, therefore, fret. Thy reward will follow. The true Israelite survives the outward Israel. The land thou lovest and servest is a type of the better land which thou shalt shortly enter. According to ancient thought, not only the life that now is, but that which is to come, is indicated in the double sentence, "Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." The Source of thy blessedness will not dry up, but gush forth more plentifully in the valley of shadows. The Spring of thy joys will more nearly reveal Himself in death. After ages and ages, more than ages will remain to thee of perfect felicity. Never declining, ever advancing, thy bliss will be eternal. For ever and ever "blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways." Religion on earth is the seed in the ground; its mighty growth is in heaven. (*E. J. Robinson.*)

PSALM CXXIX.

VERS. 1-8. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.—*The persecuted condition of godly men on this earth*:—I. AS SUFFERING UNDER THE HAND OF WICKED PERSECUTION. The persecution here referred to was—1. Of early commencement (ver. 1). It is ever so; the persecutions of godly men begin in this

life in the very youthhood of their religion. 2. Frequent in its occurrence. 3. Violent in its character (ver. 8). (Isa. li. 23; Mic. iii. 12.) This language finds its application in—(1) Christ. (2) His Church. II. AS ENGAGING THE MERCIFUL INTERPOSITION OF HEAVEN (ver. 4). 1. He is engaged in sustaining them. The bush burned on, but was not consumed. The branches were torn up, but the roots struck deeper. Not all the enemies of Christ "prevailed" against Him. Heaven always sustains the good. 2. He is engaged in delivering them. The plough is fastened by "cords" to the yoke of the oxen, and they draw its tearing iron through the ground. If you would stop the plough you must cut the "cords." This is the figure, God in righteousness will one day stop the plough of persecution, He will deliver His people out of all their troubles. III. AS RISING TRIUMPHANTLY OVER ALL THEIR ENEMIES (vers. 5-8). Persecutors will be utterly routed, driven back with burning shame, with panic dread. This was the case with Pharaoh, Sennacherib, with Haman, Herod; aye, with persecutors in every age. "I will break your church in pieces with a hammer, if you do not obey me," said a French monarch to a Protestant pastor. Calm and dignified was the reply: "This anvil has broken many a hammer." (*Homilist.*) *Persecuted, but not forsaken*:—The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the picture of the life of His people. "As He was," says Paul, "so are we also in this world." This is so remarkably true that, in the Psalms, we sometimes can hardly tell whether the writer is describing himself or the Lord Jesus. Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord? If they have persecuted Him, they will also persecute us. I. First notice, concerning Israel's affliction, WHEN IT CAME: "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth." Who was it that afflicted Israel? The text says, "they." And why is the word "they" used? Because to enter into particulars would rather obscure the sense than impress anything upon the memory. "They." I hardly like to think of who they are who, in many cases, have afflicted God's true servants; but it is still true that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." A woman is just brought to Christ, and her greatest trouble comes from him whom she loves best of all living mortals; her husband becomes her terror. Outside, in the world, the Christian man frequently meets with those who would rejoice to see him halt, who try to make faults where there are none, and exaggerate little mistakes into great crimes. He is a pilgrim through the midst of Vanity Fair whom the traders there cannot understand. In his case, that ancient word is again fulfilled (Jer. xii. 9). II. How DOES THIS PERSECUTION COME? The psalm says, "Many a time"; that means very often. So, then, you who are faithful to God must expect that you will frequently be assailed. III. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THIS PERSECUTION? There are two reasons; and the first is the hatred of the serpent and his seed. There are two things that are inconceivable in length and breadth. The first is the love of God to His people, which is altogether without limit; and the next is, the hatred of the devil, which is and must be finite, for he is only a creature; but, still, it is as great as it possibly can be. Still, there is a higher reason for the persecution of the saints. The second reason is because God permits it. Why does He permit it? Well, very often for your safety. The Church of God has often been preserved by persecution; she was never purer, she was never truer, and she never lived nearer to God and more like her Saviour, than when she was persecuted. Next, it is for our trial and testing, to separate the precious from the vile. Satan, in persecuting the saints, is simply a scullion in Christ's kitchen, cleansing His pots and pans; they never are so bright as when he scours them, and it is a scouring with a vengeance. Yet, in that way, he separates, or God through him separates, between the precious and the vile. IV. THE BLESSINGS WHICH COME TO THE TRIED CHILDREN OF GOD THROUGH THEIR TROUBLES. I do so enjoy the reading of that part of the psalm where it says, "But they have not prevailed against me." You see a troop of horsemen riding into the very midst of the battle, and you lose sight of them for a moment amidst the dust and smoke; but out of the middle of that cloud you hear the brave captain's cry, "They have not prevailed against me." You see that little band advancing into a yet more crowded host, all glaring upon them like wolves. Surely they will be cut to pieces now; but in the very centre of the struggling mass you see the banner still waving, and again comes the cry, "They have not prevailed against me." That is, in brief, the story of the Church of Christ, and that shall be the story of every man who puts his trust in God; he shall have to say, at the close of every trouble,—aye, and even in the midst of it,—"They have not pre-

vailed against me." What is the reason why the enemy cannot prevail against the saints? "The Lord is righteous." He may delay the overthrow of His people's foes; but He will in the end take their part, and display His almighty power. For the present, He is patient; He bears long with the ungodly; but He will not always do so. The fact that "the Lord is righteous" is the pledge that the wicked shall not prevail over His saints. Then notice the next sentence: "He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked." Literally, "He hath cut the traces of the wicked." They are ploughing, you see; and, in the East, the oxen are fastened to the plough by a long cord. What does God do in the middle of their ploughing? There are the bullocks, and there is the plough; but God has cut the harness; and how wonderfully He has sometimes cut the harness of the persecutors of His people! Look at the way He did this for our poor hunted brethren in Piedmont. They were likely every one of them to be crushed; and, apparently, there was nobody to protect them. The Duke of Savoy, whose subjects they were, had given them up to be destroyed. The next country was France, and the King of France was a Roman Catholic, and as eager for their destruction as was the Duke. But, one day, Oliver Cromwell sent for the French ambassador, and said to him, "Tell your master to order the Duke of Savoy to leave off persecuting my brethren in Piedmont, or he shall hear from me about the matter." "Sire," said the ambassador, "they are not the subjects of the King of France; he has nothing to do with them. The Duke of Savoy is an independent prince; we cannot interfere with him." "I do not care for that," replied Cromwell; "I will hold your king answerable if he does not stop the Duke of Savoy from persecuting the Piedmontese." And they knew that "Old Noll" meant what he said; so, somehow, the King of France managed to interfere with that precious independent prince, and told him that he had better cease his persecutions, for, if he did not, Oliver Cromwell would take up the quarrel. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The afflictions and triumphs of the Church of Christ.—I. THE AFFLICTIONS AND TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. Scarcely was the Church organized, after our Divine Redeemer's ascension into heaven, when she was assailed by three descriptions of enemies, either all at once, or consecutively, viz. the prejudices of authority and human wisdom,—the violence of persecution,—and the errors and heresies of false teachers. In all these respects the Church has been afflicted from her youth, yet her enemies have not prevailed against her.

II. THE IMPRESSIONS WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE AFFLICTIONS AND TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OUGHT TO PRODUCE UPON OUR MINDS. 1. In the Church, always afflicted and persecuted, yet still subsisting,—like the bush, burning but unconsumed,—behold a confirmation of our faith, and an evident demonstration that the religion of Jesus Christ is from God. 2. Further, the conformity of our own reformed Church, as well as of all the other orthodox Protestant Churches, with the primitive Christian Church, in her afflictions and triumphs, furnishes us with an irrefragable proof of the truth of the holy religion which they and we profess.

III. What, now, are the PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS which we may derive from the important topics which we have been considering? 1. Since God has, in His mercy, called us out of papal darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; seeing that it is based, not upon unauthorized human traditions, but upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone;—the great and fundamental object of all the predictions of the prophets, and of the preaching and writings of the holy apostles. 2. Let us devoutly bless the Father of Mercies, who remembered the Church of Christ in her low estate, for His mercy endureth for ever; and through whose propitious aid, and providential interpositions, the Reformation was accomplished, and our civil and religious liberties have been secured and transmitted to us. 3. Let us pity and pray for those nations of the earth who are yet under the yoke of papal dominion and superstition,—would that I could say, are groaning under it. 4. Above all, since the Almighty, when He bestows extraordinary favours upon man, expects from him a proportionate return of gratitude, let us remember the solemn obligations under which we are individually laid, as Protestant Christians, to exhibit a corresponding excellence of Christian character, as the necessary result of "a true and lively faith"; since we enjoy advantages and privileges which involve the possessors of them in no ordinary degree of moral responsibility. (T. H. Horne, B.D.)

Affliction may strengthen.—Care must be taken not to make too much account of the effect exercised by the great convulsions of nature on the moral condition of a people. The need of this precaution

is well shown by the social history of Iceland. This country has for the thousand years of its history been subjected to imminent peril from the instability of the earth as well as from the inhospitable nature of its climate. In almost every century of the world's history famine caused by the accidents of the earth and air has menaced the life of the population. Many successive volcanic outbreaks, attended by serious earthquakes, have convulsed this island, and yet amid these mishaps the people have maintained the highest measure of social order in any state of which we have a history. The Icelanders have had the moral strength to rise superior to such afflictions. In this state, as in certain individuals, chastisement which would have destroyed weaker natures served to affirm the vigour of the strong people. (*Shaler: "Aspects of the Earth."*)

Ver. 4. The cords of the wicked.—*Cumulative power of cords of sin*:—"The other day," says the Rev. F. B. Meyer, "I had to address some two thousand children, and, fearing that I might fail to secure their attention, I called a lad of twelve into my pulpit, and proceeded to wind around him a long knotted entanglement, first cotton, then string, next twine, next small cord, afterwards rope, ending with a chain and padlock. Of course he could break the cotton, but this led swiftly to the string, and this to a stronger, and so on, till at last the clasp of the padlock made him fast, my prisoner, 'bound by the cords of his habits.' And I think those boys and girls will never forget the lesson of the inevitable connection between thoughts—acts—habits—character—destiny."

Ver. 6. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops.—*The unholy life*:—Such a life is—I. TRANSIENT (ver. 6). Wickedness is inimical to longevity. What are all the possessions, pleasures, the pomps, and grandeurs of unholy men! Mere fading flowers of the field. II. USELESS (ver. 7). Ungodly men may leave behind them their worldly possessions that may become useful to others; but what they leave behind them morally in the way of sound teaching and life-example is worth nothing; nay, it is worse than worthless. III. UNBLESSSED (ver. 8). Who can bless the memory of the wicked, the memory of those who have lived lives entirely selfish, sensual, secular, utterly regardless of the interests and rights of others? They can only be cursed. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Unstable prosperity*:—In the East, the houses have generally flat roofs. These are covered with a kind of compost or cement. This should obstruct all vegetation; but if chipped and broken up in any part, grass seeds carried there by the wind take root and grow. The plant springs up rapidly, from the thinness of the soil, and from its warm exposure. From its elevated situation it is seen at a distance, and makes a goodly show. But the same causes make the plant feeble and shrivelled, and it withers before it reaches maturity. Who would covet such prosperity as this? It is not the tall, majestic tree, which has withstood the winds and storms of centuries. It is as grass; not even as grass sown in the humble valley, full of moisture, and rich in beauty: it is as grass on the housetop, which dies before the ears are fully formed. Their prosperity has no stability: its roots are not deep in the Divine blessing. (*N. McMichael.*) *An emblem of Israel blest by the Lord* is a wide field of thickly-growing corn stirred by gentle breezes under a ripening sun. As the labourers, humming or shouting snatches of cheery song, bind the sheaves, and carry load after load away, they receive friendly salutations from people passing by. Nearly two hundred years before this psalm was produced, Isaiah sketched the pride, impotence and ruin of Israel's foes. They that hate Zion are "as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up" (Isa. xxxvii. 27). The flat roof of an Eastern dwelling is no more the place for vegetation than Jerusalem is a proper field for Gentile and Samaritan ploughers; but so long as there are winds to blow particles of earth into crevices and corners, dew and showers to moisten the drifted dust, and birds of the air to sow seeds, the best cemented housetop is not proof against the appearance of straggling and struggling blades. The enemies of Israel shall be "as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up," which for want of nourishment at the roots dries and dies before it can be pulled: "wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom." Let who will express approbation of the salutations interchanged by Mohammedans when they meet, so long as they do not speak of them as if they originated with Turks and Moors. Such greetings are the remnant, in many countries, of a beautiful primitive custom. The Book of Ruth supplies a delightful glimpse of a harvest

field thirteen hundred years before the Christian era (Ruth ii. 4). The thought is ridiculous of housetop harvesting occasioning such benedictions. Equally out of question is it for the Church's adversaries to be blessed by God or man. (E. J. Robinson.)

Ver. 8. The blessing of the Lord be upon you.—Mutual benediction:—Although mutuality is beautiful, we are not to be, as Christians, dependent on it. "Bless them that curse you." "Being reviled, we bless." Our responsibilities are the same, under all conditions of human life. But it is a pleasant and helpful thing when there is mutuality of blessing. I. **THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THAT WE SHOULD LIVE IN OTHERS.** This is not merely a doctrine of abstract truth; it is a revelation of the life of God in Christ. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life,—His life of thought, His life of toil, His life of pity and compassion, His life of sorrow, His life of suffering, even unto death, for our sakes. So His whole history was a benediction, and He has left us as partakers of the Divine nature through Him the legacy of His joy and of His peace. II. **THERE ARE SPECIAL OCCASIONS FOR THE MINISTRATION OF BLESSING;** seasons when we are more alive to our own mercies; seasons when our warm fire-light contrasts with the cold hearths of the poor; seasons of health and strength, when we are called to sympathize with hopeless and incurable disease. III. **THE SPIRIT OF BLESSING IS THE SPIRIT OF UNIVERSAL MINISTRY.** We are not all called to do the same thing, we are not all called to be bishops, or deacons, or teachers. There are diversities of operation. God chooses His instruments, calls them to their work. You cannot find the man or woman, child or father, master or servant you cannot bless. You may be ineloquent, but you can bless with a look. You may find yourself so nervous that your words are inaudible before man, but for you the whisper at the Throne of Grace is possible. IV. **THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL BLESSING ACTS AS A REMINDER OF MERCIES.** We are too apt to forget them, too apt to take them for granted, too apt to have the blessing and not to trace it up to the great Giver. Perhaps I have taken God's mercies as though it was natural and proper for me to receive them, as though the consciousness of having done my duty ought to lead me to expect reward; as though my endeavour ought to have been so honoured; as though living a pure life I ought to have health; as though being friendly I ought to have friends. The text reminds us it is "the blessing of the Lord." We shall never know the meaning of the word "blessing" until we look back upon life from the great battlements of heaven, and see all the way that the Lord led us in, to humble us, to prove us, and to try what was in our heart. V. **THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL BLESSING IS THE SPIRIT OF THE SANCTUARY.** "We bless you in the name of the Lord," and in another part we read, "We bless you out of the house of the Lord." That is to be, as I take it, the spirit of the Church, and the Church has need to learn in all ages that lesson. The Church of Christ is to be the Church of restoration. If a man err, we are to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. If men are cast down, we are to lift them up; we are to strengthen the hands that hang down and the feeble knees, and to say to them that are of a fearful heart, "Thy God reigneth." (W. M. Statham.) **An ancient salutation:**—This ancient salutation still lingers in the East. And a delightful thing it would be were there a greater manifestation of courteous and devotional feeling in the harvest fields at home. Beyond the sacred circle of the Church, there is no sight so cheering under the broad vault of heaven as a rich field of corn, and the reapers cutting it down. It fills the heart with gladness, and sends the thoughts upward to Him who sends His sunshine, and rains, and dews, and crowns the year with His goodness. An abundant harvest is an unmixed benefit. It sometimes happens that the prosperity of one man is purchased at the expense of others; and that, to make his lamp burn brightly, many a lamp is extinguished, or sends forth a faint and flickering light. But here all are gainers, and none are losers. And hence we can ask the Divine favour to descend upon those who are engaged in cutting it down; and we can say with an enlightened conscience, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord. The reapers, too, on the harvest field should recollect, more than is always done, that God whose bounty is seen in every handful of corn they lay hold of. Why should God be so distant from us, when engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life? Why not acknowledge Him in all our ways? Why should it be supposed that He has nothing to do with us, and that we have nothing to do with Him, except on

Sabbaths and in sanctuaries? Why should not the law of kindness be on our tongues, and the spirit of courtesy sweeten our daily intercourse? Why should we not care for each other's welfare, and supplicate God, in the fine devotional feeling of the ancient world: "We bless you in the name of the Lord"? (N. McMichael.)

PSALM CXXX.

VERS. 1-8. Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee.—*A prayer for deliverance.*—The psalm should probably be regarded as antiphonal; it is composed of several stanzas which were sung responsively by different voices. 1. In the first stanza (vers. 1, 2) the speaker is a devout Israelite, who is feeling keenly the misery of his circumstances. The metaphor appears to be taken from a shipwreck; and, on the lips of a Hebrew, the picture would be one of unutterable horror. We Britons love the sea. But to the Jews the sea was an object of terror, a cruel and devouring monster, greedy of its prey, and smiling only to deceive; the symbol of treachery, unrest, and desolation. What were those depths out of which the psalmist cried to God? Were they the calamities which beset him and his countrymen? Or were they his overwhelming sins? To a Hebrew mind these were indistinguishable. It was an inveterate belief among the Israelites that, just as prosperity was the reward of goodness, adversity was the punishment of sin; and, wherever adversity alighted, sin must have been there before. This theory added to the sufferings of the Exiles an element of distress which we can hardly appreciate. It appears very plainly in our psalm. Here is a devout Israelite plunged, like the rest of his countrymen, into the depths of disaster. As a Hebrew this could only have one meaning for him, namely, that God was visiting their sins upon him and them. 2. The second stanza (vers. 3, 4) is the response of a neighbour—probably an old man, who had lived into a calmer and stronger faith than the other had yet attained to. Though his words are addressed to God, they are a reply to his companion. First he glances at the vexing problem which, as we have seen, was at the bottom of his companion's trouble—why righteous men should suffer so terribly. His answer is the rough-and-ready one, that in God's sight no one is righteous, and beneath His pure and searching scrutiny the fairest lives show very foul. This is just the theological commonplace, so shallow and irreverent, that all men alike are sinful and deserve equal condemnation at God's hands. It is quite true indeed that we are all sinners; but we are not all sinners to the same extent, and God will not blindly treat us all alike. The man speaks more truly when he leaves off theorizing and testifies to his own experience of God. "Thou dost not watch for iniquities, but with Thee is the forgiveness." God, he means, is not a stern tyrant, never satisfied with our efforts to serve Him, ever watching for mistakes and searching them out. He is right willing to forgive us even at our worst. The closing line of this stanza is a surprise. We should have expected, "with Thee is forgiveness that Thou mayest be loved"; but we read instead, "that Thou mayest be feared." On the lips of a Hebrew "the fear of God" meant very nearly devout reverence. It is the Old Testament phrase for the true worship, and our psalmist means that, were there no forgiveness in the heart of God, there would be no worship in the heart of man. Religion would be impossible were God a relentless and merciless avenger. 3. In the third stanza (vers. 5, 6) the first speaker replies, "You tell me God forgives! Have I not besought His forgiveness till I am weary? But all to no purpose. For His word have I hoped—for some assurance of His forgiveness; but not a whisper has broken the pitiless silence." The figure in verse 6 would go home to the Exiles. How often, as they camped outside Babylon and sat sleepless and tearful through the watches of the night, had they seen the sentries pacing the ramparts of the city and hailing the flush of dawn in the eastern horizon which told them their weary vigil was near its close! No figure could more pathetically express the psalmist's eager expectation of the dawning of God's mercy on his long night of sorrow. 4. In the concluding stanza (vers. 7, 8) the bystanders chime in. "My soul hath hoped in Adonai," the despondent man had said; and the chorus echoes, "Hope, Israel, in Jehovah." The second speaker had declared his faith that "with Jehovah is the forgiveness"; but, ere

it closes, the psalm reaches a still grander assurance. "Hope in Jehovah, for with Jehovah is the lovingkindness, and plentifully with Him is redemption." It is a great belief that God forgives, but an unspeakable greater that, in spite of all that seems to prove the contrary, He has in His heart towards us an infinite lovingkindness and a purpose of final and complete redemption. The psalm ends with a prophecy of great salvation and boundless peace in store for Israel. To the Hebrews "redemption from iniquities" would mean not merely a spiritual deliverance, but the removal of all the disasters and sufferings which sin entailed. And this triumphant assurance of a future unstained by sin and unvexed by sorrow is born of that twofold faith, so simple yet so grand, that there is in the heart of God a boundless lovingkindness, and that He is working out, by means of all our varied experiences, our ultimate and eternal redemption. (*D. Smith, M.A.*)

The commendable conduct of man under trial:—I. IMPLORING HEAVEN (vers. 1, 2).

1. Heaven alone can deliver. 2. From the greatest depths Heaven can hear the cries. This appeal, therefore, is—(1) Commendable. (2) Wise. (3) Right. (4) Necessary. II. CONFESSING SIN (vers. 3, 4). 1. He identifies suffering with sin. All evils, physical, intellectual, social, religious, and political, spring from moral evil. 2. He identifies deliverance with God's mercy. (1) God is so merciful that He does not "mark iniquities," that is, He does not keep, retain them. Malign natures never forget injuries, benevolent natures cannot retain them. (2) God is so merciful that He forgives men their iniquities. The highest form of love is the forgiving love. (3) Because He is thus so merciful, men can trust Him. "That Thou mayest be feared." Not servilely, but trustfully, lovingly, loyally, cheerfully. Had He not forgiveness in His nature, what rational soul could reverence Him? III. WAITING ON GOD (vers. 5-8). 1. This implies—(1) Trusting in God. Trusting in His wisdom, goodness, and rectitude. (2) Expecting from God. Expecting that He will interpose in mercy, and grant the necessary relief. (3) Vigilance of soul. It is not a passive state of mind, it is watchful and earnest. 2. He exhorts Israel to trust in the Lord—(1) Because there is mercy with Him. The mercy which the sufferer requires, mercy to succour and deliver. (2) Because there is plenteous redemption with Him. There is no limit to His redemptive willingness and ability. "Where sin abounded grace doth much more abound." (3) Because all Israel will one day be redeemed. The author, undoubtedly, had the belief that all evil will one day be swept from the face of the earth. (*Homilist.*)

From the depths to the heights:—I. THE CRY FROM THE DEPTHS. 1. The depths are the place for us all. 2. Unless you have cried to God out of these depths, you have never cried to Him at all. The beginning of all true personal religion lies in the sense of my own sin and my lost condition. If a man does not think much about sin, he does not think much about a Divine Saviour. 3. You want nothing more than a cry to get you out of the depths. There is no way for you up out of the pit but to cry to God, and that will bring a rope down. Nay, rather, the rope is there. Your grasping the rope and your cry are one. "Ask, and ye shall receive!" God has let down the fulness of His forgiving love in Jesus Christ our Lord, and all that we need is the call, which is likewise faith, which accepts while it desires, and desires in its acceptance; and then we are lifted up "out of the horrible pit and the miry clay," and our feet are set upon a rock, and our goings established. II. A DARK FEAR AND A BRIGHT ASSURANCE. The man's prayer is, as it were, blown back into his throat by the thought, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord! who shall stand?" And then—as if he would not be swept away from his confidence even by this great blast of cold air from out of the north, that comes like ice and threatens to chill his hope to death—"But," says he, "there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mightest be feared." So these two halves represent the struggle in the man's mind. They are like a sky, one half of which is piled with thunder-clouds, and the other serenely blue. It needs, first of all, that the heart should have tremblingly entertained the contrary hypothesis, in order that the heart should spring to the relief and the gladness of the counter truth. It must first have felt the shudder of the thought, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities" in order to come to the gladness of the thought, "But there is forgiveness with Thee!" And that forgiveness lies at the root of all true godliness. No man reverences, and loves, and draws near to God so rapturously, so humbly, as the man that has learned pardon through Jesus Christ. III. THE PERMANENT, PEACEFUL ATTITUDE OF THE SPIRIT THAT HAS TASTED THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF FORGIVING LOVE—A CONTINUAL DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. Like a man that has just recovered from some illness,

but still leans upon the care, and feels his need of seeing the face of that skillful physician that has helped him through, there will be still, and always, the necessity for the continual application of that pardoning love. But they that have tasted that the Lord is gracious can sit very quietly at His feet and trust themselves to His kindly dealings, resting their souls upon His strong word, and looking for the fuller communication of light from Himself. "More than they that watch for the morning." That is beautiful! The consciousness of sin was the dark night. The coming of His forgiving love flushed all the eastern heaven with diffused brightness that grew into perfect day. And so the man waits quietly for the dawn, and his whole soul is one absorbing desire that God may dwell with him, and brighten and gladden him. IV. THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE BECOMES GENERAL, AND AN EVANGEL, A CALL UPON THE MAN'S LIPS TO ALL HIS BRETHREN. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." There was no room for anything in his heart when he began this psalm except his own self in his misery, and that Great One high above him there. There is nothing which isolates a man so awfully as a consciousness of sin and of his relation to God. But there is nothing that so knits him to all his fellows, and brings him into such wide-reaching bonds of amity and benevolence, as the sense of God's forgiving mercy for his own soul. So the call bursts from the lips of the pardoned man, inviting all to taste the experience and exercise the trust which have made him glad: "Let Israel hope in the Lord." And then look at the broad Gospel that he has attained to know and to preach. "For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is redemption." Not only forgiveness, but redemption—and that from every form of sin. It is "plenteous"—multiplied. Our Lord has taught us to what a sum that Divine multiplication amounts. Not once, nor twice, but "seventy times seven" is the prescribed measure of human forgiveness, and shall men be more placable than God! (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A cry out of mental distress*.—I. SOUL-DEPTHS. 1. Darkness. 2. Doubt. 3. Sorrow. 4. Sin. II. SOUL-CRYING. "As spices smell best," says Trapp, "when beaten, and as frankincense is most odoriferous when cast into the fire, so do men pray most and best out of the depths of trouble." 1. The cry of self-helplessness appealing to Omnipotence. 2. The cry of earnest entreaty. III. SOUL-APPREHENSIONS (vers. 3, 4). Jehovah is strict to "mark," but slow to execute judgment. No sin escapes His eye: His entry against us is correct, but His mercy restrains hasty justice and holds back the due deserts of our iniquities. IV. SOUL-WAITING (vers. 5, 6). 1. Patient hopefulness. 2. Eager expectation, begotten of strong faith. Waiting, hoping, expecting, never can be disappointed: through it the "cry" of distress becomes changed into the chorus of victory. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Encouragement for the penitent*.—I. DAVID'S DISTRESSING CONDITION (vers. 1, 2). Before God fills a soul, He empties it. II. DAVID'S PENITENTIAL CONFESSION (ver. 3). III. DAVID'S GROUND OF HOPE (ver. 4). We are told that when Darius heard that the Athenians had captured Sardis, he was indignant, and vowed vengeance on the city. He went out into the open air, and sending an arrow towards the heavens, he appealed to the god, Jove, and vowed that he would destroy the city, and at the same time commanded one of his servants to enter into his presence every noon, and cry, "Remember Sardis." Is it thus that God deals with us? No! He waits not to smite, but to heal; not to punish, but to pardon; not to ruin, but to regenerate. Consider—1. The promise of God (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. lxxvi. 5; Rom. x. 12; 2 Pet. i. 4; James v. 2). 2. The death of Christ. 3 God's acts. Manasseh, David, Saul of Tarsus, Zaccheus, Bunyan, all obtained forgiveness, and so may you. IV. DAVID'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD (vers. 5, 6). Seasons of spiritual depression, though painful, are profitable. They excite earnest desires, and prepare the mind for the reception of richer blessings. V. DAVID'S ENCOURAGING EXHORTATION (ver. 7). Some tell us that a man must tumble into the Slough of Despond before he can become a rejoicing believer. David thought it better policy to try to prevent them falling into that slough. Despair paralyzes. Hope invigorates. VI. THE ENCOURAGING PROMISE (ver. 8). 1. Sinner, are you in the depths? Looking on your past life, do you see little else but sin? Looking beyond the grave you see no light. No ray of hope lights up your impenetrable gloom. The stars shine brightest at night, and the promise of pardon beams with the brightest lustre when we are on the borders of despair. Hear it, and rejoice. "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." 2. Believer, do you pray for grace to destroy sin, and fill your heart with love? The blessing you desire shall be granted. This is no doubtful speculation, no untried theory. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of

thousands, have obtained pardon and purity through faith in Christ. (*H. Woodcock.*) *The pilgrim song of penitence*:—I. **THE CRY** (vers. 1, 2). He needs an entire renovation; only the Creator can bestow that. He needs absolution; only the Being offended can grant this. To Him, therefore, to Jehovah he addresses himself. He prays earnestly and perseveringly. II. **THE INDIRECT CONFESSION** (vers. 3, 4). If Jehovah should take the matter in hand, no escape would be possible. For He is the all-seeing God, from whom nothing can be hid. Other standards are deflected and partial; this is uniform and steadfast. Its Author cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked. Who, then, shall stand when He rises up? The question answers itself. None; no, not one. III. **EXPRESSIONS OF LONGING AND HOPE** (vers. 5, 6). President Edwards, during a long sickness, observed that those watching with him often looked out for the morning eagerly. It reminded him of this psalm; and when the dawn came it seemed to him to be an image of the sweet light of God's glory. For such longing is not unsatisfied. They who have it experience the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Longings for earthly goods are often disappointed, but never the conviction which leads a man to say, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." IV. **THE EXHORTATION** (vers. 7, 8). Divine grace is not easily exhausted. There is enough and to spare. With Jehovah is the lovingkindness, shown in creation's fulness, the array of fruits and flowers, the song of birds, brilliant skies, all that pleases in air, earth, and sea, the countless blessings that come upon the just and the unjust. Nay, with Him is "abundant redemption," deliverance for the lost and undone. It is not a scant provision, but liberal. There is no end to its riches, no limit to its efficacy. It extends to all vices, crimes, and shortcomings of heart, speech, or behaviour—it can make sins of scarlet as white as snow, such as are red like crimson to be as wool. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *Pardoning mercy*:—I. **THE PRAYER**. 1. The blessed Object to whom he repaired. He well knew that "vain is the help of man." 2. The earnest spirit which he manifested (vers. 1, 2). The repetition is very emphatic, and shows how extreme was his need, and how anxiously he implored the Divine Being to interpose on his behalf. II. **THE MUSINGS IN WHICH HE INDULGED** (vers. 3, 4). 1. Solemn. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities," etc. On such a supposition we must all perish, and that for ever. 2. Joyful. "But there is forgiveness with Thee," etc. This is evident from—(1) The titles He assumes (*Exod. xxiv. 6*). (2) The rites He has instituted (*Lev. xvi. 21, 22*). (3) The scheme of redemption He has provided. Gethsemane and Calvary. (4) The commands He has given (*Isa. lv. 7; Acts xvii. 30*). (5) The long-suffering He manifests. (6) The many instances in which His pardoning mercy has been exercised. III. **THE COURSE PURSUED** (vers. 5, 6). His waiting was—1. Sincere. "My soul doth wait." (1) Diligence in use of means. (2) Expectation of blessing. 2. Intelligent. "In His Word do I hope." 3. Ardent (ver. 6). (*Expository Outlines.*) *The depth of repentance*:—This psalm is the outpouring of a broken heart, crushed because of sin. I. **THE SIMILE**—"Out of the depths." A fitting image of intensity of grief. We cast about ordinarily in the shallows and level plains. We rise to the mountains to sing. Are they not nearer heaven? We sink to the depths to weep. The depths and cavities of the rocky Palestine were inaccessible and filled with noisomeness and pestilence. Thank God, life is not all depths. Thank God that even in the depths He can hear—from the gloom, the bewilderment, the despair. The depths indicate a fall. It is natural to get lower. It is not a natural place of resort. The depths also indicate carelessness. The circumference will take heed to his ways. All sin leads to despair. II. **THE ACTION**—"I cried." No word could more fitly express the soul's action when in the depths. It indicates—1. Consciousness of danger. Some are engulfed and unconscious. 2. Absence of formality. There is no time for a well-ordered prayer. The circumstances are too tragic to permit of the consideration of grammar or propriety. Deliverance is life. 3. Sense of helplessness. The strong man can do nothing. At the same time there is a sense of hope. There is one thing which the most convicted sinner can do—he can cry. III. **THE HELPER**—"To Thee, O Lord." 1. Here is some one at hand. He is able to hear. 2. Here is some one of ability. The depths are God's kingdom as well as the heights. He is a strong deliverer. 3. Here is one of willingness. He is ready to save, waiting to be gracious. Oh, it is good for a sinner to be in the "depths." He would not cry unless he felt their mortal woe. (*Homilist.*) *In the depths*:—I. **THE CHILDREN OF GOD DO FALL INTO DEPTHS**. In this plight we find David often, though a man

after God's own heart (Ps. vi. 2, 8; lxxxviii. 2, etc.; xl. 12; and Jonah, a prophet, Jonah ii. 2, etc.; and Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 13; and Job especially, Job vi. 4). But why is this thus, seeing our Head, Christ Jesus, hath suffered for us? 1. That we may know what Christ suffered for us by our own experience, without which we should but lightly esteem of our redemption, not knowing how to value Christ's sufferings sufficiently, which is a horrible sin (Heb. ii. 3). 2. By our sufferings we know what a bitter thing sin is. 3. By our afflictions and depths we manifest God's power and glory the more in our deliverance: for the greater the trouble is, the greater is the deliverance; as the greater the cure is, the greater credit the physician gets. 4. Many times, by less evils, it is God's manner to cure greater; and thus He suffers us to feel wrath, to cure us of security, which is as a grave to the soul; as also to cure spiritual pride, that robs us of grace (2 Cor. xii. 7). 5. These depths are left to us to make us more desirous of heaven; else great men, that are compassed about with earthly comforts, alas, with what zeal could they pray, "Thy kingdom come," etc.? No; with Peter they would rather say, "Master, it is good for us to be here" (Mark ix. 5). 6. God works by these afflictions in us a more gentleness of spirit, making us meek and pitiful towards those that are in depths, which was one cause of Christ's afflictions: He suffered that He might help and comfort others. He suffered Peter to stumble, that, when he was converted, he should "strengthen his brethren" (Luke xxii. 32).

II. **THOUGH CHRISTIANS FALL INTO DEPTHS, YET GOD UPHOLDS THEM THAT THEY SINK NOT DOWN INTO THEM WITHOUT RECOVERY.** 1. For the Spirit of God is in them, and where it is it is stronger than hell, yea, though the grace be but as a grain of mustard seed. 2. As there are depths of misery in a Christian, so in God there are depths of love and of wisdom. 3. Faith, where it is, unites the soul to Christ, and to God through Him, and draws down Divine power—to lay hold on the almighty power of God by true and fervent prayer,—at whose rebuke the waters of affliction flee away (Ps. lxxvii. 16); and so the stronger the faith is, the stronger is the delivery, for it is of a mighty power, enabling us to wrestle with God, as Jacob did. Thus when we lay hold on God, and God on us, what can drown us? 4. It is the nature of God's working to be by contraries: in His works of creation, making all things of nothing; in His works of providence He saves by little means from greatest dangers. III. **AFFLICTIONS STIR UP DEVOTIONS.** 1. Let us interpret God's dealings with a sanctified judgment. He is a wise physician, and knows when strong or gentle physic is most requisite. Sometimes God by great afflictions doth manifest great graces, but so as notwithstanding they may be mingled with a deal of corruption; and it is God's use that hereby His graces may be increased, and the corruption allayed, to bring down the greatest cedars, and to eclipse the greatest lights. 2. Let us oppose desperations by all means, by prayer, by crying; and if we cannot speak, by sighing; if not so, yet by gesture, especially at the time of death, for God knows the heart. For then it stands upon eternal comfort. And therefore let us do anything to show our faith fails not. We must know that every one shall meet with these enemies, that would cause us to despair if they could, for this life is a warring and striving life. We shall have enemies without and within us that will fight against us.

IV. **OBSERVE BY THE EXAMPLE OF THIS HOLY MAN THAT PRAYERS ARE TO BE MADE ONLY TO GOD, who knows our wants, supports us and binds us up: and it is only Christ that doth this.** None can love us more than He that gave Himself for us. He is our eye whereby we see, our mouth whereby we speak, our arms whereby we lay hold on God; and therefore it is an intolerable unthankfulness to leave this "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and to dig to ourselves cisterns that will hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13). (R. Sibbes.) *Deep places*:—1. By the deep places is meant the deep places of afflictions, and the deep places of the heart troubled for sin. Afflictions are compared to deep waters (Ps. xviii. 17; lxix. 1). And surely God's children are often cast into very desperate cases, and plunged into deep miseries. To the end they may send out of a contrite and feeling heart such prayers as may mount aloft and pierce the heavens. Those that are furthest cast down are not furthest from God, but nearest unto Him. God is near to a contrite heart, and it is the proper seat where His Spirit dwelleth (Isa. lxvi. 2). And thus God dealth with us, as men do with such houses that they are minded to build sumptuously and on high, for then they dig deep grounds for the foundation. Mark hereby the dulness of our nature, that is such, that God is forced to use sharp remedies to awaken us. When, therefore, we are troubled either by heavy sickness, or poverty, or oppressed by the tyranny of

men, let us make profit and use thereof, considering that God hath cast His best children in such dangers for their profit; and that it is better to be in deep dangers praying, than on the high mountains of vanity playing. 2. By the deep places may be understood also a heart deeply wounded with the considerations of sin and God's justice, for God will not accept such superficial and scurvy prayers, which come only from the lips, and not from a contrite and broken heart. Let not men think to find mines of gold or silver in the streets; no, they must dig into the bowels of the earth for them. So, let us not deceive ourselves thinking God's favour may be gotten everywhere, for in the deep places it is to be found. (A. Symson.)

Vers. 3, 4. If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

—A psalmist's question and answer:—I want to cheer some of you who at present hardly dare to pray. Yet you are the very people who may pray; you who think that the Lord will never hear you are the people whom He is certain to hear and answer. When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket, and you stand before your God as a wretched, starving, and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love. I. First, we have a CONFESSION,—a confession which it will be well for every one of us to make (ver. 3). 1. The psalmist may have felt that, if a human witness had been appointed to mark his sin, he might have been able to stand; but he says, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?" You have sometimes had a white pocket handkerchief, and you have admired its whiteness; but when the snow has fallen, and you have laid your handkerchief upon the newly-fallen snow, it has looked quite yellow instead of white; and so is it with the holiest life when it is placed by the side of the life of Christ, or looked at in the light of the perfect law of God; then we see how stained and defiled it really is. So, Lord, we might stand up before our fellow-men, and plead "Not guilty," when they belie and slander us, as they do; but, before Thy holy presence, "if Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" 2. The psalmist also speaks of a special form of guilt. He does not say, "If Thou shouldst mark open and overt transgression,—the breaking out of bounds, and going astray in the paths of evil"; but he says, "If Thou shouldst mark iniquities." Pull that word to pieces, and it becomes in-equities"—whatever is not right in the sight of God. If He were to mark those in-equities, who could stand before Him? Not one of us could do so. 3. Notice, next, how the psalmist inquires, "Who shall stand?" If there were any way of getting into heaven by a back door, or of hiding our sins from God's eye, we might have some ground of hope; but there will come a day when we shall stand before God like prisoners at the bar. David, who probably wrote this psalm, had known many good men in his time, and he was accustomed to associate with the excellent of the earth; yet he says, "O Lord, who shall stand?" And I may repeat his question now, since God has marked our iniquities, "Who among us can stand in His sight upon the footing of our own good works?" Echo answers, "Who?" II. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE (ver. 4). 1. We know that there is forgiveness with God, because we have been informed by revelation concerning the character of God; and we find one prominent feature in the character of God is that "He delighteth in mercy." 2. Moreover, this impression, conveyed to us by the general tenor of the Scriptures, is deepened by the direct teaching of the Gospel. Why did Jesus come into the world to be a Saviour if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did He offer an atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that atonement? 3. Further, we are assured that God will forgive sin because we have so many definite promises to that effect. This blessed Book is as full of promises and proclamations of mercy as an egg is full of meat. It abounds in messages of love and grace; it tells us that God willeth not the death of the sinner, that He delighteth not in judgment, for that is His left-handed work, but that His compassion freely moves towards the blackest and vilest of sinners when they repent, and return unto Him. III. THE CONSEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS. "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Thus, you see, the doctrine of free forgiveness actually produces in man's mind a fear of God. You might have thought the psalmist would have said, "There is no forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared"; but it is not so. 1. The opposite of our text is very manifest. When there is no forgiveness, or when a man thinks there is none, what is the consequence? He is driven to despair, and despair often

leads to desperate living. If there is no hope of forgiveness, then there is no proper fear of God. 2. Many are abiding in a state of carelessness, because they really do not know whether there is any pardon to be had. When a man is in doubt as to whether he can be forgiven, he says, "I am afraid it would be a very long process, and I do not know whether I should get it even then. Perhaps, however, there is no pardon to be had, so I might become a religious man, and yet miss the forgiveness of sins." That is the thought of many, and therefore they become torpid and lethargic, careless and indifferent; but when the Holy Spirit teaches a man that there is forgiveness to be had, he would leap out of his very body rather than miss it. 3. How encouraging, too, is the belief that there is pardon to be had! But, more, how sanctifying is the actual reception of it! Walk carefully, prayerfully, humbly before God and men, putting your trust, not in yourselves, but in Christ alone, and you shall then find, in your experience, the best exposition of the text, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared"; for you will prove, by your own fear of God, which is continually before your own eyes, that His free, rich, sovereign grace, manifested in your pardon, did not produce in you indulgence in sin, but gave you the sweet liberty of walking in holiness, and in the fear of the Lord. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The sinner without excuse before God:—I. EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF THE ASSERTION. If Thou, Lord, shouldst execute the decrees of justice, and punish everything that is done amiss, the holiest man on earth would not be able to abide the trial; how much less would such a sinner as I be able to stand? II. CONFIRM THIS TRUTH FROM SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE. 1. It is the constant doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; it is the uniform language of humility and penitence there (Ps. cxliii. 2; Job ix. 2-4; xl. 4, 5; xlii. 5, 6; Ps. xix. 12; Lam. iii. 22, 23). 2. I shall propose three general subjects of examination. (1) How many duties have you omitted which you must be sensible you ought to have performed? (2) How often have you been guilty of express transgressions of the law of God? (3) How many blemishes and imperfections cleave to those very duties which you endeavour to perform in obedience to his will? III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION. 1. How great is the deceitfulness of sin! How astonishing the blindness of sinners! 2. If the holiest cannot stand before God, if no flesh living can be justified in His sight, how fearful must be the state of those who are lying under the guilt of atrocious, aggravated, and repeated crimes! 3. If any Christian desires to keep his conscience tender and faithful, to have a deep, growing and humbling sense of his own sinfulness; if he would bar the gate against the entrance of pride, or banish it after it has obtained admission; if he desires to walk humbly and watchfully, let him live as in the presence of God, let him often sift himself at His awful tribunal. (J. Witherspoon, D.D.)

Ver. 4. But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.—*Divine forgiveness:*—I. WE ARE INDEBTED TO REVELATION ALONE FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS FACT, THAT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD. 1. The heathen, who have no revelation, and deists, who have rejected revelation, could not form any proper idea on this subject. The only other grounds of knowledge are reason, and the light of nature; but neither can these guide us to the fact which is here stated. We could not infer, from God's essential goodness, or from the works of nature, that He would forgive sin at all. It does not necessarily depend on His existence, or on His goodness. It must depend entirely on an act of His will;—but whether He will, who can tell? 2. If we could prove from the light of nature that God would forgive sin, it is still evident that we could infer nothing as to the persons to be forgiven—the extent to which the blessing was to reach. An universal act of indemnity—free forgiveness of all sin, could never have entered into the minds of men. No; this would be regarded as a licence to sin. No; some sins only will be forgiven; some persons only will be pardoned;—but which, and who? Who can possibly tell? 3. As to the way in which forgiveness is to be obtained, we could learn nothing by the light of nature. Men have not been satisfied with repenting; they have looked out for sacrifices—for an atonement. Whence came pilgrimages, penances, mortifications, sacrifices? All these things show that men were convinced that something more than repentance was needed. So that it is clear we are indebted entirely to revelation for the knowledge of the way of forgiveness of sins. This way is by the satisfaction made by Christ, and received by the Father. II. IN THE FORGIVENESS THUS PROMISED, AND FLOWING TO US THROUGH THIS CHANNEL, PECULIAR CHARACTERS ARE MARKED DOWN, WHICH ARE ALMOST AS

ASTONISHING AS THE FACT ITSELF. 1. It comes to all persons, and reaches to all crimes, with only one exception. That exception is "the sin against the Holy Ghost." 2. This forgiveness takes place at the time of repenting and believing. The Gospel puts the blessing of forgiveness in the present tense:—"Thy sins are forgiven thee";—"Thy faith hath made thee whole";—"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." 3. This forgiveness is invariably followed by the special fruits of the Divine favour. It is not barren and unproductive. If God pardon us, it is that we may come nigh unto Him—that we may hear His fatherly voice—that we may become the depositaries of His grace and the objects of His love. 4. This forgiveness is renewed and perpetuated. (*J. Leischild.*) *Divine forgiveness*.—I. It is not an act that TAKES PLACE OUTSIDE OF THE OFFENDER. When a human father forgives his offending child, or a human sovereign his offending subject, it is an outward act. But Divine forgiveness is an inner change, it is a moral revolution; the soul breaking away from its past—its past masters, purposes, and life. II. It is not an act PROMPTED BY ENTREATIES. A father forgives his offending child because of the child's importunate appeals, and the king his rebels for the same reason. But Divine forgiveness is uninfluenced. He is essentially a forgiving God, and no entreaties need alter His purposes of mercy. III. It is not an act EXERCISED WITH LIMITATION. In human forgiveness there is a limitation to persons, only a few of the offenders are selected for the favour. Limited also to time. He who has been forgiven more than once is not likely to receive such a favour again, and his chances decrease with every repetition of the offence. But in Divine forgiveness there is no limitation. "Abundantly pardon." "Seventy times seven." IV. It is not an act of EXCITED SYMPATHY RATHER THAN PLAN. The forgiving act of man is generally excited by commiseration for the offender, it is not the plan of his life, it is an occasional act. But Divine forgiveness is a plan settled, eternal, immutable. His forgiveness delivers men not only from the consequences of sins, but from the sins themselves. "He sent His Son to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Hope of forgiveness with God*.—After considering our own miserable and guilty state, and how little any plea which we can offer will avail before the holiness and justice of God, it is proper to turn our eyes to His mercy, as the only foundation of our hope and peace. I. GIVE A BRIEF VIEW OF THE DISCOVERIES WHICH GOD HATH MADE OF HIS MERCY, AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE SINNER'S HOPE; or, in other words, show what reason we have to believe that there is forgiveness with Him. 1. The patience and forbearance of God towards sinners, in the course of His providence, is the effect of His mercy. Even this affords some faint hope that there may be forgiveness with Him (*Jonah iv. 2*). We may add to this His continual benignity and kindness to all His creatures, not excepting the evil, the unthankful, and the unholy. The native tendency of both these is to lead the guilty to repentance, as we are told (*Rom. ii. 4*). 2. God hath revealed Himself in His Word, as merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and slow to anger (*Ex. xxxiv. 5-7*; *Ps. ciii. 8*; *Micah vii. 18*; *Isa. i. 18*; *xlili. 25*; *lv. 1, 6, 7*; *Mal. iii. 17*). 3. But that nothing may be wanting for the complete illustration of this truth, observe that it appears in the clearest manner from the Gospel of Christ that there is forgiveness with God (*John iii. 16*; *1 Pet. i. 18*; *Heb. vi. 18*). II. POINT OUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MERCY OF GOD AND HIS FEAR. 1. A discovery of the mercy of God is absolutely necessary to His being loved and served by those who have once been sinners. There can be no religion at all, either in inclination or performance, if there be no forgiveness with God. How should any so much as attempt what they believe to be an unprofitable labour? 2. As a discovery of the mercy of God is absolutely necessary to our serving Him at all, so it is perhaps of all others the most powerful motive to induce us to serve Him in sincerity. Nothing whatever more illustrates the Divine glory. It presents Him as the proper object of worship, of confidence, and of love. 3 But, further, even taking fear in a more limited sense, as signifying a holy reverence and dread of the power and majesty of God, there being forgiveness with Him, is so far from weakening, that it strengthens this fear; and that on the two following accounts. (1) The infinite obligations we lie under to Divine mercy must serve to improve our sense of the evil of sin, as committed against so good and so gracious a God, and to increase our abhorrence of it. (2) Forgiveness with God tends to increase our fear and reverence of Him, from the manner in which, and the condition on which, it is bestowed. Every circumstance of this dispensation of Divine mercy is calculated to abase the sinner, and leave him nothing whereof to glory before

God. III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. Learn that none can understand, embrace, or esteem the mercy of God, but those who are convinced of their sin and misery. 2. Observe that the publication of Divine mercy, that the illustration of the riches of Divine grace in the Gospel, hath not the least tendency to lessen our sense of the evil of sin, or the obligation we lie under to obedience: on the contrary, it serves greatly to improve both the one and the other. 3. See the difference between a real and Scriptural discovery of forgiveness with God, and that careless security which arises from a presumptuous reliance on His general mercy. The one prevents conviction, the other produces it. 4. See of how much moment it is to the Christian to keep clear views of the mercy of God, as well as of His own interest in it. The moment he loses the comfortable sense of peace with God, his chariot-wheels are troubled, and he drives heavily. It makes his duty burdensome, and his trials insupportable. 5. See in what way you may most effectually, and most certainly, preserve your peace with God, viz. by the frequent exercise of penitence and confession. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The design which God has in forgiving sin:—I. A DECLARATION OF MERCY.* 1. It proceeds from the free, spontaneous motion of God's good pleasure. 2. The sins and offences that are the subject-matter of it. (1) Their number is numberless. (2) Their magnitude. We have them painted out to us in their colours (Isa. i. 18), with a crimson tincture, and a scarlet dye; with a redness and a blushing; sin thus wearing the colour of shame. Yet in the same verse we have forgiveness changing their hue to the whiteness of snow and the innocence of wool. 3. The persons on whom this pardon is conferred, who are men; that is, very worthless and inconsiderable creatures, in comparison of those to whom the same pardon is denied. II. THE END OF SUCH A DECLARATION, WHICH IS FEAR AND OBEDIENCE. "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." 1. What this fear is. There are three sorts of fear: an anxious, distracting, amazing fear; a slavish and servile fear; and a filial, reverential fear. Now, there is this difference between these three sorts of fear; that the first is properly the fear of a malefactor, the second of a slave, and this last of a son; which is that alone that is designed in these words: and indeed there is good reason that God should require it, since He intends to turn His servants into sons. And is it not equal to require a son's affection where He resolves to bestow a son's inheritance? Besides, this affection is of all others the most sedulous, diligent, and serviceable, and therefore there is a more than ordinary significance in those words (Mal. iii. 17). 2. How God's forgiveness may be an argument to enforce this fear. (1) Because the neglect of the fear of God, upon supposal that He has forgiven us our sins, is highly disingenuous. (2) Because the neglect of God's fear upon the account of His forgiveness, besides the disingenuity of it, is also most provoking and dangerous. III. DEDUCTIONS. 1. The different nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom from all other kingdoms in the world; and that not only in respect of the external administration of it, that it is not bolstered up with pomp and show, and other little assistances of grandeur and secular artifice; but chiefly in respect of that which is the main instrument and hinge of government and subjection, the fear of the subject. 2. Upon what ground every man is to build the persuasion of the pardon of his sins. It is the temper of most persons to be more busy about their assurance than their obedience; and to be confident of their reward, while they should be solicitous about their duty. (*R. South, D.D.*) *There is forgiveness:—I.* My first head is taken from the first word of the text: "But." Here is a WHISPER OF HOPE. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But"—Oh, the sweet music of that little word! It seems to come in when the terrible drum of alarm is being beaten, and the dreadful clarion of judgment is sounding forth. There is a pause with this word, "But there is forgiveness." It is a soft and gentle whisper from the lips of love. 1. This comes into the soul after a full confession of sin. When thou hast knelt down before God, and acknowledged thy transgressions and thy shortcomings, and thy heart is heavy, and thy soul is ready to burst with inward anguish, then mayest thou hear this gracious word, "But there is forgiveness." 2. This whisper of hope sometimes comes to the soul by the Spirit of God as the result of observation. David, Manasseh, Saul of Tarsus, have been pardoned; why not I? 3. This whisper comes also in opposition to the voice of despair, for despair says to a soul under a sense of sin, "There is no mercy for you; you have sinned beyond all limits, your death-warrant is signed, the verdict has been given against you, there remains nothing for you but everlasting burnings." Nay, soul, God's Word against thy word any day! God's Word says,

"There is forgiveness." 4. This whisper of hope is an answer even to the law of God. There is another mountain besides Sinai—Zion; there is another lawgiver besides Moses—Jesus. II. AN ASSURANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. "There is forgiveness." 1. Turn to the Old Testament, and you will see that it reveals sacrifice,—lambs and bullocks, and goats. What did they all mean? They meant that there was a way of pardon through the shedding of blood; they taught men this, that God would accept of certain sacrifices on their behalf. Then turn to the New Testament, and there you will see it revealed more clearly still that God has accepted a sacrifice, the sacrifice which He Himself gave, for "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." 2. Notice the broad indefiniteness of the text. "There is forgiveness." Where God draws no limit, do not you draw any. If God sets the door wide open, and says, "There is forgiveness," then come along, you sinners, whoever you may be, from gaols and penitentiaries, come along from your Pharisaic places of boasting and self-righteousness, come along with you, for there is forgiveness even for you. Ye rich, ye poor, ye learned, ye ignorant, ye that know nothing, know at least this, "There is forgiveness." 3. Notice, too, the immediate presentness of the text. Our version has it, "There is forgiveness," but there is not even the verb in the Hebrew. The translators put in the words, "There is," so we are to read it, "There was forgiveness"; "There is forgiveness"; "There will be forgiveness as long as life lasts." But I like it as it stands here. "There is forgiveness" to-night; "there is forgiveness" now; "there is forgiveness" where thou sittest, just as thou art, just now.

III. A DIRECTION OF WISDOM: "There is forgiveness with Thee." "With Thee." 1. Hearest thou this, dear heart? Thou art shrinking from thy God; thou art anxious to run away from Him; that is where the forgiveness is, with God. Where the offence went, from that very place the forgiveness comes. 2. God has it in His immediate gift—waiting for thee. 3. And if it be with God, then there is a way for thee to get to it, for there is One come who stands between thee and God. There is a Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; but you do not need a mediator between Christ and yourself, you can come to Him just as you are.

IV. A DESIGN OF LOVE. "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Do you not see how it is that men fear the Lord because He forgives their sins? 1. It must be so, because, first, if He did not forgive their sins, there would be nobody left to fear Him, for they would all die. If He were to deal with men after their sins, He must sweep the whole race of mankind off the face of the earth; but there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. 2. Next, if it were certain that God did not pardon sin, everybody would despair, and so again there would be nobody to fear Him, for a despairing heart grows hard like the nether millstone. Because they have no hope, men go on to sin worse and worse; but there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. A man who has been forgiven is afraid that he should go and sin again after such love and such mercy. He is melted down by the goodness of the Lord, he does not know what to make of it. For a time he can hardly believe that it is true. Look! it is a singular way to come to fear God; but believe that you are forgiven, prize your forgiveness, know that your sins are blotted out, cling to the Cross, and so all that sweet fear of God, by which is meant the whole of piety, will abound in your soul. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Forgiveness of sin:—I. ONLY GOD CAN RELEASE A GUILTY CONSCIENCE; only He can speak peace to a soul in distress. This ought to comfort us, that we have to do with a forgiving God (Neh. ix. 31). There is none like to Him, to whom it is natural to remit and forgive sin. It is His name (Exod. xxxiv. 6): "Forgiving iniquities, transgressions, and sins," all manner of sins; sins against knowledge and against conscience; with Him is plentiful forgiveness. II. AS GOD ONLY FORGIVES SIN, SO HE EVER FORGIVES SIN. It is always His nature, as the fire always burns; as He is Jehovah, He is merciful. Christ is "the Lamb of God," that doth take away the sins of the world. It is a perpetual act; as we say the sun doth shine, the spring doth run. He is (Zech. xiii. 1), that "fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness." Mercy is His nature, and forgiveness is an effect of His mercy. III. GOD'S MERCY IS FREE, AND FROM HIMSELF. Though in us is sin and iniquity, yet in Thee is mercy; and therefore God saith (Ezek. xxxvi. 22). Yet must not this be understood so as if it were freely and only from God the Father, excluding Christ. But therefore it is, in that we shall stand in need of no satisfactory merits of our own. IV. THE BEST CHRISTIAN AND MOST GRACIOUS MAN ALIVE NEEDS FORGIVENESS OF HIS SINS; for where the conscience is enlightened it will discover what corruption it

finds, and so the necessity of being delivered. We must daily pray, "Forgive us our sins," yea, the best of the disciples must do it. If we come not with this petition, "our sins are written with a pen of iron, and with the claw of an adamant" (Job xix. 24). V. THIS MERCY AND FORGIVENESS IS GENERAL TO ALL THAT CAST THEMSELVES ON HIS FREE MERCY. It is Satan's subtlety to persuade us at the first that sin is nothing; but when it is committed, and cannot be recalled, then he tells us it is greater than can be pardoned. No; the Gospel is the power of God to salvation to all that do believe. Let none despair. It is a greater sin than the former. He pardons all persons: Manasses the sorcerer, Cornelius, Zaccheus, persecuting Paul. The parable of the lost sheep, the lost groat, the prodigal son, testifies it. God offers it freely, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Jer. xxvii. 13). He complains when it is neglected: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you together!" (Matt. xxiii. 37). "He threatens" because men will not hear, and "He pardons all sins." There is no disease above the skill of this Physician. He healeth all thy sins and all thy infirmities (Ps. ciii. 1-3). (*R. Sibbes.*) *Fear, the fruit of Divine forgiveness*:—"That Thou mayest be feared." How does that follow? There is forgiveness with Thee! a blessed truth that! I. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING PECULIAR ABOUT GOD'S FORGIVENESS THAT IT LEADS TO FEAR. Had my text in connection with God introduced scenes of terror—the great white throne; the books of judgment; the falling heavens; the dying sun; the departing earth; the pit; the smoke of torment; the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched—all hearts would have responded like an echo to the text, and this question had trembled on our lips, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy." But this is not the way. And how is it, that while the parents who constantly forgive are not feared, God, with whom is forgiveness, is? Why is it that forgiveness does not in His case, as in theirs, breed insolent presumption? II. LET ME EXPLAIN THOSE PECULIAR CHARACTERS IN THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD WHICH BREED FEAR, NOT PRESUMPTION, IN THE FORGIVEN. 1. The manner of the forgiveness sets forth the holiness of God and the evils of sin in the strongest light. Turn to the Cross of Calvary, to that august and awful spectacle on which angels, suspending their songs, are gazing in silent wonder. By that bloody tree, under that frowning sky, the earth trembling beneath our feet and the sun darkened above our heads, does sin seem a light and little thing? 2. The manner of forgiveness sets forth not only God's hatred of sin, but His love to sinners in the strongest light. It is hard to say whether it most illustrates His hatred of our sins or His love of ourselves. It costs man nothing to forgive, but it cost God His Son. I cannot fathom, and I dare not fancy the feelings of the eternal Father, when He saw the Son whom He loved with infinite affection spit upon, scourged, reviled, bleeding, dying on the accursed tree. But how must He have loved you for whom He gave a Son so loved! And how will the love this breeds in you make you fear to dishonour or displease One who has so loved you—securing your forgiveness on such an immovable foundation and at so great a price. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Forgiveness and fear*:—1. The text is true to human nature because, in all strong characters, whether high or low, despair that is blank and absolute does not excite fear, but stuns and paralyzes it. In Scott's tale, the desperado dies believing nothing, hoping nothing, and also fearing nothing. Religious despair is reckless. "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared;" for while man utterly hopeless can attain to a gigantic and almost sublime defiance, yet brave men who set their teeth to die, and would have perished with indomitable valour, have wept like children when the unhopd-for deliverance came. So that fear is, after all, the dusky shadow of hope, lengthening, no doubt, like other shadows, as the sun withdraws, but vanishing, like them, when the darkness is complete. 2. The text has also much to tell us about the nature of the forgiveness of God. So far is the forgiveness of God from any carelessness about the moral law, that He once proclaimed Himself, in the same sentence, as forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet by no means clearing the guilty. And again, "Thou, Lord, art merciful, for Thou rewardest every man according to his work." For, indeed, no act was ever done which left the doer exactly as it found him. Just as the Church can never in this life return to Eden and its fruit-groves, though her pilgrimage in the desert may lead her to the splendours of the New Jerusalem; so it is with each individual soul. The mercy of God may bring us to a better place than that which we relinquish, but to the place we forfeit we never may return again. And yet, O unhappy man,

it is because there is forgiveness with God, and because He does not cease to care for your sinful soul, that He thus disquiets you. Go down upon your knees, and thank Him that He lets no soul shrivel and dry up without strong pains; thank Him for this noble misery, which forbids you to grow base tamely, which makes it the true penalty of being knavish, not that other men suspect you to be a knave, but that, deep within, the clear, strong voice of your own conscience calls you so. "Thou, Lord, art merciful, for Thou rewardest every man according to his work." For now observe that the corrosive pains of remorse are capable of being transformed into the humbling, but sweet and infinitely wholesome sorrows of penitence and restoration. (C. A. Chadwick, D.D.)

Vers. 5, 6. **I wait for the Lord.**—*Waiting, hoping, watching.*—**I. WAITING.**

1. This is the constant posture of all the saints of God. Fancy not that in heaven they have no emotion but that of joy; we know that all their emotions are joyous, but among them is this one,—that they, too, are waiting until the Lord shall again manifest Himself, for, in the day of His appearing, those disembodied spirits shall put on their resurrection bodies. 2. The children of God, on earth, are frequently in the posture of waiting as individuals. Do you not wait to be able to serve God better? Are not some of you waiting to have your tongues unloosed,—waiting to have your hearts enlarged,—waiting for better opportunities of doing God's work, or for more grace to use the opportunities you have,—and waiting for the Divine seal upon the efforts which you have put forth? I know that is so; and if we could get all that, we should still be waiting,—waiting to see all our families saved,—waiting to see all our neighbours saved. 3. It is a very blessed posture, for waiting tries faith, and that is a good thing, because faith grows by trial. Waiting exercises patience, and that is also a good thing, for patience is one of the choice gifts of God. Waiting endears every blessing when it comes; and thus we get two joys,—the joy of waiting for the joy, as well as the joy of enjoying the joy when it comes. **II. HOPEING.** 1. Hope is the reason for waiting. 2. Hope is the strength of waiting. 3. Hope is the sweetener of waiting. But make sure that your hope is a good hope, that it is a well-founded hope, that it is a happy hope, that it is a hope that "maketh not ashamed," that it is a hope that fixes itself on Christ alone; for if you have not that hope, you will not wait; and if you do not wait, you will not receive. It is the waiting soul that gets the blessing. **III. WATCHING.** He that waits, and he that hopes, learns to watch. First notice the figure here used, and then observe that the figure is exceeded: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." 1. First, what is the figure here used? With steady and weary tramp, the watchman has gone from one tower to another speaking to his brother sentinel as he has met him, keeping to his beat all through the dreary, cold, rainy, windy night; and he says to himself, "I wish it were morning." As he exchanges the watchword with his companion, he says, "I wish it were morning. My eyelids are heavy; my head begins to ache with this constant watching for the enemy; I wish it were morning." Have you never been in that posture? 2. But the figure is exceeded by the fact, for the text says, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." We have been watching longer than they who guard the city towers. The sentinel has only a few hours' night-watch; but some of us have been watching for these thirty years, some of you for these fifty years; ah, some of you for sixty years! I do not wonder that you have a stronger desire for the morning than they have who have only watched for one night. Besides, you expect so much more than they do, for when the day comes, what does it bring to them? A little ease for the sentinel, a little rest for the nurse; but they will have to go back to the nursing or the watching as soon as the shades of night return. You and I are waiting for a daylight that will bring us endless rest and perfect joy; well may we watch more than they that watch for the morning, for theirs is but the morning of a day, but ours is the morning of an eternity which shall know no end. They do but watch for the sun with his passing beams; we watch for the Sun of Righteousness whose glory makes heaven itself. Well may we grow eager when we think of what is yet to be revealed in us. Well may our hunger increase as we think of the sweets that are reserved for us. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The quiet life in its dependence.*—There is a true dependence and a false dependence. The one is the fatalistic faith of the Arabs and those Easterns who have become stolid in character, and who denude death of its horrors, to some extent, by the idea of

fate. But faith and fate are different things. There always runs through the Psalms the golden thread of the personality of God. True dependence is in a person, a living God, upon whom weariness can lean, and in whom weakness is made strong. I. TRUE DEPENDENCE IS RESTFUL IN GOD. There are two beings here—God and the soul. If I am to depend upon God, I must look within upon my own life and see whether I so live that I can fairly lean on the great Father and depend upon Him. It is here that the beautiful question of a child's relationship to the Father comes in. May a wicked man say, "I depend upon God; He will bring all things right"? Look at this matter fairly. Is our dependence such as ought to characterize one who seeks the help and favour of God? Are our objects His objects? Are our aims His aims? Is the life we are living only an edifice to worldly ambition, or is it a temple fitted for the skies? I am to wait for the Lord. But while I am waiting, what am I? Is it the dependence of a child, seeking to do God's will; looking thoughtfully around to know how the life may glorify Him? It is waiting that is so difficult. But in our hours of waiting, painful as I deem them to be, God comes very near to us. We pray more at such times. I think that these long trials make the hungry eyes look longingly over the sea to catch sight of the sails of the vessel in which God's angels are coming! I think the long night makes us hopeful for the dawn of the day. I think that whilst we wait, we learn more of that purifying consciousness of dependence that slays our pride, and feeds our humility. There is much that is disciplinary in this, "I wait for the Lord." II. TRUE DEPENDENCE IS WATCHFUL. In this world, when we are dependent upon anything, we always get ready. If houses of business think there is to be a spring trade in something that appertains to artistic beauty or modes of dress, and men are dependent upon this for revival of trade, they watch for every sign of plenty. They can do nothing until the "wave" comes. But the "wave" would be no use to them if they had not stocked their warehouses. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning." You like to be watched for. You like the little children in the summer-time to say, "Father is coming." The fisherman likes to see his wife and daughter on that old pier watching for him. God likes us to watch for Him. III. TRUE DEPENDENCE IS HOPEFUL. "In His Word do I hope;" for "God is not a man that He should lie, or the Son of man that He should repent." And in that Word the true believer does hope continually. It is not the testimony of the past only, it is the experience of the children of God to-day, that the promises—and they are greater in number than the stars—all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen. IV. TRUE DEPENDENCE IS COMPLETE. "He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." I like to follow that thought out, and to feel that quiet dependence upon God is personal in regard to one's own life of sin and transgression. I like to follow it out in regard to one's family life, and to feel how God will work if we only trust Him. (W. M. Statham.) *Waiting*.—I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S WAITING. He waits for the development of God's purposes, for the accomplishment of God's will, for the coming of the Lord to his soul, in all the fulness of His grace to scatter the clouds of ignorance, to overpower the strength of temptation, to silence the upbraidings of conscience, to purge his soul of corruption, to confirm his faith and holy resolutions, and so to deliver him from the dangers of sin, the sharp pang of sorrow, and the misgivings of unbelief. II. THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S WAITING. 1. Patience. To wait for the Lord is to rest in Him, to abide in Him. 2. But this patience is not a mere passive submission, as the slave bows his head under the yoke he cannot throw off. All the active qualities of the Christian life are associated with that waiting for the Lord, which the spirit of patience invests with peace. 3. While he waits for the Lord, he does so with an earnest expectation and desire. 4. With loins girt and lamps burning. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT BY WHICH THE SPIRIT OF WAITING IS SUSTAINED. The faith of man is built upon the faithfulness of God. There is a promise for every need, and certainty in every promise. (A. J. Maclean, M.A.) *The soul waiting for God*.—I. BY WHOM CAN THIS LANGUAGE BE APPROPRIATED? 1. By the penitent. 2. By the backslider. 3. By the afflicted Christian. 4. By the Christian about to die. As the long absent child, arrived at the door of his father's house, pants for admittance there, so does the soul of the believer, on the threshold of eternity, wait for its God. II. ON WHAT GROUND MAY THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT BE APPROPRIATED WITH CONFIDENT EXPECTATION. 1. "The Word of the Lord," it should never be forgotten, "is a tried Word." It has cheered the gloomy, and strengthened the feeble, and

animated the dying. 2. The extent of a Christian's privileges no mind can embrace. Take him at his worst state, in the difficulties of his first approach to God; in subsequent darkness; or in death; having still an interest in the promises of God, he claims an inheritance which monarchs might envy, and which angels delight to share. (*O. A. Jeary.*) *The estate and disposition of the holy man after his prayer*:—Though he had formerly sense of mercy and pardon, yet he waits for more full and sweet apprehension thereof. In them we may observe, first, though God be exceeding gracious, yet there is matter of waiting, so long as we live here on earth, for He gives not all the fulness of His blessing at once. Though He may give taste of pardon of sin in present, yet not presently deliverance out of danger (Prov. iv. 18). There is no day that is perfected in an instant; and the reasons hereof may be—1. To force us to search our souls, whether we be fit for blessing; whether we be thoroughly humbled, and have thoroughly repented or not. Thus dealt he with Jonas, and thus with the children of Israel for Achan's cause. 2. It may be a means to stir us up to more earnestness in seeking: to make us like the woman of Canaan, more earnest the more she was repelled. 3. He gives us occasion of waiting, to show the truth and soundness of His graces in us; otherwise should we have no means to try how the grace in us would serve us in time of need. 4. Hereby God doth endear those favours that we want, that it may come the more welcome to us, and we be the more thankful for it. Thus God dealt with this holy man; and thus doth He with His Church. For while we live here we are always children of hope; not miserable, because we have a sweet taste of what we hope for, and not perfectly happy, because we want fulness. Before Christ, they hoped for His coming in the flesh; since Christ, we look for His "second coming in glory"; in grace we look for glory; and when our souls are in glory, they look for the redemption of the bodies, and for the day of restoring of all things. 5. This should whet in us our desires and prayers for our heavenly estate; and not make our heaven here on earth, but desire earnestly the full harvest, by considering how excellent the first-fruits of glory in this life are; and with the creature (Rom. viii. 19), "wait, and expect, and long, and groan for the time of the dissolution of all things"; and make this a note to discern of our estate; for it is a certain infallible token of a good frame of spirit in us, if we can long for that better life in the fulness that we have here; that we can desire to be with Christ. Furthermore, note this as a difference between the estates of the wicked and the godly. The wicked must look for worse and worse continually. His best is here, and while he hath this world; but the godly, their worst is here, their best is to come. (*R. Sibbes.*)

Ver. 6. More than they that watch for the morning.—*The Christian watchman*:—I. **THIS WORLD IS A NIGHT.** The morning presupposes the night, and this world most properly is compared to a long winter's night which is very uncomfortable. The night also is cold, wanting the sun which warmeth the earth; so is the world a shadow of death, a dark dungeon. II. **CHRISTIANS ARE WATCHMEN.** Every particular Christian ought to be a watchman; for he hath enemies both spiritual and corporal, continually assailing him, to destroy both his soul and his body, for which cause our Saviour often exhorted his hearers to watch and pray, and by nature we fall asleep, as the apostles did in the garden, and Jonas in the ship. Therefore it is good we should be careful to watch over our ways. The watch looks to the enemy without, but we have more need to watch over our domestic and inward enemies, lest they surprise us, even our lusts and concupiscences, our pride, our avarice, our malice, all which are like to overthrow our soul. Let us, therefore, watch, lest we be surprised. III. **COMFORT AND LIGHT MUST COME FROM ABOVE.** The watchman waiteth for the day, and he is very glad when he seeth it break, for then he knoweth the sun is rising upon the earth, which will enlighten all the world. No comfort is to be found on earth for a Christian soul in this dark night; we must look to the day dawning, when Christ in that day of His glorious appearing shall come to deliver His Church from all miseries: which all Christians should earnestly attend, and fervently pray with the spouse, Come, Lord Jesus. The watchman looketh about to see the sun spread out his beams; he knoweth that light doth not come from below. We should turn our eyes from the world, because here is no comfort, and look unto Christ Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father, from whom only we may expect a comfortable deliverance out of all our miseries. IV. **THE LIGHT COMETH IN THE MORNING.** Before break of day is greatest darkness, and then the sun riseth, and by his beams

expelleth the same; the light cometh not till the morning. The apostles rowed all night, till they were become weary, and out of all hope, and then Christ came in the fourth watch and relieved them, being then in a most desperate case. So the Lord, although he tarrieth to let us see our own weakness, yet no doubt He will come: He dealt thus with Jacob, he wrestled all night with him till the break of day, and then blessed him; David, after he was long pursued and persecuted by Saul, yet at last got rest and ease. The Jews were nearly destroyed by their enemies, but God raised up saviours to defend them. Despair not, then, and disquiet not yourselves; be not discouraged, howsoever ye see the Church, which is, as the disciples' boat, tossed to and fro by the waves of persecuting tyrants. Look to heaven, for the day of her deliverance is at hand; yea, that everlasting deliverance, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise and shine on her for ever. (*A. Symson.*) *The hope of the good in sorrow*.—I. THE OBJECT OF HIS HOPE IN HIS SORROW—"I wait for the Lord." This implies two things.—1. A belief that the Lord would appear for him. He seemed as if He was hidden from him now. The clouds of his sorrow concealed Him, as the mists of the earth conceal the sun, but he knew that He would come, and he waited. 2. A belief that at His appearance he should have relief. He would not wait if he felt there would come no deliverance, still less if he felt that his sorrows would be aggravated by the event. God will come to deliver His people out of their sorrows. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc. II. THE GROUND OF HIS HOPE IN HIS SORROW. "In His Word do I hope." 1. His Word promises deliverance to the good in sorrow. 2. His Word is infallibly true. What He has promised must be fulfilled. III. THE EARNESTNESS OF HIS HOPE IN HIS SORROW. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more," etc. This implies.—1. The intensity of his distress. His soul is in the midnight of sadness, and he looks with stronger solicitude for relief than they that watch for the morning. In a suffering world there are thousands every night who watch earnestly for the morning. The man tossed on the bed of agony watches for the morning; the prisoner in his cell watches for the morning; the mariner in the storm watches for the morning; the general who has to decide on the coming day the destiny of his campaign, watches for the morning. None, however, watch more anxiously for the morning than the soul in anguish watches for its God. 2. The certainty of his deliverance. The night always appears long to the sufferer; still the morning comes at last. The sun comes mounting the steeps of heaven, chasing the darkness away, brightening the landscape, and pouring gladness into the world. Even so deliverance will come to the good. (*Homilist.*) *Approach of dawn*.—Day will soon break to those who long for it in the gloom or shadows of night. God's world never stands still. From the creation, when "the evening and the morning were the first day," light has followed darkness, and dawn has come from dusk. This is a thought for every weary soul to whom it seems as if daylight would never come. If there is no dawn here, there is dawn not far ahead, and we shall see it before long.

"Out of the darkness of night
The world rolls into light;
It is daybreak everywhere."

(*Great Thoughts.*)

Watching for the morning.—In the year 1830, on the night preceding the 1st of August, the day the slaves in our West Indian colonies were to come into possession of the freedom promised them, many of them, we are told, never went to bed at all. Thousands and tens of thousands of them assembled in their places of worship, engaging in devotional duties, and singing praises to God, waiting for the first streak of the light of the morning of that day on which they were to be made free. Some of their number were sent to the hills, from which they might obtain the first view of the coming day, and by a signal intimate to their brethren down in the valley the dawn of the day that was to make them men, and no longer, as they had hitherto been, mere goods and chattels—men with souls that God had created to live for ever. How eagerly must these men have watched for the morning. (*F. W. Aveling.*)

Ver. 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord*.—*Israel's hope*; or, the centre of the target. When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble, and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass, in order that, if we

are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. The other day you saw a man blind, begging in the street, and now he has an eye bright as that which sparkles on the face of a gazelle, and you cry in astonishment—"Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes; for I may be in a like case, and I should be glad to know where to go?" Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. This psalm is called "De Profundis"; its teaching is not only profound, but practical. I. In obtaining Gospel blessings THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS, and not towards the blessings themselves. 1. This is the most natural order which faith can follow. Look first to the Giver, and then to the gift. Look for the Helper, and then for the help. 2. This is the necessary order—first to Christ, and then to His yoke, and to His peace. 3. It is also the easiest order. Do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but in Jesus the Sacrifice and Saviour, who has once for all appeared to put away sin. By looking to Him you will be saved; and what is easier than to look? 4. I believe that, in every case wherein the soul finds peace, this is the actual order. We may go about after pardon, renewal, and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto Him and are lightened, and not by any other means. II. ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. As the stars called "the Pointers" always point to the pole-star, so must our faith ever look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. I would do nothing without Jesus. I would not even wish to repent except my eye were upon the Cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my all. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it be mercy received through Jesus, for He alone is full of grace, and of His fulness must we receive. Mercy flows through Christ alone. So is it with "plenteous redemption." What a grand utterance that is—"plenteous redemption"! Is there not rare music in the sound! It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. In Christ only can you find this. "With Him is plenteous redemption." Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and person of the Son of God. "Plenteous redemption." Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters. (C. H. Spurgeon.) With Him is plenteous redemption.—Plenteous redemption:—As the mighty ocean, while, from the beginning of the world, it has supplied rain and dew to water the hills and vales, and continents and islands, is undiminished; as the light of the sun, though for thousands of ages it has brightened the planets, and the broad expanse of heaven, still pours its dazzling radiance on countless worlds, so with the benefits of the Saviour's death. I. THIS REDEMPTION IS AMPLE AND UNLIMITED. St. Paul was certainly not deceiving Christians when he taught them to pray for "all men" (1 Tim. ii. 1), which would be mere mockery, if all might not come to a knowledge of the truth. The Prayer Book has not been leading us astray when it has made us say so many times, and with such earnestness of heart, "That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men." If Christ died only for the "elect," where would be the propriety of such petitions? II. IT CANNOT BE EXHAUSTED, AND PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR EACH ONE OF US. One of the lay preachers who accomplished so much good in Scotland amplified and re-echoed the sentiment—"It was not a live lamb that was tied to the door-posts of the Israelites in Egypt; only its blood was sprinkled over them. It is not the life of Christ that saves, nor imitations of His life; but His death, His blood." (J. N. Norton.) Plenteous redemption:—I. REDEMPTION implies captivity to the penalty and power of sin; release into safety and liberty; and the ransom of the obedience and suffering of Jesus. Faith secures release by appropriating the work of Christ, which abolishes penalty, and the work of the Holy Spirit, which regenerates and so changes the whole nature as to deliver from penalty. II. THIS REDEMPTION IS PLENTEOUS. 1. In the breadth of forgiveness, covering all offenders and offences, and removing them out of the sight of God. 2. In covering the breadth of man's need, Christ saves to the uttermost (Heb. vii. 25). Mind, heart, conscience, and will all purged by the power of redeeming blood. 3. In the freedom and fulness of infinite grace such a price—such love—such provision even for non-partakers. III. IT IS WITH HIM. God the Father devised, the Son executes, the Spirit applies the scheme. No hope or help in man for himself or fellow-man. (Homiletic Review.) Plenteous

redemption:—"Redemption" is a word which has gladdened many ears, when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one, and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow-Christian subjects were caught by corsairs, and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be redemption. His cruel master, who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him; but a rumour came, that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow-countrymen; that the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the Moors might return to their homes. Truly I can suppose the hours would run happily along, and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged, when once that word "redemption" had sounded in their ears. So with our fellow-subjects and our fellow-men, who once were slaves in our West Indian settlements. We can well conceive that to their lips the word redemption must have been a very pleasing song. O there are many sonnets in that one word, "redemption"! Now, ye who have sold for nought your glorious heritage; ye who have been carried bondslaves into Satan's dominion; ye who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them; ye who have smarted beneath the lash of the law; what the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits, and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—"plenteous redemption." I. *REDEMPTION*. What has Christ redeemed? His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things; He has redeemed the souls of His people; He has redeemed the bodies of His people; He has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam; He has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which He will have the world at last. "The whole creation," said Paul, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"; waiting for what? "waiting for the redemption"; and by the redemption I understand that this world shall be washed of all her sin; her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away, and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from His mind. This Christ has redeemed; this, Christ shall, and most assuredly must, have. II. *PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION*. 1. It is "plenteous" when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. 2. It is "plenteous," again, if we consider the sins of all who are redeemed. 3. Remember, again, that this "plenteous redemption" is plenteous because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite; but this atonement is quite so. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 8. He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.—*Sin shall be overthrown*:—Once, in the theological seminary, Dr. Robinson burst out before the class and said, "Gentlemen, drive these four stakes down—sin is a tremendous evil; God is not the author of sin; God is not impotent before sin, but will control it; God gives to every man a power sufficient for his salvation." That is a good stake to drive down in this strange world—"God is not impotent before evil, but will control it!" Out of the clouds and darkness shall shine forth the righteousness and judgment which are the habitation of God's throne. He shall cause the wrath of man to praise Him; the remainder He shall restrain. Satan himself shall surely be seen to be but the hewer of wood and the drawer of water for the sublime temple of the Divine purpose. God shall bruise Satan. How evidently this shines forth in the cross and death of our Lord and Saviour! Satan's apparent triumph there was his worst defeat. (W. Hoyt, D.D.)

PSALM CXXXI.

VERS. 1-3. Lord, my heart is not haughty.—*The negative and positive excellencies of true religion*:—I. *NEGATIVE*. 1. Freedom from superciliousness. 2. Freedom from restlessness. 3. Freedom from worldliness. II. *POSITIVE*. 1. To have the soul fixed on the supremely desirable for ever. 2. To have the soul

fixed on the attainable for ever. Is the Lord desirable? Aye, supremely so. Is He attainable? Undoubtedly. He comes within the reach of all that hunger and thirst after Him. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *The humble and tranquil mind:*—In this brief psalm there are three different states of mind described. The first is humility: the psalmist disclaims for himself all pride and ambition (ver. 1). The second is tranquillity. The psalmist claimed for himself that he had attained to complete spiritual quiet, to perfect rest of heart (ver. 2). And the last state of mind is that of immortal hopefulness, sustained in vigour by the thought of the wisdom and goodness of the Lord (ver. 3). The psalmist claims for himself that he has attained that which in other psalms he longed for, and prayed for, and chided himself because he could not get. In another psalm he exhorts himself: "Rest in the Lord," etc. In another he chides his wandering spirit for restlessness, and says, "Return unto thy rest," etc. And what in other psalms he strives after and prays for, in this psalm he has attained. Here is the fulfilment of the promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." Let us now confine ourselves to his spiritual quietude; for, as we need the example of his lowliness to rebuke our pride, so we need his quiet to rebuke our disquiet and unrest. We have to do with three portions of time—the past, the present, and the future; with three sources of disquiet—the retrospect of sins past, the sins of the present, and the gloomy anticipations of the future. There is in every man's heart a silent fountain of disquiet and unrest. Sometimes the hand of remorse, sometimes the hand of dissatisfaction, and sometimes the hand of foreboding comes, and the fountain is opened and fills the spirit with its bitter waters. Nor is there any guarantee for our spiritual quiet, till we have found something to master remorse for the past, dissatisfaction with the present, and foreboding of evil for the future. First, we must get peace of conscience, an assurance of God's forgiving love. I believe that Christ bare my sins on the tree; when I rest on that fact my assurance of perfect and everlasting forgiveness, it is then that I am sprinkled with the blood of Christ and washed in the fountain. It is only this that we can rest on, only this that will smooth and silence our spirits. For the dissatisfaction that arises from the present, there is one remedy—to cultivate such a faith in the wisdom and goodness of God's providence as will make our submission to Him in affliction cheerful and comparatively easy. Meet all the calamities that come upon you in a right spirit, and say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight"; thus the troubled spirit is smoothed and silenced. Those fears that come from the anticipation of the future—how are they to be lulled? By cultivating the same faith in God. God is love to-day. God will be love to-morrow, and for evermore. God is wisdom to-day. He will be wisdom to-morrow, and the next day, and for evermore. God is king to-day, and God will be king to-morrow, and for ever. (*C. Vince.*) *Lowliness and meekness:*—The compiler of the Songs of Degrees saw a connection between this psalm of David and the anonymous hymn preceding; for each of them contains the exhortation, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." He seems to have regarded that, and may himself have composed it, as a fit introduction to the present. The same spirit of patient trust and love breathes in them both; but in David's the situation appears to be more happy. Different stages in the career of the son of Jesse are pointed out as the occasion of the psalm. One is when Saul and his servants treated him as an aspirant to the crown. Not so, he seems here to say. The Lord knows that I am not traitorous and ambitious. If I fight, it is in self-defence, not for self-exaltation; and I would be content never to war at all. I am in the hands of Providence. Another time in his life selected, with some countenance in the fact that it is the theme of the next psalm, is when he brought up the ark to the new sanctuary on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 21, 22). Equally well the psalm may agree with other situations in his history. Disclaiming pride, showing humility, and recommending hope in the Lord, it is a permanent song of Israel, suitable for all seasons. From the point of view of those for whom the Songs of Ascents were collected, a meaning of this psalm seems to be that, though brought back to their own land, yet the Israelites must not be a haughty and defiant people. Pride is a disease of the heart. David offers a sound heart to the Lord. "Lord, my heart is not haughty. In the same way he submits himself to the Physician in Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. It is like Peter's appeal (John xxi. 17). Lowliness is recommended throughout the Bible in statements, precepts, and examples; and passages which show the danger of pride proclaim the blessedness of humility. Without it nothing is pleasing to God. Our incarnate Lord

taught it by example, symbol, and speech (Matt. xviii. 1-6; Mark x. 13-16). Childlikeness is not childishness, but the halo of the saint, the likeness of the angel, the mind that was in Christ. A subdued and quiet spirit is serenity at home, equanimity in business, wisdom in learning, God's pursuing smile. The character of the weaned child before the Father of spirits should be retained in youth, through manhood, and into age, growing more and more in heavenly promise. Why should not the watchful soul, ransomed by the Son, endued with the Spirit, loved by the Father, be childlike to the end? O Wisdom of God, our Pattern and Saviour, whose love surpasses that of women, and on whom we more depend than the weaned child on his mother, we would listen to Thy guiding voice, cling to Thee with even and peaceful hearts, and be little children in Thy protecting arms (Ps. xviii. 27; li. 17; cxxxviii. 6; Prov. xi. 2; xvi. 19; xviii. 12; xxii. 4; Isa. lvii. 15; Micah vi. 8; Matt. xi. 29; xxiii. 12; Luke xviii. 14; Rom. xii. 3, 10, 16; Eph. iv. 2; Phil. ii. 8; Col. iii. 12; James iv. 10; 1 Peter v. 5). (E. J. Robinson.)

Nor mine eyes lofty.—*Pride shown by the eye.*—Pride has its seat in the heart; but its principal expression is in the eye. The eye is the mirror of the soul; and from it mental and moral characteristics may be ascertained, with no small degree of precision. What a world of meaning is sometimes concentrated in a single glance! But of all the passions, pride is most clearly revealed in the eyes. There can scarcely be a mistake here. We are all familiar with a class of phrases which run in pairs. We speak of sin and misery; holiness and happiness; peace and prosperity; war and desolation. Among these may be numbered the proud heart and the haughty look. A proud look is one of the seven things which are an abomination unto the Lord. It is said of Him, "Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks." And hence David makes the acknowledgment: Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that pride has no existence in my heart. Thou knowest that no pride flashes forth from mine eyes. (N. McMichael.)

Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.—*Divine mysteries to be studied with humility.*—1. The deep things of God should be approached by us with all lowliness of heart; and they should be studied, as it were, on our knees. There are mysteries in the Divine nature which cannot be understood (Job xi. 7). An inscrutable darkness rests on all those points where the Divine and the human elements come into contact. The purpose or the foreknowledge of God: how can it be reconciled with our responsibility? How can the Eternal Spirit touch the springs of the heart, and move them at His pleasure, without destroying the moral freedom? How can the Divine and the human natures meet together without confusion, so as to form the one person of our adorable Redeemer? A loving humility is of more value here than theological science. If we would understand Divine things we must first love them, and place ourselves under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. One cannot admire enough the prayer of Anselm, a profound divine of our own country, in the eleventh century. "I do not seek, O Lord, to penetrate Thy depths. I by no means think my intellect equal to them: but I long to understand in some degree Thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe; but I believe, that I may understand." 2. Meanwhile, amidst this partial darkness, there are two topics of consolation. (1) On all matters connected with our salvation, whatever difficulties may exist in theory, there are none in practice. (2) What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. (N. McMichael.)

The responsibility of thinking.—The text carries us into the region of thought. It recognizes the responsibility of thinking. It presupposes the possibility of choosing and refusing in the entertainment of subjects. It implies that there are wholesome topics of thought and unwholesome; and that a man is just as much bound to discriminate in the things he thinks of as in the employment of his hours, the formation of his habits, or the selection of his friends. Most men know perfectly well that they can control thought—that they can make "the porter watch" the comings in as well as the goings out—the entrances of thought as well as the exits of action. But the remarkable thing in the text is the enlargement of the responsibility of this self-control from the nature and quality, to the scale and size, of the thoughts. We can well believe that the holy and devout psalmist did not suffer his heart to entertain licentious and lascivious thoughts—that he did not compose these sweet songs, or wend his way towards Zion, with the love of sin allowed in him, or with the power of sin reigning. He speaks not of low but of high thoughts—not of grovelling but of soaring imaginations—as the disallowed and discountenanced

innates. And there can be no doubt that there is a danger in this direction. There are not only evil desires, sinful lustings, to make frightful havoc of the life and of the soul; there are also speculations and ravings of thought, which give no other warning of their nature than this, that they belong to districts and regions beyond and above us—that they are fatal to the quietness and the silence of the spirit—that they cannot be entertained without reawakening those restless and unsatisfied yearnings which were just beginning to still themselves on the bosom of infinite love. Of this sort, sometimes, are the ambitions of this life. Ambition has a use as well as an abuse. St. Paul himself, who had counted all things loss, yet, thrice in his epistles, speaks of ambition as his life. We use ambition in our education. We waken up drowsy energies by proposing to them prizes of effort. We bid them even “strive for masteries.” Competition itself, though it be the near kinsman of that “emulation” which St. Paul puts among the works of the flesh, is yet enlisted among the soldiers of Jesus Christ, if so be it may subsume itself at last into an effort which desires no man’s crown. Nevertheless, we all feel that there is an ambition “which o’erleaps itself,” not more in the arrogance of its successes than in the extravagance of its expectations. There are men who would have been not only happier but greater if they had been less ambitious. There are men whose humbler efforts would at least have been respected, but whose more adventurous soarings have ended only in ridicule. That which is true in the ambitions of this life, whether professional or intellectual, is not less true in religion. It might seem that the psalmist wrote of this—it is for the sake of this, certainly, that we make his words our text to-day. They are exemplified within the Church, and without. They are exemplified in the treatment of Revelation—by believers, by doubters, by foes. The doctrine of the Trinity has been turned oftentimes, from a “mystery” in the Divine sense, into a “mystery” in the human. The soul should have calmed and hushed itself in that presence, as before the revelation of a Father, a Saviour, and a Comforter, not three Gods but one God—each Person necessary to the repose and to the activity, to the comfort and to the life, of every one of us, as we struggle along the path of difficulty into the clear light and into the perfect peace of a world in which God shall be all in all. Instead of this, speculation has been busy, and controversy has been busy, and logic has been busy, and rhetoric has been busy, and the whole matter has been referred and relegated from the tribunal of the soul to the tribunal of the intellect—theologians have exercised themselves in matters too wonderful for them—prayer has been intermitted for wrangling, and every nutritious particle has been extracted and exterminated out of the bread of life. It is impossible to live the life of this age and not to inquire. Close ear and eye—scepticism is in the air. It was always in books, now it is in society. But how shall a young man in such times, educated or uneducated, exercise that calming and hushing, that behaving and quieting which the text speaks of? Who shall prescribe the right to speculate, and the no right? Who shall lay down the conditions, present or retrospective, under which a rational being, ordained or unordained, shall be at liberty to exercise himself in great matters, too high for him or for any man? It cannot be done. We will not say that there is always a want of seriousness in the scepticism of to-day. None the less there may be many a grievous error, many a deep-lying fallacy, in the process of that search. I will name two. There are those who, as soon as a doubt enters, cease instantly to pray. They count it an insincerity to call upon Him in whom they are not certain that they shall always continue to believe. If there be a word of truth in the Gospel, the way of faith is the way of prayer, and the man who has ceased to call upon the God of his life is no longer so much as an inquirer whether that God has spoken to us in His Son. Let the cry go forth even into the darkness—it shall “calm and hush,” it shall “behave and quiet” the soul that would inquire, the soul that would know. “They worshipped” although—yea, “they worshipped” because—“they doubted!” Yet one other thing. Many, when the faith is shaken, count it an insincerity to listen to any evidence but what they call the logical. They resent it as almost a fraud put upon them if any one offers the moral beauty of the Gospel, or the spiritual satisfaction to be found in it, or the cumulative force of recorded effects and consequences of believing, as furnishing, alone or altogether, any argument at all in belief of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. If mathematical demonstration is impossible, then, for them, it shall be impossible to believe. That conviction which the first Christian doubter made to hang upon the sight and upon the touch, they suspend upon the cogency of the Christian

syllogism as it stands for the nineteenth ago. We protest against this splitting and parcelling of the being. The man is one, and but one. Intellect, and heart, and conscience; the power to judge, the power to admire, the power to adore; the instinct of truth, the instinct of good, and the instinct of beauty—all these things must march as one towards the investigation of the Divine: the thing which we believe must be the satisfaction of them all, and each one must contribute its quota to the evidence, and its voice to the verdict. The counsel of the text is the counsel of wisdom, when it makes reverence, when it makes humility the condition of all knowledge that is worth the name. We may so educate and so discipline our own soul as that health shall be the reward. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Things too high for me:—It is something to know that there are such things. To know that well is to be wise. What is one of the secrets of power? It is to keep within your own ability; you can describe a circle six feet in circumference, but not seven feet. To know that is true wisdom. To know that I cannot write the "Iliad" saves me time; it amounts to a revelation; it guides, limits, chastens my ambition. To know that you are not a statesman is half the battle of life. God has not put the flame of statesmanship within you, nor the flame of poetry, nor the flame of music. It is when people are trying to be and to do what the Divine election never intended them to be or to do that they are foolish and weak, and that life ends in futility. To know this and to do it would remodel our whole life.

1. Who can understand the mysteries of Providence? They are too high for me. Here is a soul all purity, and yet God seems to frown upon that poor life more and more. That life has no opportunity, no home, no work, no joy, no song. Oh, it is sad! How is it? We cannot tell; we must wait; in centuries to come we shall know. But I have noticed that even such a soul complains less than the people who look upon it. The soul has its own inmost delights; it says—It is well; I must wait for the Lord patiently, and at last I will see why it was; meanwhile, I have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of: there is a general impression that I am forsaken, but in my soul I know that God is with me. This is a mystery of grace. God's children are not so forsaken as they sometimes appear to be; the Lord knoweth His own, and He will not deny His own autograph, His own seal of love.

2. Who can understand Providence itself? It is its own greatest mystery. There is a greater mystery than the mysteries of Providence, and that greater mystery is Providence itself. The greatest mystery is God. What is Providence? Shall we break up the word into provide-ance? "Provide"—it is the word of a housewife; provide—see for, prepare for, arrange for; they will be back presently from the plough, have the meal ready; from the school, be ready with the little feast; from abroad, have the welcome ready prepared. This is providing for, seeing for, seeing after, being eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. This is the mystery of the Divine rule. It is too high for me.

3. But need we go so far away as to speak of the mysteries of Providence and of Providence itself? There is a mystery quite as great, and that is me itself. Who am I? What? Whence come? What is this life, this palpitation, this perpetual wonder and mystery? I think, I pray, I disbelieve, I harden myself into distrust; I have said, in moments of madness, "There is no God." Why, I am a mystery myself; the *me* stands next to the God in mysteriousness. If men would heed this doctrine they would be quieted often. Why go out of themselves to find mystery? The greatest mystery is at home—your own soul. Understand man, if you would understand God. So then we are humbled down into little services, domestic ministries, fraternal action of sympathy and healing and assistance. Yes, that is so. We do not need our wings yet. There is no humiliation in growth. Let us realize this doctrine and be sober-minded. Let us do just what little we can do. Yet it is not little, but very much; for God directs it, God accepts it, man needs it; all love is a gift Divine.

4. Here is a lesson to those who have great spiritual ambitions; men who want to be great readers of Divine mysteries, of Providence, of the plans and purposes of God. The Voice says—By and by, in a century, in a millennium, thou shalt see God. This is a hidden hope; this is not a mere sentiment, it is an inspiration, a source of strength, a great confidence; hold it and be strong. And here is a lesson to those who want to push their inquiries too far here and now. There be those who say to the preacher, and the teacher, and the expositor—How so? Explain this; what about this mystery? What is the answer to this great question? The answer is—Wait: what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.

5. Here is a great lesson for all those of us who wish to live to-day,

simply, earnestly, usefully. A man may stretch himself so high to see things beyond the stars that he may fall over the next stumbling-block: it should be ours to look around us, and below us, and see what we can do that is useful. Do not be the great man, the grand, mysterious soul, the cloud-flier, the planet-discoverer and wanderer, but keep thee near the shore, and keep thee near the haunt of poverty, and the bed of pain, and the nursery of childhood, and the school where ignorance seeks to be taught; be faithful in few things, and God will make thee ruler over many things. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. As a child that is weaned of its mother.—*The weaned soul hoping in the Lord*:—In the same hour in which the soul of man is by grace weaned from itself and its own high thoughts, it begins to hope and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, for a man to have the Lord alone for his confidence seems, to the unrenewed mind, the highest presumption; to put a present, an immediate trust in the Lord for all the future, in time and in eternity, is thought to be unhallowed boldness, and not humility or weanedness of heart. The whole dealings of God with man bring us back to the ever memorable words of the Lord Jesus (*Matt. xi. 25, 26*). **I. THE FIRST WEANING OF THE SOUL THE GRAND EVENT OF A MAN'S HISTORY.** When God begins to deal with you in saving grace. He weans you from self, in its various forms, according to our Lord's teaching (*Matt. xvi. 24*). This self-denial includes weaning from the world, from your own will, from your own strength. **II. THE JOY IN THE LORD THAT SPRINGS UP IN EVERY WEANED SOUL.** The Lord is now your ransom, your righteousness, and the well of living joy within you. **III. THE DAILY WEANING OF THE SOUL THROUGH LIFE.** The soul has to be weaned from all that must be forsaken, from that which may be either granted or denied, and from its own wisdom and way in the kingdom of heaven on earth. **IV. THE EARNEST DESIRES AND THE FRUITFUL WORK OF EVERY WEANED SOUL.** 1. The weaning of the soul from self and from its own earthly affections neither stupefies the mind nor quenches the fire of all nobler desires. 2. The gracious weaning of the soul prepares and fits us for fruitful work. In grace, the helplessness of the child is combined with the strength and energy of the man. Except we receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, we cannot enter therein; yet it is the same kingdom of heaven that suffereth violence, and which the violent take by force. (*A. Moody Stuart, D.D.*) *The weaned child*:—An aged minister once made the confession to another concerning this passage—"I wish it were true of me; but I think I should have to make an alteration of one syllable, and then it would exactly describe me at times: 'My soul is even as a weaning rather than a weaned child,' for," said he, "with the infirmities of old age, I fear I get fretful and peevish and anxious, and, when the day is over, I do not feel that I have been in the calm, trustful frame I could desire." And we have often to make the same confession. We wish we were "as a weaned child," but then we are not. To the child weaning is one of its first troubles, and no doubt it is a terrible trouble to the poor little heart. But it gets over it somehow. It is a very happy condition of heart which is here indicated, and I desire to promote it in you. So—I. Let us think **WHAT THE PSALMIST MEANT BY IT.** Look at the context and you will see that he meant—1. That pride had been subdued in him. "Lord," he says, "my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty." We are all proud by nature. The Lord Mayor is not a bit prouder in his gold chain than the beggar in his rags. Great *I* grows without any watering, for the soil of nature is muddy, and the rush of pride takes to it mightily. You need never be troubled about a man's keeping up his opinion of himself; he will be pretty sure to do that. David could say, "My heart is not haughty." His brother Eliab said that he was proud when he went down to carry his father's present to his soldier brothers, but it was not so. Whatever faults he had, he certainly had not that of vanity. Now, it is a great blessing when the Spirit of God keeps us from being proud. After all, we are nobodies, and we have come of a line of nobodies. The proudest peer of the realm may trace his pedigree as far as ever he likes, but he ought to remember that, if his blood is blue, it must be very unhealthy to have such blood in one's veins. The common ruddy blood of the peasant is, after all, far healthier. 2. And next he tells us that he was not ambitious. "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters." He was a shepherd; he did not want to go and fight Goliath, and when he did he could say, "Is there not a cause?" Else he had kept in the background still. We shall never be as a weaned child if we have got high notions of what we ought to be, and

large desires for self. Baruch thought he was somebody. He had been writing the Word of the Lord, had he not? But the prophet said to him, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." We often seek after great approbation. And sometimes we are ambitious to do great things in the Church. The great destroyer of good works is the ambition to do great works. He is the best draughtsman, not who draws the largest but the most perfect circle. 3. He was not intrusive. "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." Many men vex themselves because they will do what David did not. They want to understand everything. Some want to shape the Scriptures to their creed, and they get a very nice square creed too, and trim the Bible most dexterously; it is wonderful how they do it; but I would rather have a crooked creed and a straight Bible, than I would try to twist the Bible round to what I believe. The same evil comes up when we want to know all the reasons of the Divine providence. Why this happened and why that. When we begin asking, Why? Why? Why?—what an endless task we have before us! Now, from the simile itself we gather that the condition of heart David spoke of was like one who was able to give up his natural food. What nature loves the soul gives up. And that he had conquered his desires. Paul had, for he had learnt in whatever state he was therewith to be content. And doubtless, also, therewithout. And that as the child depends upon its mother entirely, so he depended upon the Lord.

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS CONDITION. Desires will no longer worry you. You give your thoughts to something better than the things of earth. Note the psalm which follows this, for there David declares he will build for the Lord of Hosts. When you are free from fretting, worrying, and self-seeking, you are free to work for the Lord.

III. IS THIS STATE ATTAINABLE? Certainly. David said, "My soul is even as," etc. Not that he hoped it would be. What is the way to get it? The psalm tells us. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." "Easier said than done," says somebody. Yes, except by faith; but to faith it is easy enough. You unconverted, may the Lord make you first a child, and then "as a weaned child." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The nature and effects of a weaned disposition of soul:*—

I. FROM WHAT DOES GRACE WEAN THE SOUL? 1. From the dry breasts of the world (James i. 27; 1 John ii. 16). (1) From the profits of the world (Heb. xi. 26). (2) From the pleasures of the world. (3) From all worldly comforts whatsoever, making it take up its rest in God (Luke xiv. 6). 2. From the fountains of sin, so that it loathes that which it loved before.

II. HOW IS THE SOUL WEANED FROM THESE THINGS? 1. Grace lays gall and wormwood upon these breasts, and so embitters them to the soul that it is made willing to give over sucking them (Hos. ii. 6, 7). Now, there are two things that serve to embitter these breasts. (1) Continual disappointments from them. Though the man is always seeking satisfaction from them, he can never get it. Like the prodigal (Luke xv. 16). (2) Severe wounds arise from them. The man leans with great delight on the broken reed; and, ere he is aware, it pierceth through his hand. He sucks eagerly at the breast, and, instead of milk, wrings out blood. 2. The Lord fills the soul with better things (John iv. 14).

III. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF A WEANED DISPOSITION OF SOUL? 1. The weaned soul is a resigned soul. (1) To the will of God's commandments. (2) To the will of His providence. 2. The weaned soul is cheerful, and not fretful in its resignation. What God does is not only well done, but best done; so says the weaned soul. 3. The weaned soul stands on other grounds, when created comforts are with him, and even when created streams are running full: he draws his support in both cases from God as the fountain. 4. The weaned soul will stand without them when these are gone, for they were not the props on which his house rested. Such a soul can adopt the prayer of Habak. iii. 17, 18. 5. The weaned soul uses creative comforts passingly. They follow the directions of Paul (1 Cor. vii. 29–31). 6. The weaned soul casts itself upon the Lord, without carnal anxiety, as the weaned child depends on the mother's care (Phil. iv. 6). (T. Boston, D.D.) *Weanedness of soul:*—

I. ITS NATURE. It presupposes a power left in the soul of loving and desiring. It is not the destruction of its appetite, but the controlling and changing of it. A weaned child still hungers, but it hungers no more after the food that once delighted it; it is quiet without it; it can feed on other things; so a soul weaned from the world still pants much as ever for food and happiness, but it no longer seeks them in worldly objects. There is nothing in the world that it feels necessary for its happiness. This thing in it it loves, and that thing it values, but it knows that it can do without them, and it is ready to do without them whenever God

pleases. Could you give up all you have at God's call? and when you had done so, instead of saying, "There goes all my happiness," could you say with a calm, though perhaps with a bleeding heart, "I can be happy still; my best treasure is yet left"? Then yours is a weaned soul. II. ITS SOURCES. Our souls are as fast bound to the world as they were at first, or faster. We shall never leave it of our own accord. It is God's own right hand that must draw us from it. And how? The figure in the text will partly tell us. 1. By embittering the world to us. 2. By removing from us the thing we love. 3. By giving us better food. Worldly pleasures debase the soul; they dispose it to sink deeper and deeper in its search for happiness, and to take up with viler things; the soul is always the worse for them: spiritual pleasures exalt the soul; they give it a distaste for all that is low and vile, and teach it to aspire to the very highest objects. III. ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. It will save us from much sin. 2. It will keep us quiet under our many troubles. (C. Bradley, M.A.) *Submission*.—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS REPRESENTATION OF SUBMISSION TO GOD. 1. That we labour to be satisfied with what God appoints. 2. That we can do without what God does not appoint. 3. That we have higher comforts than those which God sees fit to deny. II. THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH ARE ADAPTED TO CHERISH SUCH A SUBMISSION. 1. All the events of Providence are a discipline for promoting the welfare of good men. 2. Jesus Christ submitted to the will of God. 3. The demand of submission in its present form is only temporary. Submission is the character and blessedness of heaven; but there are no evils to be submitted to there. III. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH RESULT FROM THIS SUBMISSION. 1. It creates a just and a religious independence of men. 2. The submission which has been represented inspires with hope in God. 3. This submission quickens our desires for heaven. (*Essex Remembrancer*.) *The suppression of self-will*.—This is one of the shortest of the Psalms, and one of the most beautiful. It is unique. The grace of Christian humility is here before its time. The bird sings before the sun has risen. The spirit of Jesus is here. We almost expect the psalm to conclude with the words, "Blessed are the meek." God's benediction of peace rests upon a lowly soul. The hand of God has gently rocked a weary spirit to rest. The Authorized Version does not give the full meaning of the text. We should read, "As a weaned child upon his mother, so lies my soul upon me." The subject, then, is the suppression of self-will. Let us think of the good which is possible through failure, of the beatitude of disappointment, the peace of defeat. We see men putting forth all their powers in some noble cause, but the good results are strangely withheld. They conceive holy designs, which, like that of David to build a temple, are frustrated. Jesus Christ will not have even His work preferred before Him. The final sacrifice which some men are called upon to make is not the sacrifice of a pleasure, or the relinquishment of some precious treasure; it is the sacrifice of a dear purpose by which they hoped to bring glory to their Lord. They are required to turn from the path of hallowed service, to renounce the holy enterprise. John Ruskin has told us how, when he came into clearer light, his hope of some better service was cut off by failure of health. "Just when I was coming out of school, very sorry for having been such a foolish boy, yet having taken a prize or two, and expect now to enter upon some more serious business than cricket, I am dismissed, by the Master I hoped to serve, with a 'That's all I want of you, sir.'" To give up what is dear to them is for some men comparatively easy, but to give up what they deemed dear to Christ,—to bind on the altar of sacrifice the one offspring of our heart, which gave such fair promise that in it men should be blessed,—that is hard. But it has to be done to the bitter end. No angelic voice stays the descending knife. Now, it is not difficult to see that, in many cases, these disappointments and failures are inevitable. Men are prone to exaggerate their powers, and to minify the hindrances which are before them. They have an attractive programme of bills which they propose to carry, but they underrate the forces of obstruction, and it is not in their power to enforce a closure. Now, there is no more searching test of character than disappointment. How charming the way in which John the Baptist accepted the narrowing sphere, and acquiesced in the circumstances which consigned him to comparative obscurity and silence. "He must increase, but I must decrease." That exquisite humility gives the transfiguring touch to a noble soul. It sheds a softened splendour upon the granite peaks of his character. It is possible for a man to be victorious even in defeat. Success may be good, but failure may be better. Disappointment brings a richer dower than achievement. No man need be ashamed of failure, or afraid

of it, after the Cross of Christ. Now, this weaning of the soul, this spirit of chastened submission, this complete suppression of self-will, this hearty acquiescence in the will of God, do not come easily to a man. The soul does not gain those heights without struggle. This psalm, tranquil as it is, bears traces of sore conflict. There is in it the echo of a storm. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself." The word "behaved" here bears a meaning which we do not now attach to it. It means to hold in, to restrain. The psalmist has known tears, protests, demands, complaints. Passion and pride have raged like swelling waves. But all this is over now. "Lord, my heart is not haughty," etc. He does not seek "a position above him involving duties and responsibilities too heavy." He accepts the limitations of his life, and adapts himself to them. He is at last "willing, having tried all other ways, to try just God's." Observe, this is not a state of torpor, which leads one to retire from service, and sit, with folded hands, in dull inaction. Nor is it a state of weakness, in which a man ceases from effort because it seems to fail. It is a submission that is full of hopefulness. It implies a persuasion that, though we seem to fail, God's cause never fails; a calm conviction that, though the good result is deferred, it will surely come. There are men who, when thwarted, hindered, disappointed, foiled, in the midst of their broken purposes and crushed hopes, cry, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." When that hour comes the soul enters into rest. "Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned." There are rich feasts for weaned souls. The joy of conquest is poor beside the ecstasy of renunciation. The complacency of attainment, the pride of achievement, the flush of success, grows pale before the peace of disappointment. If there is one way in which, more than in any other, God is glorified upon this earth, it is when a man takes the bitter cup of disappointment, and says, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Such men are victorious over defeat by accepting it. Surrender is the supreme grace of the Christian soul. When a man bows meekly down before the will of God, he has reached the highest good. (*J. Lewis.*) *The quiet mind*.—This psalm is called "a Psalm of David," and there seems no sufficient reason for doubting that it comes from his pen. Probably it belongs to one or other of the few peaceful seasons of his troubled reign, in which he was at leisure to practise that self-discipline which makes men strong, and those habits of meditation which make men wise. We have here a rare and a beautiful state of mind; and there are two expressions in this second verse which will help us to understand it. "I have behaved and quieted myself;" literally, "I have stilled and hushed my soul." The idea seems to be that of checking and restraining himself. The man has repressed his wayward impulses; he has arrested unreasonable ambitions and unseemly desires; he has taken himself in hand, and has dealt firmly and faithfully with that turbulent compound. His mind, for a time long or short, and from causes which he does not explain, has been like a troubled sea; and he has ruled the raging of its waters, and hushed the violence of the storm. The second expression is more striking still. For some reason or other the psalmist has not only been in a stormy mood, but in an uneasy, fretful, unsatisfied mood as well. He has been like a child passing through its first troubles. There is no vehemence in what he is here alluding to. His soul is not in arms. It is irritation, disappointment, unsatisfied desire, with perhaps a general sense of not being able to make the thing out. But it is all over now. From many a source of earthly joy and satisfaction he has had to wean himself away. And he has done it. The painful business is over; and in the sweet content of a tranquil, satisfied, and assured mind, his "soul is even as a weaned child." Humility—a just estimate of oneself, a just conception of what one is, what one has a right to demand from life, what one really has a right to be angry and disappointed over; a clear perception of our relations to a Divine Being, to this great and wondrous universe in which we find ourselves, and to man, our brother and fellow-traveller: this is the sweet secret of peace, now and always. Have you ever known pride happy? You could as soon find a cone standing unsupported on its apex. Pride, in every form of it, is a monster with many mouths; and some of them are always crying, in all the bitterness of unsatisfied desire, "Give, give!" Notice here how thoroughly in this matter David is at one with a Greater than David (*Matt. xi. 27, 28*). Not until we have brought down those high and haughty minds of ours; not until we have learned, I do not say the sad, but the sober look; not until lofty imaginations are in the dust at our feet, imaginations which in every direction are their own scourge,—can we know anything of the

woaned condition of David's mind, or enter "into the rest which remaineth for the people of God." I hardly know which to admire the more in David—his profound wisdom, or his profound piety. Certainly it is as sure a mark of wisdom to know the limits of inquiry in any direction, and reverently to bow to them, as it is within such limits to reverently prosecute such inquiry. And the piety of it all is quite as great as the practical wisdom. It is so eminently characteristic of a true and trustful child to be able and willing to say, "I cannot understand these things; but my Father knows all about them." Is that childish talk? Then let me be a child. I have read somewhere, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Do you tell me that it is not knowledge? I say, it is better than knowledge; for it comes of the love that shall endure, when knowledge shall have "vanished away." (*J. Thew.*)

Ver. 3. Let Israel hope in the Lord.—*Hope in the Lord*:—Humility is the root of hope. Hope is the blossom of meekness. As these graces of the true child develop themselves in the heart of a man, he cherishes the Divine, the sublime conviction that it is God the Spirit who is working within him, "both to will and to do." I. A LARGE PORTION OF EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION, AND OF THE DIVINE LIFE WITHIN A MAN, MAY BE CONSIDERED UNDER THE FORM OF HOPE. Religious experience is a strong and well-grounded expectation that the promises which God has made to us will not be broken. Such expectation will triumph over the delusion of our senses, over the bitter accusations of our consciences, and the apparently stern decrees of God's providence. "We are saved by hope." A young Christian begins by hoping for salvation, and the earnest worker hopes for his reward. God's servant bears his precious seed and casts it into the furrows, but he could not do so without the hope. All the strongest intuitions of faith are of the nature of hope. We are "prisoners of hope" so long as we are pent up in this "durance vile" of flesh and death. The essence of faith is to "turn to the stronghold," and look for the changeless life beyond the reach of our present turmoil, temptations, and disappointment. II. THERE ARE CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF HOPE EXPRESSED IN THIS PSALM WHICH WE CAN AT ONCE TRANSFER TO OUR OWN EXPERIENCE. 1. It is a Divine hope, "hope in the Lord"; "hope thou in God"; "truly my soul waiteth upon God." The confidence of Israel in their own destiny and deliverance sprang not from their strange history, not from their own mental power, not from their value in their own esteem, not from their deserts, but from the Lord Jehovah. The root of their being was the eternal, ever-living, holy, faithful, covenant-keeping God. He could not be untrue, and He had promised. 2. It is a diffusive hope. The hope of the psalmist was strong enough to quicken the hope of all around him: he sang, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." A Christian's hope should be so thorough and earnest, and rational and life-giving, that he should be able to say by his very look, "I hope in the Lord, why should not you?" and should thus move like incarnate sunshine through this dark world, the messenger of peace to broken spirits, the conqueror of death to the death-doomed, the minister of joy and gladness. 3. It is a practical hope. This characteristic is to be gathered out of the words "from henceforth." It takes its start from the actual circumstances in which we are placed. Some one exclaims, "May I not wait until I have received some clearer evidence of the love of God? May I not wait until this mystery of His providence shall be solved? May I not wait until I see whether the promises of God are more decidedly vindicated?" No! take the hint of my text, and in the hour of your deepest depression "hope in the Lord from henceforth." 4. It is an eternal hope. "From henceforth, even for ever," is the watchword of our psalm. Our hope should and must take the long "for ever" in. It has to do with unchanging realities, with an everlasting salvation; it looks forward to unseen things; it anticipates the ultimate fulfilment and accomplishment of all things that have been spoken by holy prophets since the world began. (*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*) *Confidence in God*:—1. His nature invites our confidence. Boundless in love, He longs intensely to do us good. Infinite in knowledge, He is acquainted with every aspiration of our heart. Unsearchable in wisdom, it is easy for Him to form the best plans for accomplishing His purposes. Omnipotent in power, all agencies are at His disposal, and none can stay His hand from working. 2. His deeds also invite our confidence. They furnish the most instructive commentary on His character. He has uniformly manifested Himself as a God who delights in mercy: He has never failed to succour those who hoped in Him. (*N. McMichael.*) *Hope evermore*:—Teunyson sings of "the

mighty hopes which makes us men." Have you ever thought of the worst loss which can come to a man? Loss of property? That is a sad loss, but not the worst. Loss of friends? That is a sad loss, but not the worst. Loss of opportunity? Nor is that the worst of losses. Loss of hope, when the heart dies, and the courage fails, and the hands hang listlessly, and a man begins only and sadly to drudge—this, the loss of hope, is the blackest loss. "I've just got back from Washington, where I've been since the election, trying to get an appointment," said a politician. "Gave up hope, eh?" said a sympathizing friend. "Oh no," was the quick reply. "I came home to hope. It's cheaper to hope here." I like that: hope any way. Get, if you must, the cheapest place to hope, but hope!" (IV. *Hoyt, D.D.*)

PSALM CXXXII.

VERS. 1-18. **Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.**—*The house of God*:—This psalm was probably composed on the occasion of the installation of the ark in the place provided for it in the temple. Solomon himself may possibly have been the author; but it is more likely that it came from the lips of one who had been a companion of David as well as of his son. I. **THE IDEA OF THE HOUSE OF GOD** (vers. 1-6). David's was an agitated life; but he found time to think for the house of God. Many whose lives are very full do so still. Some of those who care most for Christ's cause and spend on it unceasing energy are the most occupied of business men. Where there is a will there is a way; let only the passion for doing good be present and the time and the means will not be wanting. David was not allowed to carry out his pious intention; but, at great trouble and expense, he collected the materials of which Solomon subsequently made use. Thus one soweth and another reapeth. The good cause descends from generation to generation; and the godly are linked to one another by the sacred task which fills the ages. II. **THE OCCUPATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD** (vers. 7-9). The temple is now supposed to be complete and ready for occupation. In verse 6 the worshippers express their desire to enter the sacred precincts, and expression is given to the sentiments of awe and humility with which this should be done. But something more than the presence of worshippers is needed to constitute God's house: the presence of God Himself is requisite; and, in the next verse, He is requested to take possession of the habitation prepared for Him. Who does not know how empty the Sabbath may be, and how secular the church, when God's presence is not felt? But, when He comes down and breathes His own influence through the soul, then worship is real, and the church truly a house of God. III. **THE SUPPORTS OF THE HOUSE OF GOD** (vers. 10-18). In the remainder of the psalm the sacred poet recalls two oracles of the past in support of his prayer. The first is a promise, confirmed by an oath, which was given to David, that to the fruit of his body God would give the throne. And from this the inference is drawn that God will support the son of David in his great national undertaking, and the kings of the future, who will be the conservators of the sacred building. Here we perceive one of the secrets of the art of prayer: it lays hold of God's promise and pleads it. The other oracle refers to God's choice of Zion as His seat. Jehovah had announced that if a habitation for Him were built there, He would make it His rest for ever; and from this centre He would send out streams of blessing over the whole land. These glowing promises may by us be applied to the Church; and what is said about David may be applied to Christ. But these promises may also be applied to the temple of the individual soul. How blessed is the soul of which God has taken possession with the words, "This is My rest for ever," etc. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *A prayer for the house of David*:—I. **DAVID'S ANXIETY TO BUILD A TEMPLE** (vers. 1-5; 1 Chron. xxii. 14-16). We are to worship God with our best, and His house should always surpass the houses of His worshippers. II. **THE REMOVAL OF THE ARK TO ZION** (vers. 6-10). The reference in verse 6 is to David's experience in the days of his youth, when he used to hear of the ark in his native town, although he had never seen it. On its return from the Philistines the ark was for twenty years in the forest-city, Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. vii. 2), where it was out of sight, and, in a large measure, out

of mind. Here David found it (2 Sam. vi.), and brought it up to "the city of David," to Jerusalem. Having been installed in the capital, it was used for its appointed and appropriate purpose, and the psalm recites the feelings and words of the people in view of their privileges. III. THE COVENANT MADE WITH DAVID (vers. 11-13; 2 Sam. vii.; Ps. lxxxix. 28-37). IV. THE PROMISE BASED ON THE COVENANT (vers. 14-18). This strophe, although it is not expressly so stated, rehearses the words of God Himself, resuming and enforcing the terms of the original engagement. Jehovah declares that Zion is His resting-place. Here Jehovah sat as upon a throne, and manifested His royal state by the blessings He bestowed upon His people. These blessings are set forth with detail and emphasis. In the concluding verses the poet reverts to the main theme, the grace given to the house of David and the promise linked inseparably with that lineage. The horn is a common Biblical emblem for strength and prosperity (Deut. xxxiii. 17; 1 Sam. ii. 10; Ps. lxxv. 10; Ezek. xxix. 21; Rev. v. 6), and to say that a horn should sprout or shoot forth for David is to convey the idea of some signal descendant who should fulfil all that David suggested. The psalm closes with a contrast between the scion of David's house and his foes. They are to be clothed with shame and wear it as a garment, while on the contrary the crown upon his head sparkles with jewels, its lustre undimmed, its splendour unfading. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *The song of the builders*:—I. PREPARATORY WORK. The picture of my text may be a rebuke to the slothfulness of us all, to the feeble wavering purposes of Divine services which we languidly entertain and partially carry out, to the preference of our own comfort to God's work, which leads us all to give but the superfluity of our time, or of our means, or of our sympathy, to the service of our brethren, or, what is the same thing, to doing the work of God. But it should come with a special message to men, and emphatically to women, of comparative leisure and freedom from corroding frets and consuming toils. Brace yourselves for continuous service, give yourselves in resolved self-dedication to it, and fling behind you your leisure and regard for your own selfish repose, that you may lay some stone in the Temple of God. II. THE PRAYER FOR GOD'S BLESSING ON THE WORK. The prayer rests upon the profound conviction of the incompleteness of all our organizations and works if taken by themselves. The Temple may be finished. But something more is needed. Not till the ark is in the Holiest of all, and the cloud of glory fills the house, could they say, "It is finished." And the lesson is of everlasting importance. It is true for all ages of the Church. None, perhaps, ever needed it more than our own. We need to guard ourselves most jealously lest we come to put the instrument in the place of the power, to "burn incense to our own net, and to sacrifices to our own drag." If ever we do that, then we shall soon have to say, "We have toiled all night and caught nothing." III. THE DIVINE ANSWER, WHICH MORE THAN FULFILLS THE PSALMIST'S DESIRES. The prayer had pointed to David's swearing to the Lord as a plea on which its petitions rested. The reply points to a mightier oath than David's, as the ground on which God's mercy is sure. The king "swore to the Lord." Yes, but "the Lord hath sworn to David." That is grander and deeper. Another parallel of the same kind occurs between the former and the latter parts of the psalm. The one alleges David's finding out a habitation for the Lord," as a plea. The other replies, "The Lord hath chosen Zion," etc. A mightier will than David's had determined it long ago. State this in its widest form, and what does it come to but that great truth, that God's own love is the cause, and God's own promise, based upon His unchangeable nature, the guarantee for all His merciful dealings with us? He is His own all-sufficient reason. The day shall come when the weary work of the ages shall be accomplished, and the glory of the Lord shall fill that wondrous house. In that lofty and glorified state of His Church the prayers of earth shall be surpassed by the possessions of heaven. Here we ask that God would dwell with us, and there "the tabernacle of God shall be with men," etc. Here we ask for righteousness as our garment, and there it shall be granted us to be arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white," etc. Here we ask for joy in the midst of sorrow, and there "they shall obtain joy and gladness," etc. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.*—*Hearing, seeking, finding*:—Long before David's time, the ark of the Lord had been almost forgotten by the children of Israel. The first thing, therefore, for David to do was to find the ark; for it was a central portion of the

Divinely-ordained ceremonial. But I am not going to talk so much about David finding the ark as to think of some who are in the condition in which I once was, when I desired to find God. I longed to meet with Him in the person of Christ, in His own appointed way, but I could not find Christ. My heart was dark, my eyes were holden, and I looked everywhere but in the right place. I. My first remark will be that, **LIKE DAVID, WE WISH TO FIND THE ARK, THAT ARK BEING CHRIST.** 1. Now, concerning that ark, the first point to be noted is that it was covered with a golden mercy-seat, which was the place of forgiveness when it was sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. Those who came to it, through the high priest, knew that God had accepted them, and forgiven their sin. You and I know that we can never meet with God except at the mercy-seat, which is Christ Jesus the Lord. Christ made an atonement, a propitiation, for our sin; He "offered Himself without spot to God." By the way of His pierced body, that rent veil, is the only means of access for a sinner to a holy God. 2. The ark was a throne of grace. God sat there, as it were, upon a throne of mercy; and to us, to-day, the Lord Jesus Christ is the throne of grace. God in Christ Jesus is our reigning God, stretching out the silver sceptre of His mercy, and accepting all who come unto Him. 3. The ark was the place of God's manifestation. As much as could be seen of God's glory was seen between the cherubim; and if thou wouldst see the glory of God, thou must look into the face of Jesus Christ. 4. There were within the ark three notable things,—first, the tables of stone, which God had ordered to be placed there for preservation; there was, next, the golden pot with manna, and then there was also Aaron's rod that budded. Now, if you come to Christ, you will find in Him all that these things represented, and all that you want. (1) There is preserved the complete, vindicated, and honoured law. (2) Spiritual food. (3) The rod of Christ to rule us. II. Knowing what we do about Christ the ark, **WE DESIRE TO FIND HIM.** 1. David thirsted to find this ark immediately, and so much in earnest was he that he said, "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house," etc. Oh, when it comes to this pass,—that you must have Christ, then you shall have Christ! 2. Next, David sought the ark most reverently, for he recognized it as being a token of the presence of "the mighty God of Jacob"; and you and I must seek Christ reverently. 3. But while David thus sought very reverently, yet observe that it was with intense desire that he might receive this ark when once he found it. And, oh! if you want to find Christ, let it be with this desire, "Oh, that He may come and live in my soul, and be my own personal Christ! I do not want merely to hear about Him, to be taught about Him; I want to have Him, and, if He is to be had, I will have Him. If there is grace beneath the sky for a poor sinner, then I, the chief of sinners, will not rest until I find rest in Him." III. Knowing what this ark is, and then desiring to find it, **WE HAVE HEARD WHERE IT IS:** "Lo, we heard of it at Ephrath." "We heard of it." And is it not a blessed thing that we have heard about where Christ is? Some here present have long heard of Christ, and you are always hearing about Him; is it not time that you should get further than merely knowing and hearing, and should intensely seek until you find him? IV. The next words are, **"WE FOUND IT."** You remember the learned Grecian who, when he had made a discovery while in the bath, leaped out of it, and ran down the streets crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" Oh, those are the best words in my text, "We found it." 1. David said that he found it "in the fields of the wood"; that is, where he did not expect to find it. Have not many of us found Christ where we never thought we should find Him? 2. In the case of David finding the ark, it was not only where he could not have expected it, but it was in a place that was despised,—a rustic place,—"in the fields of the wood." Perhaps the Lord may lead you to some very plain minister, without any polish, or talent, or ability. I knew one who found the Saviour down a saw-pit, and another who found Him in a hay-loft. 3. "We found it in the fields of the wood" may perhaps mean that you will find Christ where you lose yourselves. V. **"WE WILL GO":** "We will go into His tabernacles." 1. Now that we have found where Christ is, and we can go to Him, we will have Him. We will go to God in Christ: "we will go into His tabernacles." It is a blessed thing to see a soul on the way towards God when Christ becomes the Way. 2. "We will go into His tabernacles," and we will dwell there. We will dwell with God; we will get back to the Father's house where there is "bread enough and to spare," and there will we stop. We will go to learn of God, we will be the disciples of Christ. We will go, and we will

go at once. VI. And then the last word is, "WE WILL WORSHIP": "We will worship at His footstool." 1. In lowly reverence, we will bow ourselves down in the very dust, for we are but dust and ashes even when we are saved. 2. "We will worship at His footstool"; that is, with deepest solemnity, for even His ark, His temple, is but the footstool of the great King. 3. But let us worship there with great joy. His "saints shall shout aloud for joy"; and, as they bow at his footstool, it shall not be as slaves, but as His chosen and accepted ones. 4. Let us also bow there very gratefully, blessing God that He has brought us to His feet. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 7-9. We will go into His tabernacles.—*The devout worshipper's resolution and ardent prayer*:—I. HIS RESOLUTION. 1. Attendance at the house of God. Not merely as a duty, but as a delight. 2. Devotion in the house of God. To worship in spirit and in truth; to meet with God in His holy temple. II. HIS PRAYER. 1. For the manifested presence of the Saviour. 2. For the sanctification of God's ministering servants. 3. For the abundant joy of God's faithful people. (J. G. Breay, B.A.) *Public worship*:—I. ITS REASONABLENESS. It is true that God is a spirit, and they that worship Him should worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is true that private worship should be regularly observed; and it is true that, without the homage of the heart, no external ceremony can be of any avail. But still it is surely reasonable that our feelings should be expressed in words, and that these words should not be uttered in secret alone. Has God gifted us with the power of speech, and should not this faculty be employed in the worship of the Giver? Has He blessed us with social capacities, and should we not return His kindness by meeting in these capacities, for the purpose of promoting His glory? Is it not regarded as greater honour to even an earthly benefactor, and a stronger proof of our attachment to Him, to speak of His praise to others, than simply to confine this feeling to our own bosoms? In like manner do we testify our love and gratitude to God by public expressions of worship to Him, while we incur blame by neglecting the opportunities that offer for this purpose. Besides, there are certain blessings we receive of a public nature, and which, therefore, ought to receive a public confession. There are certain wants which we need supplied, of a public description, and the supply of which ought, therefore, to be petitioned for, in our public capacity. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. God regards with delight His humble worshippers. 2. This duty is full of the most rational delight to the soul of man. Worship is the noblest exercise under heaven. 3. Worship has a tendency to excite us to the more faithful discharge of duty in general, to improve the various graces of the Christian life. 4. How well calculated, too, is the house of God for begetting in the bosoms of men proper sentiments with regard to themselves! It humbles the pride of the great; it fills with contentment the poor. It levels for a time the difference which the distinction of ranks makes in society. 5. It is a means of our preparation for heaven. (R. Macnair.) *God's house and worshippers*:—I. MEN SHOULD APPROACH GOD'S HOUSE IN A HOLY FRAME OF MIND. They should put off the garments spotted by the flesh, and put on the clean linen of the saints; they should wash their hands in innocency, and their consciences in the blood of the Lamb before they enter this habitation of God, and draw near to His holy place. II. MEN SHOULD OFFER WITHIN IT HOLY WORSHIP; and this worship should consist of an unblemished sacrifice and a pure oblation. III. MEN SHOULD CARRY AWAY WITH THEM THE SPIRIT OF THEIR WORSHIP, IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE THEIR LIVES. "True religion," says an old and quaint divine, "is no way a gargleism, only to wash the tongue and mouth to speak good words; it must root in the heart, and then fructify in the life, else it will not cleanse the whole man." (G. F. Fessey, M.A.) *On the sanctuary*:—If, with half the interest which their temporal concerns excite, men would reflect upon the nature of public worship, its reasonableness and advantages, they would, with one mind, perceive it to be a duty which they cannot excusably nor safely neglect. I. CONSIDER YOURSELVES IN YOUR SOCIAL CAPACITY. Free men from the restraints of religion, and leave them to the passions of nature, and the world will soon be converted into a scene of wickedness, debasement, and misery. But how is a general sentiment of religion to be preserved? Doubtless, one of the best means is the consecration of a part of our time to the holy purpose of recognizing the sovereignty of the Deity, and learning His will. Besides, it is the natural tendency of this duty to civilize the manners and the affections. Ideas of subordination are cherished, when all feel that they are accountable to a superior

power. Mutual regard and fidelity are promoted when all assemble together as brethren, before one common Parent, with sentiments of humility and hope. II. CONSIDER YOURSELVES IN YOUR RELATION TO GOD. It results from our moral capacity that the glory of this Being, who hath given us existence, and so highly endowed and exalted us, should be the supreme object of our lives. Now, He is glorified by our virtuous demeanour in His world, and by our private bosom acknowledgments of Him as our Lord and benefactor; but He is more especially and suitably glorified by us when we unite together to offer Him, in the presence of each other and the universe, the devout homage of our hearts and lips. This is the greatest tribute we can bring Him; a tribute which nature dictates and reason recommends. III. CONSIDER THE DEMANDS OF THE RELIGION YOU PROFESS. What was the conduct of our blessed Lord with respect to public worship? For our example, His custom was to go into the synagogue every Sabbath day. What was the practice of the primitive Church; the happy few who had been often with Him, and knew His will? (Acts ii. 42). What are the express or implied precepts of the Gospel upon this subject? (Heb. x. 25). Why, indeed, did our Lord ordain holy mysteries, which are social in their nature, very forms of public worship? Why did He appoint a ministry in His Church, and promise to be with this ministry, "even unto the end of the world"? Are not these expressions of His will that His disciples should assemble together, to preach, and hear His Word, and to worship the Father in spirit and in truth? (*Bishop Dehon.*)

Vers. 8, 9. *Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.—Blessings on the sanctuary:—*I. THE TEMPLE IS HERE CALLED THE PLACE OF REST, OR THE ABIDING PLACE OF GOD. II. THE TEMPLE, GORGEOUS AS IT WAS, WAS INCOMPLETE AND VALUELESS WITHOUT THE ARK. In all ages the ark in the Temple is its life. Still the quick heart within the man, and you will have the stately skeleton soon. Withdraw the magic vapour, and the wheels whirr no longer, and the most exquisite contrivances are mute and motionless machinery. Take the breath from the great organ's heart, and in vain you bid it discourse its harmonies. III. LOOK AT THE OTHER BLESSINGS WHICH ARE ASKED FOR, EITHER OBVIOUSLY OR BY DIRECT IMPLICATION IN THE PSALM. 1. The ark of God's strength in the Temple implies that God's power is in the Temple, and He waits to exert it in the Word, in the minister's appeals, in the people's prayers. 2. The prayer proceeds to ask that the priests may be "clothed with righteousness," which is, in fact, a petition for universal purity. It is a prayer not only for us who minister, but for you who hearken, that we may, all of us, be robed always, robed already, in the new linen, clean and white, in which the saints were seen in heaven. 3. The third blessing that is asked for is holy joy in God, which has its foundation in oneness with God, both in favour and feeling, and which has its outlet in the appropriate expressions of praise. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *The gracious presence of God in His own ordinances, an object of earnest desire to every acceptable worshipper:—*I. THE GLORIOUS OBJECT TO WHOM THE PEOPLE OF GOD PRESENT THEIR SUPPLICATION, IN THE VIEW OF A SOLEMN APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD IN THE ORDINANCES OF HIS WORSHIP—JEHOVAH HIMSELF. 1. He, to whom this great name belongs, is the independent, self-existent God, whose being is in and of Himself; and who gives being to all His words and works. 2. He is the eternal, and, consequently, the unchangeable God. 3. He is the fountain of all blessedness, as well as of all being. Indeed, if He is the one, he must needs be the other. If He is independent, He cannot but be all-sufficient. 4. He is Israel's own God. In our applications to Him, therefore, on this and on every other occasion, we ought still to view Him as Jehovah, our God: our God by His own gracious grant and promise; our God by virtue of that everlasting covenant, which is sealed to every worthy communicant at the sacramental table. This will encourage us both to be fervent in our supplications for His presence, and confident in our expectations of it. II. THE PLACE INTO WHICH GOD IS HERE INVITED, OR WHERE HIS PRESENCE IS DESIRED; CALLED, IN THE TEXT, HIS REST. The Church of Christ may be called God's rest on a twofold account. 1. On account of His Divine pleasure and satisfaction in her, much beyond the pleasure that a weary or burdened person has in a place or state of rest. 2. On account of His constant and perpetual residence in her. III. THE INVITATION WHICH THEY HUMBLY, YET CONFIDENTLY, ADDRESS TO HIM. "Arise." The manner of expression here used, especially when applied to the Church, intimates the following things. 1. That, in taking

possession of His rest, it is necessary that God should make signal displays of His power. 2. That there may be times when God seems, in human reckoning, inactive and negligent about the affairs of His Church. 3. That though Zion is God's rest, there is, and always will be, much work for Him to accomplish in her. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE WAS DESIRED AND EXPECTED TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION. They did not ask Him to be present, unless in a manner adapted to the dispensation under which they lived, and under those symbols by which His presence among them was always exhibited and secured. They only wished Him to be present, along with the ark of His strength. This imports—1. That the people of God had an earnest desire after the symbol itself, and expected not to enjoy the presence of God, in the same comfortable manner, without it. 2. That they could not be satisfied with the symbol, without the thing signified and represented by it. 3. But the principal thing to be attended to about this ark of God's strength was its being the most lively type of Christ. This intimates—(1) That they desired the presence of Christ as Mediator, and the benefit of His mediation, as well as the presence of God Himself. Indeed, these two can never be separated. (2) That they neither expected the presence of God, nor desired it, otherwise than through Christ. Out of Christ God is a consuming fire. V. IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT. It affords us—1. Matter of wonder, gratitude, and praise; in that we enjoy the symbols of God's presence, and have access to worship Him according to His own appointment. 2. Matter of reproof to all who satisfy themselves with outward privileges, and matter of warning to all who enjoy them, against such a fatal mistake. 3. Matter of encouragement to all in this company who have business with God to-day. 4. Matter of consolation to all those who mourn for the low state of the Church in our day, and for the very low state of the work of God in her. 5. Matter of trial to all present; particularly to those who intend to eat the sacramental bread and drink the sacramental cup. (*John Young, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness.**—*A righteous pulpit*:—We hear advocated, on platforms and elsewhere, different kinds of ministry. Some are urgent for a talented ministry. Some are urgent for an educated ministry. They insist on culture. Some are urgent for an evangelical ministry. The great want, however, is a righteous ministry. I. A ministry that advocates THE PRINCIPLES OF RECTITUDE. The Sermon on the Mount should be the text and the imperial inspiration of every teacher. II. A ministry that advocates the principles of rectitude in AN HONEST WAY. 1. Conscientiously, believing in them. 2. Consistently, living them. 3. Independently, disregarding alike the frowns and smiles of men. A ministry, in fact, that "commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. III. A ministry that advocates the principles of rectitude FOR A RIGHT PURPOSE. Not for popularity, not for greed, not for seat, but for right. Such a ministry as this the people will believe in, trust, and follow. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) **And let Thy saints shout for joy.**—*The connection between a pious ministry and a happy Church*:—True piety has ever a cheerful character; our religion has no sympathy with gloom (Prov. iii. 17). We dare not speak of uninterrupted enjoyment. Christians live too much beneath their privileges to admit of this; and, even though they should attain perfection, how could they escape suffering in a world where sin so much abounds? It would be preposterous to expect it. But, making all deductions, the believer has far more pleasure than the man who rejects the overtures of Divine compassion. Is it not so? Would you not like to know that your sins were pardoned, every one of them, no more to rise up in judgment against you? Would you not like to know that God was your friend, and that He would never leave you nor forsake you? Would you not like to know that the bondage of death is removed, for Jesus has disarmed the grisly monster of his sting? Now, these are some of the benefits of which genuine believers are partakers; and an interest in them is obtained by believing in the Son of God, who is the Strength and the Saviour of suffering man. Would you not be happier, as well as better, could you say, All these are mine? Make the experiment for yourself. Surely it is worth the trial. Linger no longer. Close at once with God's own free terms. Permit Him to save you in His own way, and there shall be no disappointment. (*N. McMichael.*) *Joy in the Lord*:—Joy is both full of insight and medicinal. Our best poets delight to depict its power in each of these ministries. Wordsworth said it was "with an eye made quiet by the deep power of joy that he saw into the life of things."

Then he felt sensations sweet passing into his pure mind, with tranquil restoration. Thion he came to know that blessed mood in which the burden of the mystery of this unintelligible world is lightened; and he became a living soul. If this be the ministry of the joy of nature, surely the "joy of the Lord" would lighten many dark problems in life, lift many a burden, change the home and the business of many a weary and tried child of God, and fill them with brightness and song.

Vers. 13-16. For the Lord hath chosen Zion.—*God's choice of Zion.*—He giveth a reason for the absolute promise of Christ's coming to rule the spiritual kingdom of Israel, or the Church, because the Lord had chosen Zion in the type, and the universal Church under the figure, to be His chosen Temple and habitation, wherein He delighted. Whence learn—1. Where God will settle His sanctuary, therein He will settle His kingdom also: Zion must not want a king; for the reason here, why the Lord will with an oath set up one who shall be the fruit of David's body upon the throne, is "because He hath chosen Zion." 2. The Lord's pitching upon any place to dwell in, or persons to dwell among, cometh not of the worthiness of the place or persons, but from God's good pleasure alone. 3. The Lord resteth in His love towards His Church, accepting the persons, prayers, and service of His chosen people; He smelleth a sweet savour in Christ here, and His love maketh His seat among His people steadfast. 4. What is promised under typical figures is really everlasting, not in regard of the figure, but in regard of the signification: "For this is my rest for ever," is true only in respect of the Church, represented by Zion. 5. No reason is to be craved for God's everlasting good will to any person or incorporation; His pleasure may suffice for a cause. (*D. Dickson.*) *Zion and her provision.*—I. **GOD'S CHOICE OF HIS ZION.** 1. The sovereignty of God, which is exercised towards His creatures. 2. This choice is a choice of love (Eph. ii. 4, 5; Jer. xxxi. 3). II. **THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH GOD HAS CHOSEN ZION.** God desires Zion—1. For His habitation. 2. For His rest. Where He takes up His abode, it is for ever. III. **THE BLESSINGS PROMISED.** In 1 John ii. 12, 13, you have the family of God set forth from infancy to manhood; from weakness itself, to perfect strength; from sin's dominion and degradation, to salvation's honours and glories; from the captivity of Satan, to a full victory over him; from the love, power, and guilt of sin, to the enjoyment of all the Gospel blessings, promises, and treasures in Christ. (*C. Parvey.*)

Ver. 15. I will abundantly bless her provision.—*An abundant blessing promised to the Church upon her spiritual provision.*—I. **THE GLORIOUS SPEAKER**—GOD HIMSELF. 1. The God for whom a habitation has been prepared in the Church. If you enjoy the blessing of God upon your provision, you will cheerfully contribute your mite for preparing Him a habitation. 2. The God who hath chosen Zion, and taken up His habitation in her. By this means He knows every circumstance relative to her and to every one of her members; He is ready to hear all the requests of His people, and to grant them without loss of time. 3. The God from whom all her provision comes. As He knows what provision is suitable to every one's taste, and to every one's need, He knows what blessing is proper to make every one's provision effectual for affording him the promised satisfaction. II. **THE PARTY SPOKEN OF**—ZION. The Church is spoken of in the feminine gender, chiefly to put us in mind of two things. 1. Of her weakness and helplessness, considered in herself. 2. Of that happy relation that subsists between Christ and her. So close and intimate is that mysterious relation, that it can be compared to no other earthly relation—so fitly as to that between husband and wife. He has betrothed her to Himself for ever. He nourishes and cherishes her as a loving husband the wife of his youth. III. **THE BENEFIT PROMISED**—A BLESSING. As soon as any person is brought into a state of union with Christ, and is blessed in Him,—being justified freely by the grace of God; not only is that person adjudged to happiness, but that sentence has an effect upon all that he meets with in the course of Providence. All the common benefits of life have a commission from God to be means, not merely of rendering his present life happy, as far as happiness is attainable here,—but likewise of preparing him for eternal happiness, and of conducting him to it. Yea, the trials, afflictions, and miseries of this life, are all under an appointment of God, to be conducive to the same end (2 Cor. iv. 17). IV. **THE MORE IMMEDIATE SUBJECT OF THIS BLESSING**—HER PROVISION. The spiritual Israel have nothing of their own to support the life of their souls: and the wilderness, through which they pass, affords nothing fit for that purpose. They behoved,

therefore, to perish, if their Heavenly Father did not give them the true bread from heaven, which is no other than the flesh and blood of His own eternal Son, which He gave for the life of the world. V. THE DEGREE IN WHICH THIS BLESSING IS BESTOWED—ABUNDANTLY. (*John Young, D.D.*) **I will satisfy her poor with bread.**—*The poor-laws of the Bible*:—Those who are not familiar with the Bible, especially with the Old Testament, might be disposed to smile at the statement, that if we could get the poor-laws of the Bible fairly administered, there would be an end to the miseries and complaints of the poor. God has from the beginning made the poor man's cause His own. His aim has been to stir men up to consideration and sympathy, by identifying the poor with Himself in His account with mankind. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord." That is the principle; the claim of the poor on men is the claim of God. And throughout the Old Testament God announces and enforces His provision for the poor (Deut. xv. 7-11; Isa. lviii. 6-8; Neh. viii. 10). The principle runs through the whole Book. Whatever men felt that they owed to God they were to pay to the poor. Would it be possible to place their claim on a surer and firmer foundation? And there is a tenderness in the tone of the Bible about the poor and helpless, which is unmatched, as far as I know, in any ancient literature; and it is one of the most sacred traditions which the elder dispensation handed down to the Christian Church. But there is nothing in the way in which the Bible deals with the question which gives countenance even for a moment to the notion that bread is the great necessity of man. God's cure of disease is always radical; therefore the method is slow, deep, and, on the surface, long invisible. And herein God's method differs essentially from the various panaceas for social wrong and misery which have been promulgated in various ages by the philosophers. Bread is precious to those who use life nobly. But he who should assure bread on a sufficient scale to all men, and make no provision for their spiritual culture, for their concord, brotherly love, energy, industry, and perseverance, would miss the deepest elements of human misery, would, in the end, nourish it fearfully, and would hasten, instead of retarding, the overthrow of society. God, in His method of dealing with the problem, considers the "what then?" He takes things in their true order, the heavenly order, the order of their necessity. He does not flood the world with plenty, and leave man to wrangle and wrestle over the partition of it. He would first cure the radical selfishness and wickedness out of which in the long run all absolute poverty springs. It is a mistake to use the term Christian Socialism, under the idea of commending the Gospel to those who favour Communistic views. The Gospel aims at an ideal which, as a dream, has haunted the imagination of every great world reformer who has ever pored over the dark problems of society, but it aims at it by a path which is all its own. It begins from within, and works outwards; it puts love in the heart, and then sends plenty. All true abundance springs out of love. There was a movement in the early Church which had, no doubt, a communistic aspect, and which some may connect with the essential spirit of Christianity, and regard as the only true form of life in the Christian society (Acts ii. 42-47). It seems to have been confined to the Church at Jerusalem, and there it was carried too far and lasted too long. We find from apostolic records that the Church at Jerusalem became rapidly the poorest and the most helpless of all the primitive Churches, and was compelled to throw herself on the charities of the Gentile Christian world (Rom. xv. 25-27), and this history is very important and instructive. It reveals the inevitable issue of a communistic administration of the temporal affairs of men. The rights of property were most carefully guarded in the early Churches, as we gather from all the apostolic epistles; while brotherly love and the most large and constant charity were enjoined on the most sacred grounds. There is nothing that God reiterates more earnestly than the poor man's claim. There is nothing that God sustains more mightily than the poor man's cause. There is nothing that God avenges more awfully than the poor man's wrong. "Would God that I could see it," many a poor man cries; "but, as far as I see, the masters that profess most are often the hardest; and those who say that they have most to do with God, and from whom we might hope to find what God can do to help us, are too frequently known as grinding the faces of the poor." Well, there is truth in this, alas! no doubt; but be very chary of attaching value to the criticism of employers by the employed; their judgment will be constantly narrow, selfish, and unjust. But ye masters, remember the higher judgment. Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord; ye, who say that ye know My name. Beware how you drag it through the mire

of selfish and sensual lives, and put it before all men, and especially before the poor, to an open shame. We may all take the warning home. But ye poor, be just. Do not charge on God the wrongs and evils which He is doing His best by His own patient but radical method to cure. He hates the grinding of the face of the poor more entirely, I believe, than He hates any evil thing that is done under the sun. Be just. See how God is fighting your battle in all ages, and maintaining your cause against the oppressor. There is one method by which God is always maintaining the cause of the poor, which they are very slow to recognize and to honour, and that is against themselves, against their own idleness, improvidence, and lust. Man's folly and sin do not withhold, do not restrain, God's mercy, or we had none of us been here. But while He pities, He educates and purifies. Side by side with the pity there is the hard, stern rule, that "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat." Giving is the cheapest and easiest form of charity. To take poverty by the hand and lift it is harder work, and demands a resolution, the ultimate spring of which is on high. Self-help must be the message of our visitors and almoners. We must have done with the pampering method of the constant dole. Help the industrious and necessitous over a crisis that they may help themselves again. Stir up the energies of the indolent and dependent. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation.—*A consecration sermon*:—**I. THE PROMISER.** "I": that is, the Lord; the most true, the most constant, the most powerful God; most true and sincere in the declaration of His purpose, most constant and immutable in the prosecution, most powerful and uncontrollable in the perfect execution thereof. These glorious attributes and perfections of His, so often celebrated in Holy Writ, do ground our reliance on all God's promises, and do oblige us, notwithstanding the greatest improbabilities or difficulties objected, to believe the infallible performance of this. **II. THE PERSONS WHOM THE PROMISE MAINLY REGARDS.** 1. Priests; that is, persons peculiarly devoted to, and employed in, sacred matters; distinguished expressly from the poor (that is, other meek and humble persons); and from the saints (that is, all other good and religious men). 2. Her priests; that is, the priests of Zion: of that Zion which "the Lord hath chosen"; which "He hath desired for His permanent habitation"; which He hath resolved to "rest and reside in for ever." Whence it plainly enough follows that the priests and pastors of the Christian Church are hereby, if not solely, yet principally designed. **III. THE MATTER OF THE PROMISE.** "I will clothe," etc. The least we can imagine here promised to the "priests of Zion," will comprehend these three things. 1. A free and safe condition of life: that they be not exposed to continual dangers of ruin; of miserable sufferance or remediless injury: that the benefits of peace, and law, and public protection shall particularly appertain to them. 2. A provision of competent subsistence for them: that their condition of life be not wholly necessitous, or very penurious; but that they shall be furnished with such reasonable supplies as are requisite to encourage them in the cheerful performance of their duty. 3. A suitable degree of respect, and so high a station among men, as may commend them to general esteem, and vindicate them from contempt. **IV. THE REASONS.** 1. God's honour is concerned in the safe, comfortable, and honourable estate of His priests; and that on account of those manifold relations, whereby they stand allied, appropriated, and devoted to Himself. They are in a peculiar manner His servants, stewards, ambassadors, co-workers, etc. 2. The good of the Church requires that the priesthood be well protected, well provided for, and well regarded. 3. Common equity requires this. Is there any office more laborious, more vexatious than theirs; accompanied with more wearisome toil, more solicitous care, more tedious attendance? (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. I have ordained a lamp for Mine anointed.—*A lamp ordained for God's anointed*:—**I. CHRIST AS GOD'S ANOINTED.** 1. He is a Redeemer and Saviour of God's choosing. 2. Called and sent of God. 3. Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church. 4. Thoroughly fitted and furnished for His work, by an unmeasurable effusion of the Holy Spirit. **II. THE LAMP THAT GOD HAS ORDAINED.** 1. This lamp was first set up in the purpose of God from eternity, or in the council of peace, when the whole plan of salvation through Christ was laid. 2. This lamp was first lighted in this lower world, immediately after the fall in paradise; when a dark and dismal night of woe and misery was spreading itself over our first

parents, then a gleam of light began to break out in the first promise (Gen. iii. 15): and afterwards unto Abraham (Gen. xxii. 18). 3. The lamp of the Gospel shone typically and prophetically during all the Old Testament period, before the coming of Christ in the flesh. It shone, as it were, under a veil, and only among the Jews. 4. After the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the lamp of Gospel light was brightened, and the light of it was made more general and extensive. The veil of types, ceremonies, and prophecies, was rent, and, by the commandment of the everlasting God, carried unto all nations for the obedience of faith, Christ being given of God for (Acts xiii. 47). 5. Ministers of the Gospel are, as it were, the lamp bearers. They are commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel, to teach all nations. III. **THE ORDINATION OF THIS LAMP.** 1. God has ordained the places and parts of the world where it shall be set up and shine (Rom. xi. 33). 2. As He ordained the places where the lamp shall be set up, so He ordained how long it should shine, before it be lifted to another part of the earth. He ordained how long it should shine among the Jews, viz. until Christ came. He ordained how long it should shine in the Churches of Asia, before He came and removed His candlestick. He has ordained how long the Gospel and a faithful ministry shall stay in any parish or congregation also. 3. He has ordained what souls or persons shall be converted, edified, or built up, by the Gospel: when He sends it unto any nation or congregation of Zion (that is, the place where the Gospel-lamp is set up), "it shall be said this man and that man was born there," etc. 4. He ordains by what instrument or minister the Gospel-lamp shall be brought unto a people or particular person. Paul is ordained for the Gentiles, Peter for the Jews, and every one of the apostles and other ministers, led by the ruling hand of the sovereign Lord, to labour in this, or that, or the other spot of His vineyard. 5. He ordains what fruit and success a minister with his lamp shall have, what number of souls shall be edified, and who shall be hardened and blinded by His light. (*E. Erskine.*) **A lamp for God's anointed.**—I. **GOD'S ANOINTED** (Ps. xlv. 7). 1. He was chosen to be God's anointed (Isa. xlii. 1). 2. He was called and sent by God (Isa. xlii. 6). 3. His investiture in His offices (Isa. xlii. 7). 4. Fulness of grace for His great work (Col. i. 19). II. **THE LAMP OBTAINED FOR GOD'S ANOINTED.** 1. Some of its discoveries. (1) It shows a trinity of persons in the Godhead (1 John v. 7). (2) It reveals the everlasting counsel (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). (3) It demonstrates the mystery of the incarnation (2 Cor. v. 19). (4) It discovers the doctrine of substitution (Ps. lxxxix. 19). (5) It shines into the grave, and shows Christ's resurrection and ours (Heb. vii. 25). (6) Its light shows man's darkness and salvation (Ps. cxix. 104). 2. Some of its properties. (1) It is a lamp of Divine formation (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). (2) It is a dazzling brightness that this lamp sheds (John ix. 39). (3) It has an assimilating power (John xv. 3). (4) It is a profitable lamp (Ps. cxix. 105). (5) It is a lamp of general use (Luke ii. 10). (6) It is an ancient lamp (Jer. vi. 16). (7) It is a durable lamp (Ps. cxix. 89). III. **THE REASONS WHY GOD HAS ORDAINED IT.** 1. To the honour of His Son Jesus Christ (John v. 39). 2. To perpetuate His name to all ages (Rom. ix. 17). 3. For the gathering of His people (Isa. lv. 11), (*T. B. Baker, M.A.*)

Ver. 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.—*The Redeemer's glory, and the confusion of His enemies.*—I. **THE CONFUSION OF HIS ENEMIES.** 'Tis an astonishing and melancholy fact that such a government should have enemies, but evidently it is so (Ps. ii.). The opposition of Jews and Gentiles only a specimen of the opposition of human nature in all ages. Describe the enemies. In individuals—pride, unbelief, self-righteousness, inconsistency. The same enmity in the world on an extended scale; carnal policy, etc., arising from inveterate hatred of religion is too humbling and too holy. Christ's enemies are clothed with shame when their machinations are detected. Ariel, etc. (Milton), Gehazi. When their own plans defeat themselves. Haman, Esther, Mordecai. The cross as peopling heaven. The stone, watch, seal at Christ's tomb established the fact of His resurrection. Persecution drove out the disciples to spread the Gospel. II. **THE PROSPERITY OF HIS REIGN.** This consists in—1. The settled and undisturbed title to His crown. 2. When His counsels are wise, and the laws of legislation are pure, salutary, and securing to the subject his liberties and immunities. 3. When His laws are administered in prudence, firmness, and integrity. He died for the ungodly; therefore He is just and the justifier of the ungodly. 4. When His realm consists of extensive empire, when

other rulers are His subjects and willingly receive His laws into their administration. 5. When His subjects are happy and united. III. **THE CERTAINTY OF BOTH.** (*Homilist.*) *A flourishing crown*:—Look at Melville when standing before King James. Danger threatened the Church of Christ in that kingdom, and upon the prosperity of the Church depended the stability of James' throne. Melville and others obtained a private audience of the king, and, among other points, Melville reminded James of his duty to his Saviour. There are two kings in Scotland, said the Covenanters, King James and King Jesus, but King Jesus reigned here before King James, and His authority is supreme. That bold and uncompromising speech carries us back in thought to another scene equally momentous and interesting. Paul, that bold champion of his Master's cause, standing in the midst of an infuriated crowd, fearlessly told them that while Cæsar had his claims to sovereign power, there was another King, one Jesus, who had His claims also, but they were superior to Cæsar's claims. It is recorded of the first and the greatest of the Cæsars that such were his capacious powers that he could at once keep six pens racing to his dictation on as many different subjects. That may be true; but Christ can attend to the affairs of the whole world at once! Crowns have always been highly valued. What schemes to obtain them! what bloodshed! what treachery! With what pomp and pride they have been and are still worn! No crown like this! (*E. Digby.*)

PSALM CXXXIII.

VERS. 1-3. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.—*True socialism*:—The subject of this poem is genuine socialism or unity of souls. Not theological unity, religious dogmas divide but can never unite. Not ecclesiastical unity; no laws made by any Church, though signed by all its members, can unite souls. Not mechanical unity, the unity of organizations either political, religious, or commercial. Unity of soul implies unity in the supreme affection, the supreme aim, the supreme rule. I. It is **GOOD**. 1. Because it harmonizes with man's social constitution. It is what man's social nature craves for, his greatest hunger is for loving companionship. It is what man's social nature needs. He needs the ministry of friendship from the cradle to the grave. It is what man's social nature pictures as its grandest ideal. Social unity is regarded by all peoples and nations as the perfection of society. 2. Because it harmonizes with the teaching of the Gospel. Christ inculcated this unity, and prayed for it, that "they all may be one." The apostles everywhere exhort to it, "be of one mind one toward another." II. It is **DELIGHTFUL**. 1. It is delightful to witness. To "behold" it in the family, the Church, the nation. All jealousies, envies, rivalries, wars, banished from the scene, and utterly unknown. "Peace like morning dew distills, and all the air is love." 2. It is delightful to experience. What a delicious fragrance there is in social unity, to feel one with all, and all with one another. This gives to the social atmosphere a delicious perfume. III. It is **BENEFICENT** (ver. 3). It does not mean that the dew falls alike upon the two mountains, but that the moisture that gathers on Mount Hermon is caught up by the sun, and falls in refreshing showers on the distant heights of Zion. 1. This unity is peaceful. How silently falls the dew! How serenely moves society where all its members are inspired with love one towards another, no clash, no jar, no grating of the wheels. 2. This unity is refreshing. It gives to the whole social sphere perpetual freshness, verdure, and beauty. (*Homilist.*) *Church unity*:—Short though this psalm be, it is difficult to find a sweeter. Some link it with the period of David's call to the throne, and imagine that it was suggested by all Israel coming to him at Hebron, and saying, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh," and then anointing him king. The strength and health of a nation lies in its unity. And this is true, likewise, of a Church. Note—I. **THE GRACE**. What is meant by "dwelling together in unity"? It is no mere absence of quarrelling, for that may be owing to the quiet of death. Enter the mortuary attached to the hospice of St. Bernard. There are the frozen corpses of those who have perished in the snow. They stand upon their feet against the wall

Some have been there for years waiting for friends to recognize and claim them. And there are no quarrels there. But it is the chill of death that keeps them so still. Nor is it dwelling apart in order to have peace. As Abraham separated from Lot. It is a humiliating way of obtaining peace. As if two souls were like two chemicals—kept apart they will do no harm, bring them together and they will explode and shatter everything. Nor is this unity merely engagement in one work. But it is for a member to be actuated as by one soul. One soul in many members. It includes serving one another in love, and it has often to be cemented by forgiveness. Now, such calls for special notice. "Behold." And it is "good." For it is God's will for us. It obeys the new command of Christ. It is one of the chief proofs of our discipleship. It makes the communion of saints good and edifying. II. THE ILLUSTRATIONS. This unity is said to be like—1. The anointing oil upon Aaron's head (Exod. xxx. 23-26), which shows that it was made of several different compounds, all precious in themselves. Various are the spices, all "principal" in themselves. The myrrh of love. This takes the precedence. Full measure of this must be found. With this, also, there must be the sweet cinnamon of gentleness, the sweet calamus of meekness, the cassia of longsuffering, and the olive oil of forgiveness. No wonder that the compound was most fragrant. Aaron was not qualified to minister until thus anointed. 2. The dew of Hermon. So this unity comes from above: cools the air and makes fruitfulness abound. Unitheth not for men. III. ITS BENEFIT. "There the Lord commanded the blessing." Not for us is it to command a blessing; we can but beg for it. But where is it that the Lord thus commands His blessing? Not where anger and strife, discord and division abound—these have turned many gardens of the Lord into howling wildernesses. But where love reigns—where the holy oil anoints pastor and people alike. May this oil never cease to flow upon the Church, and this Hermon never lack its dew. (Archibald G. Brown.) *Solidarity*:—Solidarity is but another name for unity. How the solidarity—the interrelation, the interdependence—of our twentieth-century life, by means of which we are enabled to know so much more, do so much more, be so much more, than men could when seas were separations instead of chances for ferries, when telegraphs did not make the round world throb, puts emphasis on the power and blessing of the unity which is the psalm's theme. I. WHAT THIS UNITY IS. 1. It is not a levelling uniformity. It does not mean that one gathered into the unity must think, feel, do, precisely as does every other one also gathered into it. There is large chance for individuality in a real unity. 2. It does not mean an outward and iron compulsion. A minister was once asked if his Church were united. "Yes; all the members of it are frozen stiff together." That was not unity. 3. It is association. In a real Christian unity there is a holy tendency toward this togetherness. 4. It is a general and including similarity of aim and feeling. 5. It is variety of gift and service, each ministering in its own way to the common end (1 Cor. xii. 12-26). 6. It is mutual esteem. 7. Mutual forbearance. 8. Co-operation for the best interests of the brotherhood. II. WHAT THIS UNITY DOES. 1. It attracts (ver. 2). It diffuses its gracious influence far and wide, and at the same time calls into the sphere of its influence. People love to come to it and be with it. How true this is of a thoroughly harmonious and united Church! 2. It refreshes (ver. 3). It brings the refreshing of shared, of achieving, of rejoicing service. 3. It commands the Divine blessing. III. APPLICATION. 1. Each one of the brotherhood is charged with the preservation of this unity. 2. Failure to keep it deprives our Lord of one of the evidences of the truthfulness of His mission. 3. The unity we most deeply need is thorough personal unity with the one Lord and Brother, that thus we may really enter into the power and blessing of this great grace of unity with each other. (W. Hoyt, D.D.) *A good and pleasant prospect*:—I. THE SIGHT PROFOUNDED. 1. The duty commended—unity or agreement (Eph. iv. 3; 1 Thess. v. 13; Col. i. 20). There are two ways especially in which the Gospel is a Gospel of unity betwixt man and man. (1) It is so, as it teaches it, and commands it, for so it does at large and in the proper scope and intent of it; it teaches us as to deny ungodliness, so to deny uncharitableness: and as to live righteously and godly, so likewise to live quietly and peaceably in this present evil world. (2) It also works and transmits it where it comes in the power of the Spirit going along with it. As it is a transforming doctrine in other respects, so especially in this amongst the rest as changing the hearts of those that do truly believe it, and receive it into a disposition like unto itself. It changes and alters men's evil natures, and transforms them into contrary

qualities; it takes away their natural fierceness, and makes them mild and tame, and to live in peace with other men. 2. The subjects of this unity—brethren.

(1) Brethren by nature and blood, and carnal generation, such persons as are children of one and the same natural parents: these are such of whom unity is required, who are brethren in the first, and primitive, and original acceptation of the Word by us; and there is nothing more unworthy when it is otherwise. (2) Brethren in a civil sense, by custom, contract, or employment, or civil association, which is that which does more properly belong to yourselves; these are likewise brethren, and have peace and love and unity charged upon them. (3) Brethren in a spiritual sense, from the principles and considerations of piety and Christian religion, these are again brethren: that profess the same faith, that worship the same God, that are members of the same Head, that expect the same heaven and salvation and future inheritance. There are none who have a better title to this appellation of brethren than such, and consequently none who have peace and unity more required of them, even in that consideration likewise. 3. The manifestation of this unity—dwelling together. Unity is much expressed in communion and sociableness of conversation, and as expressed in it, so likewise preserved by it, and nourished and kept up from it: those that forbear to meet in their persons, they do not so easily meet in their affections, nor in their hearts one with another; whereas that it is a very great help, and means, and conducement to this. It makes friends and Christians so much the better to understand one another, and to be accepted with each other's dispositions, to know one another's natures, and to discern one another's graces, and to be sensible of one another's perfections, and so consequently to receive the more comfort and benefit one from another. There is a very great advantage in such occasions and opportunities as these are, both for the doing and receiving of good. II. THE INVITATION TO THE OBSERVING OF IT. 1. As an excitement of faith. Behold it to believe it. 2. As an engagement of affection. Behold it to admire it. 3. As a provocation to obedience. Behold it to practise it, and to imitate it, and to conform unto it.

(*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Christian unity*.—1. If our Christianity is genuine it must bear its own witness in the happy accord of our Churches, in the fraternal attitude of the various branches of the Church of Christ, and in the mutual love and helpfulness of believers. 2. Unity is not only essential to the Church's vindication, but to her progress as well. The folly of the corps of a great army wasting their energies and opportunities in contentions over the merits of the various military codes and manuals of arms would justly excite contempt. A spectacle more pitiable still is that of rival denominations of Christians pausing in the great battle with sin and Satan to contend one with another over non-essential forms and dogmas. The multiplied variances and rivalries of sects are sources of bewilderment to the heathen, and stumbling-blocks in paths of missionary effort. 3. Again, unity is necessary to the development and growth in grace of the individual believer. Grace is an exotic that blooms only in an atmosphere of peace. The frosts of envy and the fires of contention blight and consume it. A Christian at enmity with his neighbour cannot discharge his duty to mankind. 4. Our estimate of the value and bliss of unity will be enhanced by attention to those intimations the Scriptures afford us concerning the life of the redeemed in heaven. There shall be the consummation of the Church's unity. (*S. G. Nelson.*) *Christian unity*.—I. WHAT IT IS. II. ITS EXCELLENCE. III. MEANS FOR ATTAINING IT. 1. The first thing needful is for each one of us to be united to Christ: without this, we shall in vain expect to be "members one of another." "He is the Head over all things to the Church;" and to Him we must be united by faith. 2. Let us be "gentle towards all men"; willing to hope the best, and to make every allowance for the infirmities and imperfections, and even the errors of those who walk not with us in the things of God. 3. Practical co-operation. If we would "walk together as friends in the house of God," we should act together in the service of our Master. (*T. Preston, M.A.*) *Unity of the Christian brotherhood*.—"Many things," says Bishop Horne, "are good which are not pleasant, and many pleasant which are not good. But unity among brethren, whether civil or religious, is productive both of profit and of pleasure. Of profit, because therein consisteth the welfare and the security of every society; of pleasure, because mutual love is the source of delight, and the happiness of one becomes, in that case, the happiness of all." I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY AMONG BRETHREN. 1. They all receive the same infallible standard of belief and practice—the oracles of the living God. 2. An ingenuous and open avowal of the truths whereto they have already attained.

They must not disguise their convictions in deference to the judgment of others; nor even seem to approximate towards any view which is not, according to their conscientious judgment, founded on the Word of God. 8. Cordial acceptance of Christ and His great salvation. II. SEVERAL MEANS WHICH SUBSERVE ITS PROMOTION. The cultivation of "a meek and quiet spirit." 2. Habitual watchfulness against rash and uncandid judgments of our brethren. Let mutual jealousies and envyings be repressed as destructive of brotherly affection; and let there be no rivalry but that of provoking one another to love and good works. 8. Prayer—offering our united adorations, confessions, and thanksgivings at the throne of grace. (*J. Smyth, D.D.*) *The excellency of union*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. A oneness of sentiment. 2. A union in point of affection. 3. A sameness of principles. 4. Co-operation. II. ITS TRANSCENDENT EXCELLENCE. 1. Its moral fitness. 2. Its pleasing appearance. 3. Its beneficial influence. III. THE MEANS OF ITS PROMOTION. 1. We must avoid a spirit of evil surmising, and guard against hard and uncharitable thoughts in reference to our fellow-professors, resolutely resisting every inclination to evil speaking and detraction. 2. As we are regularly dependent upon God for strength and support, it is of the utmost importance that we maintain constant communion with Him by fervent prayer; also that we uniformly regulate our conduct and conversation by the sacred Scriptures; steadily and conscientiously using every means which has a tendency to unite us more closely to our Christian brethren. This subject—1. Excites to close and serious self-examination. 2. Teaches us that discord in religious societies impedes the progress of the Gospel. 3. Describes a line of conduct for us in the future part of life. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Unity among brethren*:—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS MEN ARE BRETHREN. 1. By creation. 2. By regeneration. 8. By ecclesiastical ties. II. WHAT COURSE WE MUST PURSUE TO PROMOTE UNITY. 1. Form correct views of our relation to God and one another. 2. A correct sense of justice between man and man. 3. Distinguish between men and their religious opinions. 4. Make suitable allowance for the infirmities of human nature. 5. Put the best possible construction on the conduct of our brethren, and be always ready to forgive an injury. III. ARGUMENTS FOR THE PURSUIT OF THIS COURSE. 1. The peace of society requires it. 2. The honour of our holy religion. 3. It is one of the best evidences we can give of the genuineness of our Christian experience. 4. Life will soon be over, and Christians hope to dwell together in perfect unity in the kingdom of heaven. (*T. Spicēr.*) *Let heaven's brotherhood come in all the earth*:—"Behold!" This is more than look! Looking is a shallow thing compared with beholding. To behold is to hold yourself on to the object in view. As though the inspired poet had said, Hold your eyes, hold your hearts in the contemplation of the blessed society and joyousness of men and women whose hearts beat in perfect unison with God and with each other. Sing of your fathers and mothers, sing of your wives and husbands when their funeral is over; sing that their death is past and their blessed life begun. How good and how pleasant it is for them to be at home in their paradises, with their kindred immortals! Our brothers and sisters above know that their unity is not of their own making; they know that they owe it to the one Life—the Life of the Lord's Love in them all. And they are quite as resolved to lead down this one Life into our bosoms as we are resolved to call it down. They are by no means losing heart, for their hearts live and beat in the all-patient, infinite Love of our common Father. On the contrary, they are fuller of hope and courage than ever; for the foretold consummation is nearing, and they are waxing stronger and stronger in the potency of Christ. The marriage of heaven and earth is coming (*Rev. xxi.; xxii.*). Let us believe that the hosts of our luminous friends above are intent on opening more direct pathways to our hearts, and that we and they are drawing nearer. The kingdom of heaven's law of enrichment is through giving, for giving enlarges the capacity of receiving. "Are they not all ministering spirits," who seek to intertwine their affections with our affections, in order to inweave heaven in our structure, and thus to make for us a more abundant entrance and welcome among them? The question which we must ask ourselves is, Are we making a corresponding use of our life in the flesh? Are we acquiring energies for future service and for higher honours and rewards? Do our deep wants awaken deep and intense prayers? Are we turning our temptations and sorrows to account by becoming more powerful in spirit? Jesus returned from His wilderness combats "in the power of the Spirit." Were a child buried and still alive, with what anguish it would cry for help that it might be delivered and brought home! Are

our cries piercing the heavens that we may be recovered from our lost estate, and inherit the eternal life with all our Father's household? If so, we are making essential and eternal profit out of our temporary earthliness. To become members of the all-blessed family we must be individually purified, enlarged, and unified. So long as we are mere segments of corrupt and dying humanity we shall never be appeased, nor realize our Father's purpose concerning us. We must be made whole. We must unite heaven and earth, God and nature in our personal experience. With the material universe, as a veil before our eyes, we must persistently hold the heavenly universe in our affections and thoughts. (*J. Pulsford, D.D.*)

The unity of believers:—The oil here specified was very sacred. It was prepared with four ingredients—myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. Its composition was thus a skilful union of diverse materials. Here were mingled the bitter, the aromatic, the sweet, the fragrant, substances very dissimilar, all compounded in the pure beaten oil. The prescription was Divine. The mystery and glory of true Christian oneness arises from its composite character. Men holding the same opinions in science, or philosophy, or theology, find it pleasant to dwell together in unity. True Christian brotherhood must be sought, not in doctrinal agreement, but in spiritual affinity. It is to be of spirits who are "in Christ." Life in Him is the basis, and variety the charm. The music of the true Church of God is a harmony rather than a melody. The garments of our King smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, not one fragrance alone. This truth has never been fully recognized by the Church. The Word of God is as full of commands to live in unity with the people of the Lord as it is to be separate from the people of the world. Separation from those who are His is as wrong as union with those who are not His. It is the downflowing and condescending that is common to both figures in the psalm. The precious ointment flows from head to beard, and from beard to the skirts of the garments. And the dew of lofty Hermon floats down to the mountains of Zion. The oneness of true believers is not to be cultivated amongst a select few, who have attained the lofty heights of some defined doctrinal scheme, but to pour out its fertilizing influence upon the lesser hills of Zion. And if this idea of downflowing be the true one, the figures are singularly suggestive. For the refreshment of the cool evening dew was far more precious in Zion than on Hermon. And assuredly the lesser hill had by far the greater honour. It was the lowly Zion, and not the snow-capped Hermon, that God chose for His tabernacle and the fountain-head of His blessing. It is the grandeur of the Christian life that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves. In the Hebrew the holy oil is said to descend upon the mouth of Aaron's garments. This has suggested a curious ancient comment. By the mouth, which the Chaldaic version translates the speech, is said to be meant the breastplate or Urim and Thummim, which was the mouth of the oracle of God. And in the second figure of the psalm the suggestion is that of condescending to come into contact with that which is of higher honour. The unction of holy love is to flow over our utterance. If we think we have the oracles of God we must speak the truth in love. On the lower edge of Aaron's robe were the golden bells which put forth sweet sounds wherever he went. All the music of our lives is to be sweetened with the consecrating unction of holy affection. (*J. H. Cooke.*)

Unity not uniformity:—Let a difference be observed between "unity" and uniformity. The one is a Divine, the other a human thing. Acts of uniformity are the product of man. God only can make us the subjects of sacred "unity." Uniformity we get in trees and hedges hacked, cut, and clipped, so as to reduce them to a common size and shape. "Unity" without uniformity we get in the trees of the forest, all growing according to the course of nature, of diverse shape, and size, and worth, but dependent for their wild strength and beauty on the same genial influences of nature, as they stretch out their thousand branches and myriad leaves to catch the light, and air, and dew, and showers of heaven. Uniformity we have in the classified assortment of flowers, arranged in pots or plots of ground according to their size and colour, no one sort allowed to mingle with another. "Unity" is the gathered bunch, worthy of the admiration of every beholder, whose difference of form, colour, and odour only adds to the loveliness of the flowers, which are all bound by one cord, enclosed in the one vessel, and made to drink of the same vital element—the liquid stream of life. We are told that it is highly probable that in the wide domain of material nature there are to be found no two things alike, not even two drops of water, or two flakes of snow. Who ever knew two human faces alike? or two voices with precisely the same

cadence? or two human forms identical in every particular? Is it, then, a thing of astonishment that in the mental and moral world there should be differences of thought, and judgment, and feelings? "One star difforth from another star in glory," but amid all the varied glories of the "heavens" there is no want of "unity." (*Anon.*) *Church union necessary to prosperity*.—Without union no Church can be prosperous. This, indeed, is applicable to all societies, whether small or great. A divided family: how unamiable! how helpless! A divided kingdom—a kingdom distracted with rival factions, and where the general welfare is overlooked: how can it stand! Its internal feuds tempt its stronger neighbour to make war upon it, and the aggression succeeds. And with still greater emphasis does this hold good as regards the Church. In this sacred territory no power is recognized except the law of love, and when this disappears the Spirit of God has no choice but to depart. And when the Spirit is thus grieved, and flies from the scene of discord, who takes His place? Satan, who glories in dissension, and who has no other pleasure than the dark and hateful one of vexing the Church of Christ, and of luring men's souls to perdition. In the Church, if anywhere on earth, peace should reign. If men's minds are agitated by wars and rumours of wars, there should be one place where angry passions are unknown. Let the winds and the rains beat upon the Church: within its hallowed walls harmonious sounds should alone be heard. "In the house of God," it was said nearly thirteen centuries ago, "in the Church of Christ they dwell with united affections, in concord, and in singleness of heart. And therefore came the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. A creature of cheerfulness and simplicity; bitter with no gall; fierce and violent with no savage beak and hooked talons; delighting in the dwellings of men, living together, and rearing their young in an house; flying side by side in their wanderings from their nests; sweetening life with society, and a natural affection; manifesting their peace with gentle kisses; and in all things living according to a law of love. Such simplicity, such love, should be seen in the Church; and from the dove the love of the brethren should take its pattern." (*N. McMichael.*) *Pleasantness of unity*.—It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for "pleasant" is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony; so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement. The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant—oh, how pleasant is it!—and such is the saints' agreement. The same word in the Psalms is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this to discover the pleasantness, profitableness, and sweetness of the saints' agreement. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves. (*W. Bridge.*) *Nature of vital union*.—The idea of unity does not demand the monotony of similarity, but unity in variety. Not the oneness of a trellis that supports the vine, or a pile of trellises, but of the plant which, with tendrils, leaf, and fruit, rears aloft in the summer air. Not the oneness of a stone or a pile of stones, but of a palace in which so many different materials and contrivances combine to shelter human life. Not the oneness of a child, but of a family of children who differ in age, character, and temperament, and chosen pursuits in life, but are one in love and tender sympathy. (*R. Venting.*) *Believers united*.—The Rev. Dr. Cuyler, seeing at a Union meeting a Congregationalist deacon and a Quaker and a Methodist standing with clasped hands, and flanked by Baptist and Presbyterian clergymen, said, "It reminded me of the time when we college students were standing thus in the chemical lecture hall. The electric current leaped from the charged battery through the whole circle in an instant." Thus will it be when the whole body of believers are linked to each other and to their Head. (*E. P. Thwing.*) *Unity by higher life and fellowship*.—Two men may start to ascend some lofty Alpine peak from points many miles apart down in the valley. They climb the steepes, they scale the narrow ledges that overlook the chasm; at times they are shrouded in the cloud-mist, and you begin to say they will never meet. Ah! but wait a while. Before the night falls they reach the sun-gilt summit, and, resting their

worn limbs and refreshing their hungry and thirsty spirits, they find time and taste for pleasant intercourse before they fall asleep in the little hostel on the mountain-top. So many who seem hopelessly divided in opinion and creed when on the lower plane of life and experience, have only to climb to loftier heights of Divine truth to discover their oneness in the Lord, and their enjoyment of His bounty, and therein their fellowship one with the other. More abundant life is the Divine philosophy of more abiding unity between Christians. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Strength in unity*:—Take up a thread, untwist it, and you shall find that it is made up of several threads, untwisting which, you shall find that they, also, are made up in the same way, and so on, and so on. Fit symbol of the true relationship of each member of any human family, or of the larger family of the Church, or the great Church of Churches, the Church of the living God. The various threads, so weak alone, become strong and mighty when twisted together; and, just as any cord is easiest broken where one or more of the threads are separated, so is it in the Church. Just because of increased strength in unity, in disunity there is increased weakness. If thou canst not take the place of a bigger thread, thou canst very easily take that of a lesser; and of the least the biggest are made. (*Sword and Trowel.*)

Ver. 2. It is like the precious ointment.—*Unity compared to oil*:—1. It is precious ointment. It is not to common and ordinary use; oil of any consideration whatsoever, but the best and choicest that could be lighted on: like that wherewith Mary Magdalene anointed Christ before His passion (Mark xiv. 3). Such was this whereunto the concord of brethren is compared here in this Scripture. To set forth unto us the preciousness and excellency of it. It is a virtue of very rare account, and so to be esteemed of by us. It is such which carries a good name and report with it, and accordingly like that is also better than precious ointment. 2. It is compared not to oil enclosed and shut up in a vessel, but to oil effused and poured forth abroad, which is more significant, as that which does cast forth a special fragrant and odoriferousness with it. Look how a box of precious ointment when it is broken casts forth such a smell as does refresh the nostrils and brains of all such persons as are made partakers of it. So in like manner the unity of brethren is very sweet to all that observe it. 3. It is not the anointing only of some Levite, or common priest, but the anointing of Aaron himself, who was the highest priest of all, and therein a special type of Christ, as prefigured, and shadowed out in him. 4. It was not oil which rested only upon Aaron's head, but ran down upon his beard, and from thence further to the skirts of his garments, which is a lively description to us of the property of this grace of love and brotherly agreement. It is such as does not rest itself only in those who are the next and immediate subjects of it, but it conveys itself to many others. Love it is of a very diffusive and communicative disposition. (*T. Horton, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. As the dew of Hermon.—*The spirit of brotherhood like dew*:—I. Brotherly love is SILENT, NOT DEMONSTRATIVE. Nothing in nature is more silent than the dew. The rain rattles, the wind howls, and the ocean booms, but the dew descends serenely and unheard. Genuine love is never noisy. The deepest emotions are always the most silent; the shallowest the most tumultuous. II. Brotherly love is VITAL, NOT MECHANICAL. How refreshing is the dew! It gives new life and verdure to all it touches. Brotherly love is independent of organizations, it is independent of all social mechanisms. III. Brotherly love is DIVINE RATHER THAN HUMAN. Whence comes the dew? It descends from above. All true love comes from God, as all light from the sun. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Brotherly love*:—I. IT IS A SURE BOND OF UNION. Hermon is in the north and Zion is in the south: morning by morning the sun, Nature's great distiller, extracted moisture from the snow-peaked Hermon, and the clouds wafted southward shed their treasure on the hill of Zion. Thus the various parts of the land served one another in God's natural order. So brotherly love with its mutual service binds the home, the city, the land. No system of unity can be otherwise founded if it is to be secure. Force directed by selfishness can never make a true bond. II. IT IS GOD'S METHOD OF BENEDICTION. "For there the Lord commanded the blessing." The psalmist recognizes in the periodical worship of Zion an occasion of this brotherly love, and speaks therefore of the love as God's blessing vouchsafed there. And all such love has its source in God. Apart from Him we should not know its delights. It is the way He promotes our happiness by filling us with a

desire to help one another. We are severally channels of God's help. III. It is HEAVEN BEGUN. "Even life for evermore." What can this phrase mean but that true love is immortal. Has not St. John taught us that to truly and purely love is to share the life of God? In so far as we love, then, we already have imparted to our life an undying element—we participate to that extent in the "pleasures that are for evermore." (W. Hawkins.) *As the dew:*—1. As the dew comes down from the heaven above upon the earth beneath, so is brotherly unity, in its production and increase, the gift of the Divine spirit of love, the fountain of blessing to the whole Church. 2. As the dew descends silently and imperceptibly, till it covers the whole face of the ground, so is the affection of Christian brethren diffused amongst themselves by a quiet and gentle progress, till the plentiful appearance, and happy effects of it, are manifest to the world. 3. As the dew, consisting of many millions of drops, refreshes the fruits of the earth by their joint influence, so is the Church edified by the love of many; its prosperity and fertility depend upon the united love of all its members. (W. Jones, M.A.) *The dew of Hermon:*—The dew of Hermon and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, to which the psalmist referred—differs entirely from the ordinary dew of our country—and is a phenomenon peculiar to Palestine and the East. It is a soft mist that comes from the Mediterranean during the summer, when the heat is greatest, and the country is burnt up with the terrible sunshine. It is attracted by the inland heights, and condensed in copious moisture upon their sides, and creeps down upon the plains, reviving and refreshing every green thing. It comes first of all to Mount Hermon, and helps to keep up its unchanging robe of snow, and to fill its springs, and feed its cedars, and then it flows down and makes the corn to grow green in the valleys, and the vines to swell out their purple grapes in the vineyards, and the lilies to unfold their crimson radiance in the fields. And it is to this wonderful phenomenon that the psalmist compares the unity and harmony of those who dwell together as brethren. It is a most beautiful and expressive image. For just as Mount Hermon that is high above the plains and valleys of Palestine, benefits them by its clouds and rains and streams, imparts to them the blessings it receives from heaven, and thus becomes essential to their life and well-being; so these plains and valleys in turn have helped to elevate and maintain Hermon on his throne, and send up to it their evaporations and radiations to become the sources of its spotless snows, its billowy clouds, and its sparkling streams and cooling winds. They help it as much as it helps them. They are mutually dependent upon each other. The lowly plain does not envy the lofty mountain; nor does the lofty mountain look down in contempt upon the lowly plain. They are associated together in physical harmony. They are there in the close relation to each other appointed by Him who weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance; and they could have no other position or shape or function. The one could not do or even be without the other. So would the psalmist have the inhabitants of the Holy Land to live. Let the religion of Ephraim be like the all-pervading fragrance of the holy oil of the temple in Judah; and let the religion of Judah be like the moisture that is borne from the snow-capped Hermon in Ephraim, and falls in refreshing drops upon the dry southern hills of Judah. The covenant people had lost the blessing through their division; they were weakened, and, in consequence, were carried away captive, and their land was made desolate. But now, if they become reunited and continue, in mutual harmony and brotherly kindness, to help and encourage each other in the good work for which God had prepared and called them; if they observe together the same ordinances of religion, and preserve together the purity of their national faith, then God would remove the threat, and command upon them the blessing, even life for evermore. Their land would become once more a land flowing with milk and honey; and they themselves would be once more a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people zealous of good works. And so would it be with every family and Church and nation still that dwelt together in the unity and harmony of love. God would command there the blessing, even continuous and prosperous life. Especially in the Church would this goodness and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity be felt. When will Churches recognize the fact that they are meant to provoke one another not to envy and jealousy but unto all good works? When will their members learn the great truth that God bestows the blessings of salvation upon individuals, not that these blessings may be confined to them, but that they may be diffused by them? But the earthly Hermon is only the type of the heavenly—the shadow of something grander and more enduring.

There are everlasting hills to which we are to lift up our eyes, rocks higher than any in this world. From them come to us the dew of grace, and the river that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb; and God there indeed commands the blessing, even life for evermore. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) **For there the Lord commanded the blessing.**—*Commanded blessing*:—It is an allusion, possibly, to great persons, to a general, or an emperor: "Where the word of a king is, there is power." The centurion said, "I say to one soldier, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doeth it." So God commandeth one ordinance, "Go and build up such a saint," and it goeth; He saith to another ordinance, "Come, and call home such a sinner," and it doth it; God's words and work go together. Men cannot enable others, or give them power to obey them; they may bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see; but they cannot enable them to walk or see: God with His Word giveth strength to do the thing commanded; as in the old, so in the new creation, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9). But there the Lord commands His blessing, "even life for evermore." The stream of regeneration, or a spiritual life, which shall never cease, but still go forward and increase, till it swell to, and be swallowed up in the ocean of eternal life, "even life for evermore." (*G. Swinnock.*) **Even life for evermore.**—*Eternity*:—The thought of eternity is in us all—a presentiment and a consciousness; and that universal presentiment itself goes far to establish the reality of the unseen order of things to which it is directed. The great planet that moves on the outmost circle of our system was discovered because that next it wavered in its course in a fashion which was inexplicable, unless some unknown mass was attracting it from across millions of miles of darkling space. And there are "perturbations" in our spirits which cannot be understood, unless from them we may divine that far-off and unseen world, that has power from afar to sway in their orbits the little lives of mortal men. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Unending life**:—We, of this century, often smile over the foolish alchemists of long ago, forgetting that such is man's love of existence that in all ages he has eagerly sought some true "elixir of life." And whether that supposed but ever elusive boon be pure gold, as with the early alchemists, or "extract of mutton," as Professor Kedzie calls the elixir of Dr. Brown-Séquard, the motive of search is the same. So, "though great the hope and slow to die," no ancient nor modern alchemy can prolong existence, which hath for each of us been set beyond the point Divinely determined. How strange is it, then, that men are so slow to seek that One who is our life for evermore, who by His loving grace offereth life and immortality to all! (*G. V. Reichel.*)

PSALM CXXXIV.

VERS. 1-3. Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord.—*Man blessing the Lord and the Lord blessing man*:—The two first verses of this psalm—the last of the Pilgrim Psalms—are addressed by the congregation to the priests and Levites who had charge of the temple during the night (1 Chron. ix. 27-33). The last verse seems to be the answer of the priests in dismissing the people with a blessing. I. MAN is here represented as **BLESSING THE LORD**. "Bless ye the Lord." That is, praise ye the Lord—worship Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth. II. The LORD is here represented as **BLESSING MAN** (ver. 3). This is the usual form of priestly benediction (Num. vi. 24). 1. The Author of the blessing. "The Lord that made heaven and earth." What a condescension in Him, what an honour for us! 2. The condition of the blessing. He will bless us on the condition that we bless Him or worship Him. So it ever is, there is a Divine blessing in worship. (*Homilist.*) *Pastors and people*:—It seems unnecessary, and is perhaps impossible, to determine whether this last of the fifteen Songs of Degrees was meant for the pilgrims on their arrival at the temple, or when they appeared within its courts, or on their departure from its sacred threshold. Adapted to particular occasions, yet it was not unfit for repetition anywhere, outside or within Jehovah's dwelling-place, on the road to or from Jerusalem, with the lips or only in the mind. It includes a greeting and a reply. An exhortation to ministerial duty, expressing encouragement and approval, is answered by an

affectionate benediction. As the two commandments of our Lord condense the law, this brief dramatic song is a summary of worship. 1. It is to be expected of ministers that with humble gladness they deem themselves, and show that they wish to be considered "servants of the Lord." They are also servants of the Church (2 Cor. iv. 5). But they may no more follow the will of men, as if blind slaves to the congregation, than their own independent will, "as being lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter v. 3). It must be their great concern to ascertain, obey and teach the will of their Supreme Master. Having received Divine instruction, they must, in a becoming spirit and manner, fearless of consequences, speak and act accordingly (1 Cor. iv. 1-4; 2 Tim. ii. 3; 1 Pet. iv. 10). The address in the psalm implies a call upon ministers to speak in their lives what they say with their lips, and be themselves the blessing they pronounce. The margin reads, "Lift up your hands in holiness." "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye," etc. (Luke vi. 42). "Be thou an example of the believers," etc. (1 Tim. iv. 12). Merit the title we give you of "servants of the Lord." Deserve, as far as possible, to praise Jehovah for the congregation, and in His name to bless His people. 2. What the people of God require their pastors to be and do they aim at for themselves in prayer and practice. Language like this in the psalm, addressed to the Lord's servants in the place "where prayer is wont to be made," implies the possession of a praying spirit, and an engagement to offer prayer. We cannot turn our wishes and counsels into prayer without also, in our relation and degree, turning them into practice. The psalm implies that all who use it, in the spirit of it, people as well as pastors, are servants of the Lord; and in nearly every respect the duty of ministers of religion exhibits that of their fellow-worshippers. And not only in the worship of the temple and the reading of the sacred volume, but in the cleanness of your hands, in the purity of your hearts, in the holiness of your lives be as consistent as you would have your ministers. (*E. J. Robinson.*) *The pilgrims' farewell to Zion*:—The pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their Psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse. The priests as good as say, "You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray the Lord to bless you." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Which by night stand in the house of the Lord.**—*The charge to the watchers in the temple*:—This psalm, the shortest but one in the whole Psalter, will be more intelligible if we observe that in the first part of it more than one person is addressed, and in the last verse a single person. No doubt, when used in the temple service, the first part was chanted by one half of the choir, and the other part by the other. Who are the persons addressed in the first portion? The answer stands plain in ver. 1. They are the priests or Levites whose charge it was to patrol the temple through the hours of night and darkness, to see that all was safe and right there, and to do such other priestly and ministerial work as was needful; they are called upon to "lift up their hands in"—or rather towards—"the sanctuary, and to bless the Lord." The charge is given to these watching priests, these nightly warders, by some single person—we know not whom. Perhaps by the High Priest, perhaps by the captain of their band. They listen to the exhortation to praise, and answer, in the last words of this little psalm, by invoking a blessing on the head of the unnamed speaker who gave the charge. **I. THE CHARGE TO THE WATCHERS.** "Bless ye the Lord." It is because they are the servants of the Lord that, therefore, it is their business to bless the Lord. It is because they stand in the house of the Lord that it is theirs to bless the Lord. So for us Christians. We are servants of the Lord—His priests. That we "stand in the house of the Lord" expresses not only the fact of our great privilege of confiding approach to Him and communion with Him, whereby we may ever abide in the very Holy of Holies, and be in the secret place of the Most High, even while we are busy in the world, but it also points to our duty of ministering; for the word "stand" is employed to designate the attendance of the priests in their office, and is almost equivalent to "serve." "To bless the Lord," then, is the work to which we are especially called. And then there is another lesson here, and that is that all times are times

for blessing God. Although no sacrifice was smoking on the altar, and no choral songs went up from the company of praising priests in the ritual service; and although the nightfall had silenced the worship and scattered the worshippers, yet some low murmur of praise would be echoing through the empty halls all the night long, and the voice of thanksgiving and of blessing would blend with the clank of the priests' feet on the marble pavements as they went their patrolling rounds; and their torches would send up a smoke not less acceptable than the wreathing columns of the incense that had filled the day. And so as in some convents you will find a monk kneeling on the steps of the altar at each hour of the four-and-twenty, adoring the sacrament exposed upon it, so in the Christian heart there should be a perpetual adoration and a continual praise—a prayer without ceasing. What is it that comes first of all into your minds when you wake in the middle of the night? Yesterday's business, to-morrow's vanities, or God's present love and your dependence upon Him? In the night of sorrow, too, do our songs go up, and do we hear and obey the charge which commands not only perpetual adoration, but bids us fill the night with music and with praise? Well for us if it be anticipating the time when "they rest not day nor night saying Holy! Holy! Holy!" II. THE ANSWERING BLESSING (ver. 3). May we venture to draw from this interchange of counsel and benediction a simple lesson as to the best form in which mutual goodwill and friendship may express itself? It is by the interchange of stimulus to God's service and praise, and of grateful prayer. He is my best friend who stirs me up to make my whole life a strong sweet song of thanksgiving to God for all His numberless mercies to me. Even if the exhortation becomes rebuke, faithful are such wounds. It is but a shallow affection which can be eloquent on other subjects of common interests, but is dumb on this, the deepest of all; which can counsel wisely and rebuke gently in regard to other matters, but has never a word to say to its dearest concerning duty to the God of all mercies. And the true response to any loving exhortation to bless God, or any religious impulse which we receive from one another, is to invoke God's blessing on faithful lips that have given us counsel. But observe, further, the two kinds of blessing which answer to one another—God's blessing of man, and man's blessing of God. The one is communicative, the other receptive and responsive. The one is the great stream which pours itself over the precipice; the other is the basin into which it falls, and the showers of spray which rise from its surface, rainbowed in the sunshine, as the cataract of Divine mercies comes down upon it. God blesses us when He gives. We bless God when we thankfully take, and praise the Giver. God's blessing, then, must ever come first. Ours is but the echo of His, but the acknowledgment of the Divine act, which must precede our recognition of it as the dawn, must come in order that the birds may wake to sing. Our highest service is to take the gifts of God and with glad hearts to praise the Giver. Our blessings are but words. God's blessings are realities. We wish good to one another when we bless each other. But He does good to men when He blesses them. Observe, too, the channel through which God's blessings come—"out of Zion." For the Jew the fulness of the Divine glory dwelt between the cherubim, and the richest of the Divine blessings were bestowed on the waiting worshippers there. And no doubt it is still true that God dwells in Zion, and blesses men from thence. The New Testament analogue to the Old Testament temple is no outward building. A material type must have a spiritual fulfilment. In the true sense, Jesus Christ is the Temple. In Him God dwelt; in Him man meets God; in Him was the place of Revelation; in Him the place of Sacrifice. "In this place is one greater than the temple," and the abiding of Jehovah above the mercy-seat was but a material symbol, shadowing and foretelling the true indwelling of all the fulness of the Godhead bodily in that true tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man. So the great Fountain of all possible good and benediction, which was opened for the believing Jew in "Zion," is opened for us in Jesus Christ who stood in the very court of the temple, and called in tones of clear, loud invitation: "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." There is another application of the temple symbol in the New Testament—a derivative and secondary one—to the Church, that is, to the aggregate of believers. In it God dwells through Christ. Receiving His Spirit, instinct with His life it is His Body, and as in His earthly life "He spake of the temple of His 'literal' body," so now that Church becomes the temple of God, being builded through the ages. In that Zion all God's best blessings are possessed and stored, that the Church may by faithful service impart them to the

world. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Watchers by night*:—Who are these night watchers, and to whom does the psalmist refer? Probably there were guards or sentinels set to pace the sacred courts and to trim the lamps which burned dim within that holy place, which was the presence-chamber of the great King. The gloom must have been oppressive, and sometimes they must have trembled as they paced the long corridors and looked up at the vast vault overhead, through which a dim lamp or two shot a feeble ray like a star seen through the rack of clouds on a stormy night. To cheer these watchers, and to impress on them that solitude is not awful if God's presence be there, this psalm was probably written. It was written for us, too, who have to pass through the same solitude, and to stand by night in the house of the Lord. There is, then, a night-time of sorrow and suffering here on earth, during which we may be said to be like watchers in the outer courts of God's temple. But there is a completer sense of the passage than this, and it is to this second sense that I wish to turn your attention. It is well to take the calm expression of the psalmist, and apply it in this way, "Ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord." In this temple there is an inner shrine, where all is dark, and yet amid the solemn gloom God's presence is felt to be inexpressibly near. No conception of the middle or waiting state between death and the general resurrection is so near the mark as this. Suspended activity, but not suspended consciousness—this sets us thinking what can be the occupation of those who are set to stand as watchers by night in the house of the Lord. May it not be that this is the very counteraction necessary for the undue activities of our too busy, bustling existence on earth? Now, are we willing to be watchers by night in the house of the Lord? I use the term "night" in two senses. There is a night-time of sorrow here, and of separation hereafter from those we love on earth. We have to pass through these two seasons of watching—an evening and a midnight watch, as I may describe them by way of contrast. It is the faithful watcher on earth who will stand by night and watch in the house of the Lord during the interval between death and the Resurrection morning. Season of solitude here, in which we get spiritual strength through loneliness and isolation from our fellow-men, will prepare us for that midnight watch when we are called within the veil and there stand and wait for the full morning of Resurrection blessedness. What hours of weariness under pain and privation of the usual outlets for activity in the affairs of life many of us are to pass through God only knows. Some have had to pass through long years of such watching. Our soul, then, waits for the Lord—in the pathetic language of the psalmist, "more, I say, than they that wait for the morning." But such discipline has its uses. Silent suffering is a school, and hours of loneliness are also a school quite as much or even more than racking pain or positive privation. It disciplines us in faith and patience. It strengthens the character by forcing us to see that all our fresh springs must be in God and in Him alone. In all this Christ was our example, and, more than this, our forerunner. (J. B. Heard, M.A.) *Hours of watching need not be lost*:—They may by prayer and praise become times of spiritual power. All earth is the temple of the Lord. Many have to keep night watches. Some, through sleeplessness, wait anxiously for the morning. Some have to sit in the sad sick-chamber by the side of the fevered, restless sleeper in disease. Some on the ship's deck look out on the black, hissing waters and watch the stars roll by. To them comes the exhortation, "Lift up your hands in prayer and bless the Lord." Let a spirit of devotion engage your thought and feeling. Amidst the forces that affect men, who can estimate the influence of holy night watchers who call on God in prayer? The Lord blesses out of Zion. The refreshing showers which cleanse the plants and bedew the flowers, which fill the watercourses and cause the rivers to roll, take their rise in quiet uprising mists often by night. So the showers of blessing the Lord God pours out on His people spring from the quiet mists of prayer ever uprising to the heavens from holy souls in retirement. It is the Divine plan. For the blessings of His grace He will be sought. "More things are done by prayer than this world dreams of." Hear a mythic tale. One night Rabbi Ben Israel sat through the dark hours in anxious thought, desiring to know the forces at work in the nation. He would trace effects to their cause. When an aged beggar knocked at his door and asked for food, the rabbi rose from his meditations and gave him his own supper, which he had not touched. Then the stranger told him he was an angel in disguise, and bid him come forth, as he was about to visit the man of greatest power in the city. First they took their way towards the

palace, and the rabbi said to himself, "Surely it is the king," but the stranger led him past the royal entrance. Then they turned and went to the quarter where the general of the army lived, and the rabbi thought, "Surely it is the captain of the host," but they passed his door. They passed the abodes of men of wealth, great councillors, and that of the high priest, but visited none of these. At length they came to the gate of the temple, which opened at the touch of the angel. They passed the outer court. The angel pointed out to the rabbi the Levite in charge, who was lifting up his hands in earnest prayer for the people. Then the rabbi learned that, as the Lord is the most powerful of all, and has all the hosts of earth and heaven under His control, the man who can prevail with Him must be the mightiest on earth. Prayer can do more than the merchant's gold, the soldier's sword, or the king's sceptre. (*J. H. Cooke.*)

Ver. 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary.—*The sanctuary*:—The uses and meaning of this word "sanctuary" are very interesting and instructive. In all countries and in all ages the word has been used to denote a place set apart for special and sacred uses: among the heathen, to the temples of their first deities; among the Jews, to the temple of the true Jehovah; among ourselves, to the places of our holy assembling. But there is a yet deeper sense in which this word "sanctuary" is used of a holy place. It is made to denote the sacreddest part of sacred places: among the heathen, to the inner shrines of their gods; among the Jews, the Holy of Holies, into which the high priest alone could enter; among ourselves, that sacreddest part of our sacred places where the mysteries of the blessed Sacrament are celebrated. Then, again, the word is used to denote a place of refuge: such places the heathen had in their shrines of justice; such places the Jews had in those cities of refuge of which we read in the books of Moses; such place we have had in Christendom until very lately; places, as the lawyers call them, places of sanctuary. One of the last of these was in the precinct of the Savoy in London; I believe there is one still remaining in the palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh. Then, again, the word "sanctuary" is used to denote a place of purification. Such places the heathen had, and still have, in their various rites of ablution; such places the Jews had in the ceremonies of purification; such places we have in the font of holy baptism. And then, lastly, this word is used to denote a place of rest and refreshment, of joy and of hope. Such places both heathen and Jew had in those groves which they used to plant, and those wells which they used to dig in the arid, burning deserts, where the pilgrims found shelter from the sun, and water to quench their thirst. Such places we have in Christendom in abundance. Every hospital in this city, every orphanage, every penitentiary, every almshouse, every school,—all these are places of sanctuary, where the young can be taught to love and serve God, where the sick can be healed and gladdened, where the orphan can be cherished and cared for, where old age can be tended and sheltered from the outside world. There are times in the most sheltered life when we long to find some quiet refuge where we may pour out our souls before God. We need constant cleansing, and the word denotes a place of purification. We are ever tempted to think that in this sin-stained world such purification is impossible, and there are some who find purity in the seclusion of the convent or monastery. But most of us must find it whilst in contact with the world's dangers and difficulties, and we may do it without missing our way. Ye may be in the world without being of the world. This aim of purity may consecrate all we do, and we can never rest until our aim of purity is every day higher, and our attainment every day richer and truer. The sanctuary is a place of refreshment, and of joy, peace, and hope. In this hard-working world we need a place where the world cannot worry us. At the time of the plague in Milan a great cardinal used to say that if it had not been for the morning and evening rest in the sanctuary he should never have been able, as he did, to pass through that trial of strength and courage which his devoted work in the city involved. And when we enter the sanctuary for rest, and for a blessing, our work itself becomes a rest and a stimulating refreshment. Lastly, the sanctuary is the home of hope. Whatever the world may have to promise us in the day of prosperity, it offers us nothing when the day of darkness and distress comes, or when disappointment overtakes us. This beautiful grace of hope may not seem so necessary for us when the sun of our life is shining brightly, when friends are many, and fortune is favourable, and prospects good; but wait until the days of loss and sickness come, when friends have taken to themselves wings, when you are covered with

disaster; wait till you follow to the grave a wife, a sister, a brother, a friend; then where shall hope be found? Not on earth, not in the world, but in the sanctuary we learn what true consolation is. That hope gives us to know even here something of the life which is beyond, a hope of immortality. (*H. White, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.—Mutual benediction:—We may suppose these words to be addressed to the sacred sentinels by the head of their course, or by the captain of the guard, or even by the high priest. We can imagine the captain of the guard coming in during the night watches, and saying to the priests who were guarding the temple (ver. 1). Or we could imagine the high priest, when the watch was set for the first part of the night, going to the priests who were under his control, and addressing to them these same soul-stirring words. Now our text is the response of these sacred sentinels. As they listened to the captain of the guard, or to the high priest, telling them to worship by night in the courts of the Lord—to lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord—they answered him, "The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion." So that here you have brought before you the interesting and instructive subject of mutual benediction—the saints blessing each other. **I. JEHOVAH—THE FOUNTAIN OF BLESSING.** There is in the Divine nature an infinite and everlasting disposition to do us good; and connected with that infinite and everlasting disposition to do us good are all power, all knowledge, all wisdom, absolute independence and eternity of being. And we find actual blessings on God's part according to that capacity. He does not bless as His creatures bless—often unwisely, often insufficiently, often half-heartedly—but when God blesses, He blesses with all that is within Him; with all that can be employed in that particular act and work of blessing. **II. THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, EVIDENCE OF DIVINE CAPACITY TO BLESS.** While we, of course, look chiefly and supremely to the manifestation of God's goodness in our Lord and Saviour, we ought not to overlook the expressions of His care and kindness which we find in the grass of the field, and in the very dust which we tread beneath our feet. **III. THE CHURCH A CHANNEL OF BLESSING.** The Church is the conservator of Divine revelation,—the Church is the offerer on earth of true worship—it consists of a company of priests, a royal priesthood, part of whose mission is "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The Church is the heritor of the covenants. God's covenants are made with His Church, and His promises are addressed chiefly to His Church. The Church is the scene of special Divine ministrations. God shows Himself to His Church as He does not to that which is called the world. It is also the scene of special heavenly influences: and in a sense next to that in which God is said to reside in heaven, the Church is the dwelling-place of the Most High. Now, what is it to be blessed out of Zion? It is surely to be blessed with Zion's blessings, and to have Zion's endowments and gifts rendered sources of advantage and profit to us. **IV. THE SAINTS AS THE MEANS OF SPREADING THE BLESSING, AND THAT, TOO, BY THE SPIRIT OF BLESSING.** "The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion." "Bless thee!" You know where this was first said, and when. The Fountain of Blessing first said it. He said it in Paradise to our first father and mother when, beautiful in holiness, and glorious in uprightness and goodness, they came fresh from His hand. As their Creator, He said to them both, "Bless thee"; and we have learned to say, "Bless thee," from our Father in heaven, the Fountain of Blessing. We never should have said to each other, "Bless thee," had not God taught us; and when we say it, we but echo His voice. "Bless you," said the Son of God to the multitude around Him. And, "Bless you," said He emphatically to His apostles when He was about to leave them—when He was about to ascend from Olivet, and depart out of their sight. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." "Bless you," said the apostles to the Churches. How full of benedictions are these glorious epistles! "Grace, mercy, and peace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." And what has this to do with spreading the Divine blessing? Much every way. Such benediction, when sincere, and when not a mere form of words, is prayer. And every promise that is made to prayer is made to benediction. So that he who is possessed by the spirit of blessing, and who expresses it in his behaviour, and in his deportment, is constantly supplicating the throne of the heavenly grace on behalf of others. **V. THE RICHES INVOLVED IN THE DIVINE BENEDICTION.** It means, The Lord speak comfortably to thee. It means, The Lord

keep thee; the Lord be thy shepherd; the Lord restore thy soul when thy spirit wanders; the Lord keep thee in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake; the Lord hold up thy goings in His paths, that thy footsteps slip not; the Lord be thy light and thy salvation; God be thy refuge and strength, thy present help in trouble. May morning follow the night, and the night be driven away by the lifting up of the light of the countenance of the loving God—by expressions of His love adapted to the time of sorrow, and to the state of depression and despondency." "The Lord give thee peace,"—that is, prosperity, well-being, health in the soul, comfort in the heart, rest, joy, quiet in the spirit. (*S. Martin.*) *The universe*:—I. THE UNIVERSE HAD AN ORIGIN. The heaven and the earth are not eternal, they had a beginning (Gen. i. 1). II. THE ORIGINATOR OF THE UNIVERSE WAS ONE. "The Lord." He created it alone. There was no one to instruct Him in planning it, no one to aid Him in building it up. III. THE ONE ORIGINATOR OF THE UNIVERSE IS THE OBJECT FOR UNIVERSAL PRAISE. "Bless the Lord." True worship should be, therefore—1. Unaided. There is no one to share the praise. 2. Enthusiastic. This One Being should be the all-in-all of the soul. 3. Incessant. He is ever-present, ever-giving, ever-sustaining, ever-inspiring. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *God, more than His gifts*:—At a camp at Goshen, N.Y., a minister was shouting to inquirers to persevere in seeking the blessing, when Rev. Dr. Inskip, the master spirit, cried out, "Get the blessing! Humph! Get the Blesser!" Says Monod: "You cannot separate any one gift of Christ from Himself, from His person. He that hath the Son hath life." (*E. P. Thwing.*)

PSALM CXXXV.

VERS. 1-21. *Praise ye the Lord.*—*The sublime object of worship*:—I. IN HIS ABSOLUTE GOODNESS (vers. 1-3). He is "good"—essentially, eternally, infinitely, immutably. II. IN HIS RELATIVE KINDNESS (ver. 4). Britain is more favoured than ever Palestine was. It is the land of liberty, Bibles, churches, etc. III. IN HIS TRANSCENDENT SUPREMACY (ver. 5). He is King of all kings, and Lord of all lords. IV. IN HIS SOVEREIGN OPERATIONS (vers. 6-12). 1. In material nature (vers. 6, 7). 2. In human history (vers. 8-12). V. IN HIS ENDLESS EXISTENCE (vers. 13, 14). 1. His character is everlasting. 2. His remembrance is everlasting. 3. His kindness is everlasting. VI. IN HIS UNAPPROACHABLE GREATNESS (vers. 15-18). Idols, what are they to Him? What are the highest objects of the earth to Him? CONCLUSION—Do not the aspects in which the author of this ode presents Jehovah manifest His supreme claim to the hallelujah of all souls? (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. *The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself.*—*A strange yet gracious choice*:—This is a psalm of praise all through. It is to be sung to the high-sounding cymbals. There is not a low note anywhere; it is all robust, exhilarating, joyful. It is "Hallelujah!" from beginning to end; and it did not seem possible to the psalmist that he could omit from it the high jubilant note of election; for if there is anything that makes believers' hearts sing unto the Lord, it is the recollection that He has chosen them, and fixed His love upon them. I. THE CHOICE. 1. Divine. 2. Sovereign—irrespective of character. 3. Most gracious. 4. Very wonderful. When you have told me why He chose Jacob, I shall then try to find out why He chose me; and if I should find that out, probably you will at the same time discover why He chose you. God never acts unreasonably; yet He does not find His reasons for acting in men, but within Himself, in His compassion, in the eternal counsels of His own will. II. THE REASON OR RESULT OF GOD'S CHOICE. 1. That we might know Him. 2. That we might keep His truth alive in the world. 3. To keep up His worship. 4. That He might commune with us. III. THE SEPARATION WHICH GROWS OUT OF THIS CHOICE. He led Israel out into the wilderness that there He might speak to their hearts. He drew them away from men; He made them live solitary and alone, like eagles on the rock, that they might dwell there with Him, and have no strange god among them. Blessed are the people who enjoy this separation; but unhappy are the men and women who talk about election, and yet have never

known the separation which stamps their election as being a matter of fact. IV. **THEIR ELEVATION.** "His peculiar treasure." God's people are everything to Him; there is nothing that you have, that you account rich or rare, that is anything to you in value in comparison with what God's people are to Him. His delight is in them: the pleasure which God has in His people is truly wonderful. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 5. I know that the Lord is great.—A great God.—Right views of God lie at the foundation of all right religion. If our views of God are spiritual, scriptural—if they have a sanctifying tendency in our souls—we are right in other things. If we are wrong in this, we are wrong in all things: like the error in the proof-sheet, all goes through wrong. If we are right here, we are at the foundation of all that is right. I. **THE GREATNESS OF GOD.** God is great. If I look at Him in His being, He is great; if I look at Him in His perfections, He is great; if I look at Him in creation, He is great; if I look at Him in His providence, He is great; if I look at Him in His law, He is great; and still more gloriously does He appear great in the greatness of His Gospel. II. **THE CERTAINTY WHICH DAVID SEEMED TO FEEL OF THIS BEING THE TRUTH.** "I know" it, he says. There was a special inspiration, I doubt not; but he was led into the school of holy experience; he knew that God was great; and so does every child of God. He knows that He is great in His regenerating grace. Equally great is the work of revealing Christ. He has given you His Son, He has given you His Spirit, He has given you Himself, He has given you His Word, He has given you His promises, He has given you the foretastes of heaven; and He expects from you the very best that you have, to be given up to Him to be His own, because He is a great God. (J. H. Evans, M.A.)

Ver. 6. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He.—The activity of God.—I. **GOD ACTS.** He is the great worker,—never resting, never failing, never wearying,—the worker of all workers, the motor in all motions. II. **GOD ACTS EVERYWHERE.** In the heavens He rolls the massive orbs of space; on the earth He maketh the grass to grow and clotheth the earth with verdure. III. **GOD ACTS FROM AND FOR HIMSELF.** 1. **From Himself.** Our activity is often excited and controlled by something external to ourselves. His never. Nothing ab extra. No ruling principles or persons, not all the hierarchies of intelligences, nor the rushing forces and forms of universal matter can excite Him. His action is that of absolute spontaneity. He is responsible to no one. 2. **For Himself.** There is no other reason for His activity but what pleases Him. The chief measure of any moral intelligence is the gratification of His predominant disposition. In God this is love. Hence His pleasure in creating the universe and sustaining it is the diffusion of His own happiness. His pleasure is the pleasure of His creatures; His happiness and theirs are identical. (David Thomas, D.D.)

Ver. 15. The idols . . . are silver and gold.—The gold-god.—Idolatry consists in giving to any object, whether animate or inanimate, the work of man's hands, or the work of the Divine hands, the love and worship which belongs to the Supreme Existence. "Thou shalt have no other God but Me." But to have Him means to love Him with all the heart, mind, and strength. The god of the man is the object he most loves. Hence gold is a divinity, and by no means an insignificant one, perhaps the chief. I. **The gold-god is the most popular of the gods.** It is said that ancient Greece and Rome had not less than thirty thousand divinities, and that in modern heathendom, at present, their name is legion. But throughout this civilized world the gold-god reigns supreme. Tell me, is there aught besides that engrosses so much of human thoughts, human affections, human plans, activities and time, as gold? Civilization everywhere multiplies the shrines, the altars, and the devotees of mammon. II. **The gold-god is the most mischievous of the gods.** The ponderous wheels of Juggernaut's chariot have crushed millions; Krishna, Moloch and other heathen divinities have tortured and destroyed their devotees, but is there a divinity in the long roll of idolatrous worship more terribly destructive than the gold-god? 1. **How soul-debasing!** It deadens the sense of virtue, blinds moral perceptions, seals up the social sympathies, manacles the moral faculties, and chains that soul made to wing the immeasurable regions of light and truth to a mere clod of dust. It is a law that the soul can never rise above its god. 2. **How peace disturbing!** It keeps its devotee in a constant

tumult. It breaks the harmony of families, disturbs the order of society, raises nations into war and bloodshed. "Midas," says Carlyle, "longed for gold and insulted the Olympians. He got gold so that whatever he touched became gold, and he, with his long ears, was little the better for it. Midas had insulted Apollo and the gods: the gods gave him his wish, and a pair of long ears which also were a good appendage to it. What a truth in these old fables!" (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. Blessed be the Lord out of Zion.—Thankfulness:—I. **THE PSALMIST'S EXPRESSIONS OF THANKFULNESS.** 1. We are taught by the whole of this psalm that these expressions spring from a grateful memory. Everywhere around him he beholds some memorial of the Divine goodness, some landmark of the ancient inheritance of his fathers, some footprint of the Divine mercy and power, which has lingered on from generation to generation, through calms and storms, judgments and blessings. And surely we also can recall the past, with its evidences of God's love and pity. 2. The expressions of thankfulness, observe, are specially appropriate to the Church in her present state of trial. It is "out of Zion" the voice of blessing is to go up to heaven. It is in our gatherings on the Sabbath that the heart is to give free scope to its grateful memories and feelings. The Church of God is still in the wilderness; but though in the wilderness, battling with wrong, and with the visible and invisible enemies of her path, still she is able to raise the anthem—"Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem." II. **THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS THANKFULNESS.** 1. This might be urged from the Divine Presence of "the Lord, which dwelleth at Jerusalem." It was the fact of this recognized Presence, this "Shield," this "Refuge," this "Strength," which gave the deep, full impulse to the thankfulness of the Jewish heart; so should it act with us. There is no comfort so great and so lasting to a right-minded Christian man as the consciousness of the Almighty Presence. 2. The reasonableness of thanksgiving arises, too, not only from a sense of duty, and of manifold blessings bestowed from day to day, but also from the gracious truth that God's dwelling is to be found on earth; that He has not deserted it, nor given it over to destruction. And the fact that this meaning is conveyed to us by the naming of Jerusalem is very certain. Thus we are not directed to look for the Divine Presence out of our own spheres of existence, far away beyond the limits of our comprehension, but to look for it at our very doors, even within our own hearts. Is not this a cause of thankfulness? 3. In the fact of God's dwelling at Jerusalem we find another reason for thankfulness in the form of His dwelling, namely, the symbol of "the Shekinah," the visible glory between "the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat." Thus, in the presence of Christ, our God and Saviour, we have a protection, a shelter, and a security against danger. (*W. D. Horwood.*)

PSALM CXXXVI.

VERS. 1-26. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.—The eternity of God's goodness:—This is a reason for praising Him—I. **IN THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE** (vers. 1-9). When the grandeur of nature overawes you, when its terrific phenomena, thunders, earthquakes, volcanoes seem to overwhelm you, still praise Him. There is goodness in all. II. **IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND** (vers. 10-26). 1. In the deliverance of His people (vers. 10-16). 2. In the destruction of despots (vers. 17-22). 3. In His regard for all (vers. 23-26). All men have enemies, foes to their virtues, their interest, their happiness. He delivers them. All men require nourishment. They live by the appropriation of the fruits of the earth. He "giveth food to all flesh." His "mercy endureth for ever," and thus should we praise Him in all. (*Homilist.*) *A song, a solace, a sermon, and a summons:—* I. **A SONG.** 1. For all singers. Let young and old, rich and poor, instructed and ignorant, saved and unsaved, take part in it. Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad in the sunlight; let us praise Him for the mercies which are new every morning, for the bread we eat; let us bless Him that we are not deprived of our reason, or stretched upon the bed of languishing; let us praise Him that we are not cast out among

the hopeless, or confined amongst the guilty; let us thank Him for liberty, for friends; let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed.

2. But the sweetest and the loudest note in the chorus must always be reserved for those who sing of redeeming love (vers. 10-12). Even now by faith we wave the palm branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair white linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not this day give thanks to the name of the Lord whose redeeming "mercy endureth for ever"? 8. Further on our poet invites the experienced believer to join in the psalm (vers. 16-22). Just as some among us, whose voices are deep, can take the bass parts of the tune, so the educated saint, who has been for years in the ways of the Lord, can throw a force and a weight into the song which no other can contribute.

II. A SOLACE. We have many troubles, and we need comfort; God is willing that we should be comforted. 1. I shall use the text as a solace to the past. The year is all but gone. Have we not found, up till now, that His mercy has endured for ever? 2. Our text is also a very sweet consolation as to the present. Have we at this moment a sense of present sin? Then, "His mercy endureth for ever." 3. As to the future. Ah! we are poor fools when we begin to deal with the future. It is a sea which we are not called upon to navigate. The present is the whole of life, for when we enter into the future, it is the present. When these fingers cannot perform their daily work, when my brow is wrinkled, and I can scarcely totter to my toil, what shall I do? Ah! "His mercy endureth for ever."

III. A SERMON. "His mercy endureth for ever." Then—1. Let our mercy endure. 2. Let us learn the duty of hoping for everybody. 3. See the duty of hoping for yourself. IV. A SUMMONS. "His mercy endureth for ever." 1. Is not that a most loving and tender summons to the wandering child to return to his Father? to the backsliding professor to approach his God? to the chief of sinners to humble himself before the mercy-seat? There is mercy—seek it. There is mercy in Jesus—believe in Him. 2. Believers, the summons is also meant for you. It says this, "His mercy endureth for ever"; therefore let your love to souls continue; let your labour for conversion abide; let your generosity to God's cause abound; let your endeavours to extend the kingdom of Christ endure evermore. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The duty of praise and thanksgiving*.—I. THE DUTY. It implies—1. A grateful sense of the Divine benefits. Here the duty begins, though it ends not here; in acts of the mind, in attentive meditations on the loving-kindness of God, and lively warm affections produced and cherished by these meditations. 2. A suitable expression of gratitude. The heart will awaken the tongue, and the affections of the inner man direct and influence the actions of the outward. II. THE PERSONS CALLED UPON. 1. The whole world of mankind are by the psalmist invited to pay their common tribute of praise to their supreme and universal Lord; even all the nations of this widespread and many-peopled earth, by whatever name, or language, or religion they are distinguished; seeing how much soever they differ in these and other respects, they all partake of the light of reason, which discovers a God to them, a first and most perfect Being, and directs them to make Him the universal object of their worship, and trust, and obedience. 2. The Church of God is more immediately and expressly spoken to. 3. All those are particularly called upon to give thanks who have received any fresh or remarkable instances of the Divine favour and interposition on their behalf; such as have been prospered in their designs, and perhaps beyond their own expectations; or have been happily disappointed (for frequent experience shows there are such things as happy disappointments), have had light and comfort in a day of trouble; succour in threatening dangers and temptations; have been raised up from beds of sickness, or blessed with extraordinary measures of health; have had considerable turns in their lives, and seen the hand of God guiding and overruling events to their good. III. THE REASON OR FOUNDATION OF IT HERE ASSIGNED. 1. Men should give thanks unto the Lord, because He is good. Other perfections challenge our reverence, and fear, and admiration; this demands our gratitude. 2. Men should give thanks unto the Lord, because His mercy endureth for ever. This may be understood—(1) In opposition to the anger of God. (2) To the favour of men. (3) More absolutely of the unchangeableness and perpetuity of the Divine mercy. APPLICATION. 1. Does religion invite and oblige us to give thanks unto the Lord, because He is good? and does a great part of religion consist in the duty of thanksgiving rightly performed? then, certainly, religion can neither be an unreasonable nor a tiresome service. 2. Since the mercy of the

Lord endureth for ever, let us resolve that we will serve, and praise, and trust in Him for ever. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) **For His mercy endureth for ever.**—*God's goodness and mercy*.—I. **GOD'S GOODNESS.** 1. Goodness is the perfection of things for which they are desirable; perfection imports freedom from all defects, and fulness of all excellences, and is chiefly seen in the being, working, end of things; that which hath the noblest being, and therefore end, and therefore operations, is ever best and most desirable; desire is the reaching of the soul after that that likes us, because it is like us. Now the all-sufficient God is His own Being, His own end, His own act, or rule in action; yea, He is the Author of all good, the end and desire of all things (in natural respects), and therefore the perfection of all, and so all perfection and goodness. 2. God is—(1) Essentially good. (2) Causally good. (3) Eminently good. (4) Originally and absolutely the only good. Uses—1. God is good, let us put it to good use; first, for humbling, see what we were once, good; for of goodness can come nothing but goodness; secondly, what we are now by nature, bad; for first, we are sunk as far from God as hell is from heaven. 2. See what we should be, good; goodness is ever admirable, and therefore (saith the philosopher) imitable. Now, Ps. cxix. 68 tells us that God is good, and doth good, and He is our copy and rule. First, therefore, we must be good, and then do good; first the sap must be good, and then the fruit, for as things be, so they work. II. **GOD'S MERCY.** 1. It is everlasting. (1) His essential mercy is everlastingness itself; for it is Himself, and God hath not, but is, things. He is beginning, end, being, and that which is of Himself, and ever Himself, is eternity itself. (2) His relative mercy (which respects us, and makes impression on us) is everlasting too, in a sense; for the creatures, ever since they had being in Him, or existence in their natural causes, did ever, and ever will, need mercy, either preserving or conserving. 2. Reasons. (1) From God's nature. He is good. Mercy pleaseth Him. First, it is no trouble for Him to exercise mercy. Secondly, it is His delight; we are never weary of receiving, therefore He cannot be of giving; for as it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive, so God takes more content in the one than we in the other. (2) From His unchangeable word and covenant (Isa. liv. 10). (3) From our need; every creature is compounded of perfection and imperfection; the first is the ground, the second is the object of mercy. Uses—1. Dwell upon the mercy of God. 2. Put it to use. 3. Be ye merciful, as He is—to men's souls, bodies, estates, names. (*R. Harris, D.D.*)

Vers. 4-9. To Him who alone doeth great wonders.—*God the wonder-worker*.—Altering a little the language of Coleridge, I would say, "All true science begins with wonder, and ends with wonder, and the space between is filled up with admiration. If we turn to Providence, the history of the nations, the history of the Church, what centuries of wonders pass before us! It is said that wise men only wonder once, and that is always; fools never wonder, because they are fools. The story of the Church is a constellation of miracles. I cannot venture upon themes so vast as Creation and Providence. Shall we turn to the works of Grace, the wonders of Redemption? If we consider the glory of grace surrounding the Cross, which is the wonder of wonders, we are upon a boundless ocean. I. **GOD IS WORKING WONDERS OF MERCY NOW.** 1. In the salvation of the lost. 2. In the preservation of believers. 3. By maintaining His Church and the cause of truth in the midst of the world. II. **THESE WONDERS ARE STILL GREAT.** Many apparent wonders can be explained, and, henceforth, the wonder is gone. Certain nations wonder at an eclipse, which to the astronomer is a very simple affair. Now, you cannot explain away redemption, regeneration, and the pardon of sin: these great wonders of almighty love are all the greater the more you know of them. Many wonders, also, are diminished by familiarity. The wonders of grace are such, that the more you see them the more your wonder grows. Those who are most familiar with the Lord think the most of Him and of His grace. The wonders of Divine grace are so great that they can never be eclipsed by any greater marvels. III. **THESE GREAT WONDERS ARE WROUGHT BY GOD ALONE.** When the Lord uses means in the salvation of a soul, He takes care that nobody shall praise the means or ascribe the salvation to the agent. He has many ways with His most useful servants of making them keep their places; and you will notice that as soon as ever any one of them begins to grow rather large in his own esteem, he is usually met with weakness and barrenness. We must keep self out of the way. We must put ourselves absolutely into God's hands, that He may use us in the winning of

souls, and then we must send the great I down, down, down, till it is buried out of all remembrance. IV. FOR THESE WONDERS GOD IS TO BE PRAISED. Holy wonder is like sweet incense, but love must set it on a blaze with a burning coal of gratitude. If you will begin to praise the Lord for His great wonders of mercy, I will tell you what will happen to you. 1. First, we shall find His nature revealed to us. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." We shall begin to see the essential goodness of God, and then we shall the better understand the manifestations of it as seen in ten thousand ways. 2. Next, while praising for His wonders, thou wilt learn to adore His Godhead. "Give thanks unto the God of gods." It is a grand thing to be deeply impressed that God is God. 3. If thou wilt keep on praising Him for His wonders, thou wilt come to know somewhat of His sovereignty. "O give thanks unto the Lord of lords," for He rules over all things, both in heaven and in earth, and in all deep places. We can trust our God with unlimited power; and it is a part of our worship that we should never question whatever He may do. "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." 4. Still, when thou praisest God for the wonders He has wrought for thee, and for others, let the climax of thy praise be this, that "His mercy endureth for ever." Magnify with all thy faculties of mind and heart; with memory, and hope, and fear, and every emotion of which thou art capable, the changeless mercy of God. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 17-22. To Him which smote great kings.—*Mercy in the destruction of tyrants*.—I. THE MERCY OF GOD RECOGNIZED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRANTS. 1. It appears in their own destruction. (1) If there be no future state it puts an end to their miseries. (2) If there be, as we believe there is, a state of future punishment, the sooner the incorrigible sinner dies the better for himself; the longer he lives the more guilt he contracts, and the greater his guilt the greater his agonies in a world of retribution. 2. It appears in the relief afforded to the race. When such demons in human flesh are cut down, the world breathes freer, obstacles are swept from its path of progress; when the Pharaohs are engulfed the human Israel can march forward to promised lands. II. THE PRAISES OF GOD CELEBRATED ON ACCOUNT OF THE PERPETUITY OF HIS MERCY. 1. Because Divine mercy will always work for good. Therefore, the longer it continues, the better. 2. Because the future ages of the world will require mercy. There will be much for mercy to do on this planet yet, before the race will be brought back into harmony with God. 3. Because we ourselves shall ever be dependent on mercy. (Homilist.) *Sihon and Og, or mercies in detail*.—These six verses reiterate the same fact. Is the tautology tedious; do the chimes weary you with their monotony? For my part I like a repetition in the tune of a psalm as well as in its language. No doubt one verse instead of these six might have sufficed. It might have run thus, "Who slew famous kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, Og, king of Bashan, and gave their land for a heritage to His people, for His mercy endureth for ever." That would have comprehended all the sense. But by this repetition we learn that it is well to dwell long and to dwell deliberately upon some of God's dealings with us. This is the theme on which I want to thread a few reflections. And—I. IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS. We might have thought it more natural if we had read, for His justice, or, for His vengeance endureth for ever. But though terrible for these tyrants, it was a great mercy for others. When tyrants die nations have time to breathe. When lions fall, or the wolves are slain, the deer and sheep have time to rest. Not mercy to the one man, perhaps, to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius or the like, but to the millions who groaned under his abominable rule. And so of huge systems of error and superstition which have oppressed men. They have passed away, and others shall, "for His mercy endureth for ever." II. EACH MERCY DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. See with what special point and emphasis each instance is put. They are thus given—1. Because each mercy we have received is undeserved. In the very chapter which tells of these victories of Israel their murmurings and the fiery serpents that chastised them are told of also. It was to these people God gave these repeated victories. 2. Not one could be dispensed with. Had the Lord stopped when Sihon was slain, what would have become of Israel? 3. There was a peculiarity about each mercy. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. 4. But if any mercy deserves to be particularly remembered, it is early mercy. The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They were young recruits. And so with ourselves, how we ought to remember

God's mercy to us in the beginning of our career. III. EACH MERCY DOES REALLY IN ITSELF DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION. How we dwell in detail and fulness on our troubles. Should we not do so also with our mercies? When I have got some trouble of my own, I think I generally find myself turning it inside out and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the wrong way up, the right way up, and all ways. Ought I not to do the same with my mercies? IV. CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY. For God to give one mercy might not prove that His mercy endureth for ever, but when no sooner is one given than another follows, and another follows that, the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity does show that His mercy endureth for ever. And is not this what so many of us have to tell of? V. THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT. Israel did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og. Their land was on the other side Jordan, but since they attacked them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory. Unexpected trials often issue in unexpected advantages. VI. THAT ALL THIS SHOULD BE FOR THE SAME PERSONS FURTHER SHOWS THAT "HIS MERCY," etc. For whom does Sihon, does Og, fall but for Israel? All is for them, undeserving, evil, full of provocation as they were. Is there one of us who might not justly be in hell before the clock ticks again, if it were not that His mercy endureth for ever? Do any say, "My sins are strong, how can I master them?" Cannot He who slew great kings, yea, famous kings, cannot He slay them? (*O. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 23, 24. **Who remembered us in our low estate.**—*Raised from low estate:*—I. BY APOSTASY FROM GOD WE ARE REDUCED TO A CONDITION OF GREAT DEGRADATION. 1. By sinning we have lost all moral excellence. 2. All sources of supply are forfeited. II. GOD REMEMBERED US IN THIS OUR LOW ESTATE. 1. He devised a way of escape from our thralldom. 2. He remembered us in the day of our conversion. 3. Since our conversion to Himself, how many have been the seasons of distress in which God has remembered us! III. SUCH REMEMBRANCE COULD ONLY ARISE FROM THE MERCY OF GOD. (*Isaac Mann.*)

PSALM CXXXVII.

Vers. 1-9. **By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept.**—*The tears of memory and the cry for vengeance:*—I. THE TEARS OF MEMORY (vers. 1-6). 1. Their sorrow had reference to the loss of the highest blessing—Zion, where their nation met their God to worship Him, etc. 2. Their sorrow was deliberate and all-absorbing. Now these tears of memory—(1) Reveal one of the most wonderful faculties of our nature, the faculty of memory. (2) Reveal a view of retribution opposed to modern scepticism. Modern sceptics say we pay our moral debts as we go on, that retribution for sin is prompt and adequate here. Not so, memory brings up the sufferings of the past. (3) Reveal a view of our mortal life terribly solemn. We do not, as the brute does, finish with life as we go on; we are bound by memory to re-visit the past, and to re-live our yesterdays. (4) Reveal a futurity which must reverse our present calculations. How different do things appear to the eye of memory to what they do to the eye of sense. II. A CRY FOR VENGEANCE (vers. 7-9). (*Homilist.*) *The patriot's psalm:*—This psalm celebrates the splendid constancy of the Jews amid the oppressions of the Babylonian captivity, and is the production of some son of Korah or Asaph. The knowledge and love of music was widespread among the Jews; and it was most natural that the Babylonians, who were great musicians themselves, should ask their captives to sing them a song of Judea. Whether they did it in scorn and mockery, or from genuine interest, the thought of singing of home was none the less painful to the exiles. The whole of the later books of the Old Testament are full of this consuming fire of Israelitish patriotism, a patriotism which burns in every nation under heaven, and in no nation more strongly than our own. Where it is trampled on, it breaks the oppressor like a potter's vessel; where it is respected, it binds nations together in the strongest of bonds. So deep, so strong is the divine passion for fatherland in

every human breast. Yet, loyal as you are, and lovers of old Caledonia, with heart and hand ever open to a "brither Soot," you are free-born subjects of another country, owning another sovereign, like Andrew Melville, and fellow-citizens with the saints. Henceforth heaven is our home, our true and only home, and here we are strangers and pilgrims. Many of the younger Jews had been born in captivity, but none the less did they love far-off Jerusalem, for their fathers talked of nothing else. The very fact that they had never seen it made them dream about it the more. So we often in imagination cross the Jordan and the wilderness, and enter one of the many mansions. We read and read again Rev. xxi., xxii.; the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the "Paradiso," and call curses on ourselves if we ever forget what we read there. The Jews sat down by the rivers of Babylon with a set purpose to weep. They deliberately intended to weep, and they had a never-failing specific for bringing tears to their eyes. It was deep, silent, solemnized, and deliberate weeping, reserved for a time when the Babylonians were not by. Nor do we intrude with our weeping into your feasts and dancing, nor hang our heads like bulrushes over the wine-cup; but never for one moment do we forget Jerusalem. Materially, the Jews lost little or nothing by having to migrate to Babylon. They were not slaves as they had been in Egypt, but prosperous colonists, and some of them were so well to do, so contented, that they let Zion and Jerusalem slip from their minds. Yet there was ever a remnant (or elect) whom no material prosperity could ever satisfy, who said, better a cottage in a vineyard in Jerusalem than a palace here. Asaph did not sell his harp nor tear its strings to pieces; he only hanged it on a willow-tree against the time he knew was coming. Then he struck it to some purpose, as we know in this far-off island of the sea. Not till her golden gates have closed and all her glorious children have gone in, will Jerusalem awake to her own full joy, and then will be heard the voice of mirth, and gladness, and feasting, the sound as of many waters, and the harpers harping with their harps. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *Injurious retrospection*.—The psalm opens with words of which the melancholy sweetness blinds us from seeing the evil tendencies which lie hid in them. "By the rivers of Babylon," etc. Are the words so sweet? Is there not suppressed bitterness in them? What right had these exiles to sit down and weep, when it was God who had brought them to Babylon? What right had they to fold their hands and hang up their harps when God had told them by His prophet Jeremiah to build houses, and seek the peace of the city to which they were led captive (*Jer. xxix. 5-7*)? God sends trouble to make men look forward, not backward. Living back in an irrevocable past is worse than mere waste of time. So it proved with the captives by the waters of Babylon. They thought upon the wrongs, but not upon the wrongful dealings of Zion. Zedekiah's broken oath to the king of Babylon (*Ezek. xvii. 16*), and their own intrigues with the enemies of Nebuchadnezzar were forgotten; the destruction of Jerusalem and the joys of their neighbours on the day of destruction were remembered too well. (*W. E. Barnes, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.—*Harps on the willows*.—1. **EVERY MAN HAS A HARP.** The harp was the well-known instrument for the accompaniment of song. Its music was sweet and delightful. When calamity fell upon the nation their harps were silenced, etc. And thus it is with all our lives. We have the elements of joy in them, the powers of song and gladness, and there is no man who has not the capacity and the occasion for delightful mirth. 1. Think of the constitution of our nature, wherein a place is secured for joy. The body is attuned to pleasure. How exquisitely has God harmonized the sound and the sense! 2. What a harp man possesses in physical nature if he would only let its music be heard. Every sight and sound, every scene and action, all things fair and good, and bright and godly, are but fingers of Nature's skilful hand, which will touch the strings of the harp of our being, and wake their perfect tones of rapture. 3. Man has the harp for pleasant accompaniment of happy song in the region of the immaterial and the intellectual. The joy of learning—when it is indeed learning worthy of the name; the discovery of the unknown; the pursuit of the law which underlies obscure phenomena; the search for causes; the enumeration of effects—these and others afford keen and lasting delight. 4. The pleasure which belongs to the still higher sphere which we are privileged to enter. (1) Let me remind you of that sacred melody which is attuned when the joys of the spirit are experienced. The sinner seeks his Saviour, and finds the pardon of Father and of Friend. The best music of all the Christian poets falls far short of the

rapture which dwells within the forgiven heart. And with what language shall we tell of the occasions for harping that have occurred so often since the first forgiveness! Have there not been Bethels of a Divine covenanting, Horebs of refreshment, and Red Sea passages of deliverance and triumph? Prayer has had its blessed answers, and meditation its holy raptures. (2) Remember, this harp must be tuned and practised on. Let Zion re-echo with your songs. II. BUT SOMETIMES THE HARP HAS TO BE HUNG UPON THE WILLOWS. 1. It is thus when disease invades our bodies or sorrow smites the soul. Songs are not suitable to funerals, and harpings in the house of mourning are out of place and impertinent. 2. There are some silences still more profound that fall upon the music of our life. The father whose eldest son forswears his father's faith, and throws away his father's virtues, and wins only a name that will be a dishonour among men—such a father has little heart for harpings, and is, indeed, in a silent land of bitter exile. 3. And then how useless is the harp when we ourselves are in the hours of spiritual distress. God is absent, and we know no gladness till He shows His face again. They sang a hymn when the Master was among them, even though when they rose from the supper it was to pass to Gethsemane, and Pilate's bar, and Calvary. But their hearts had no desire for singing in the suspense and numb agony of the hour when the Christ lay dead. And so it is with the Christian still. III. But though there is no heart or place for song, and the harp must be laid aside, IT NEEDS NOT TO BE CAST AWAY. They had been foolish and wicked men of Israel if they had flung their harps beneath the running river, and thus deprived themselves altogether of the means of melody when the days of joy came back again (Ezra iii. 9-13). So, cast not away your harp. The weather will clear and the soul will awake to gladness when the sunshine comes. And the sickness will depart, and the strengthened frame shall recover its wonted sense of health and vigour. Yea, and there shall be some hours of gladness even for the wailing weary heart that sickens over the sinfulness of child and friend. It was a sad home when the prodigal was far away. But one day the father saw the returning son, ragged, worn, and disgraced, and that night there was music and dancing in the long silent homestead. And thou, too, depressed and cast-down Christian, throw not away thy harp. There shall be peace, and joy, and fullness of blessing yet for thee. God shall show Himself, and Christ will yet return. (Ll. D. Bevan, LL.B.)

Ver. 3. Sing us one of the songs of Zion.—*The phases of psalmody*:—The noblest employment of which the nature of man is capable is the worship of his Maker. One of the elements of the worship is the rendition of praise, and in the songs of Zion we are amply provided with material for this purpose. I. THE SONG OF THE PARDONED PENITENT. This song can be sung by him who no longer looks to his own righteousness for salvation, but whose desire is to be found in Christ as the righteousness of God. II. THE SONG OF THE ADORING CREATURE. This song is sung not for any special gift received, but in contemplation of the great acts of God—His past acts in the Church and in the world—for the laws of nature—for all those marvellous exhibitions of power and wisdom that are before our eyes. III. THE SONG OF THE RECIPIENT OF MERCY. This is well brought out in Ps. ciii. The mercies that are renewed to us daily are not to be taken as a matter of course. Count up your daily mercies and sing. IV. THE SONG OF THE HEAVEN-BOUND PILGRIM, "Thy statutes have been my songs," etc. God's people should not go on their way as if to be a Christian were the most gloomy thing in the world. They are commanded to "rejoice." Let us attain to the apostolic stand and come "to Zion with songs." V. THE SONG OF THE SOBROWER. "He giveth songs in the night." Where sufferings abound, consolations abound. God never lays one hand on us but He lays the other hand under us. Paul and Silas sang in prison in the night. VI. THE SONG OF THE SANCTUARY. The service of song in public worship was very prominent under the old dispensation. Music should be edifying; not a sensuous enjoyment, but a part—a noble part—of the worship of God. VII. THE SONG OF ZION WHICH IS TO BE SUNG BY THE GLORIFIED ABOVE. That song is to be the utterance—the ceaseless utterings—of their gratitude and praise for all the eternal love wherewith they were loved, for the grace by which they were redeemed, kept there, sanctified there, brought there—"Salvation to God and to the Lamb." Are you in training for that choir which is in heaven—for exchanging the songs which we sung in a strange land for the songs of the New Jerusalem and all her beauty? (J. C. Miller, D.D.) *Babylonian captivity*:—1. Certainly there are many men and

women to whom this psalm will be full of a touching significance if they look back on the time when they first found themselves alone in London. A young man, after being brought up with loving care in the country, is sent with a book of the Lord's songs packed by his mother in his trunk to serve his time at some business in our modern Babylon. Will he not be ready to shed tears on his first Sundays spent in town when he thinks of friends at home singing one of the songs of Zion, in which he can no longer join, deterred perhaps by the ridicule or want of sympathy of strangers? And the very desire of others that he should "keep up his spirits" and be a "jolly fellow"—such jarring requests will only increase his heaviness. What should such a young man do? Let him, before his better feelings grow cold, resolve rather to forget the cunning of his hand if he be an artisan, or the cunning of his business faculty if he be in a merchant's or lawyer's office; let him resolve to forget these or never to acquire them at all rather than to forget the love of his home and the worship of his mother's God—in one word, Jerusalem. 2. When travelling abroad did Englishmen remember Jerusalem, and prefer her above their chief joy, they would realize the presence of One who could dispel the loneliness of a strange land, and deliver them from the many temptations of friendlessness. 3. Again, there are many generous souls whose best impulses are imprisoned by circumstances over which they have no control. Round men have got into square holes, and find no scope for the best energies of their nature. Children long to help their parents; but they are far from home, or their desire is in captivity, by reason of poverty, ill-health, or anything else. Parents cannot do all they desire for their children. Let these, and all who find themselves in adverse circumstances, think of Israel weeping on the banks of the Euphrates—let them think of how she waited patiently on the Lord in poverty, in humiliation, in a strange land, full of sin and scoffing; and of how He delivered her from Babylon in His own good time, as of old He delivered the same Israel out of bondage in Egypt. (E. J. Hardy, M.A.)

Ver. 4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?—*The Lord's song in a strange land*:—The temple music had a reputation, even among the heathen peoples of Central Asia; and it seemed natural that the sacred words and music, which had for ages set forth the worship of the one true God, should furnish a more refined amusement for the cultivated pagans who had trodden down the sanctuary and had enslaved God's people. But the heart of captive Israel beat true to what was due to the honour of God, and to the memories of their ancient worship. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Nay, this request of the heathen oppressor that the captives should sing the Lord's song for his æsthetic gratification nerves the psalmist to a sterner mood. He cannot forget how, in those dark hours, a race of kinsmen by blood had cheered on the heathen foe in his work of destruction. Already he sees the approaching capture of the city by Darius Hystaspis. Her young children are dashed against the stones by the Persian invader. But, meanwhile, if the psalmist is asked to prostitute his gift by singing the old temple songs merely to amuse the heathen, there are many reasons which make compliance impossible. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" I. THE LORD'S SONG. 1. It meant for Israel all that was precious to the soul; but for the Babylonians it meant merely entertainment, merely a newly incited curiosity, merely a new sensation in the world of art. There was nothing common to Israel and Babylon in their way of looking at it. 2. Any ancient hymn of king or prophet which had passed into the service of the sanctuary bore that name. There is one prayer with which no other prayer may compare, and which alone in Christendom bears the name of the Lord's Prayer. But there is, at least on earth, no one psalm or hymn which bears the name of "the Lord's song." Whatever may be the case with the new song of the everlasting future, the religious hymnology of earth is, and always has been, almost infinitely varied in its expression; and yet at bottom it is one—one in its motive, one in its spirit and its effort, one in its surrounding moral atmosphere. 3. What is it but the ascent of the soul towards the infinite and the eternal, the upward bounding of the understanding, the expansion of the affections, the effort of faith, and hope, and love, to utter themselves somehow in praise? Although the words, the languages, the rhythms, the melodies, should be most dissimilar, this—this, the true song of the Lord; springing out of the very heart of the people of revelation, and embodying its creed in poems of the most different ages and characters—this it was which could not be uttered for the mere gratification of pagan

Babylon—could not, at least, without profanity. 4. If it had only been the old poetry of the Hebrews—only their ancient music—they might, perhaps, have consented to render it before a Babylonian audience. But, for the Jews, language was a much more sacred thing, speaking generally, than, I fear, it is to us. The Jews did not conceive of language as a something which might be stripped off thought, like bark from the surface of a tree. For them, thought and language always went together. 5. It sounded through the corridors of the soul before it took shape in language, and resounded beneath the vaults of the temple; and this—this sense of its reality, made it impossible for a good Jew to prostitute it for the benefit of a pagan audience who might think of it as a new sensation in art. 6. Poetry, music, painting, architecture, all have their place in the sanctuary of God. And what has once been given to Him is His—His irrevocably—His for ever. Poetry or music which has been dedicated to Him, and which has lifted souls up to Him for many a generation, cannot be divested of its purpose, and made the amusement of the unbelieving, without wounding Him to whom it was given by the faith and love of the gifted dead. II. IN A STRANGE LAND. 1. This was apparent, first of all, in the difference of the language. Although the Babylonian tongue had affinities with the Hebrew, it was practically for the Jews a foreign language. We know how it affects us, when we first go abroad, to hear another than our mother tongue being talked all around us. It produces, at least at first, a sense of isolation; and this must have been deepened in the case of the Jews by the fact that they certainly did not go to Babylon for their own satisfaction. In time, no doubt, the captive Jews learned much of the language of their conquerors, and, in fact, brought it back with them to Palestine; but at first it was a barrier between them; and this would, of itself, have made them unwilling to sing the Lord's song in their own ancient Hebrew to strangers who could not follow it. The language of religion is, and must be, unintelligible to those who do not share the faith and the feelings which prompt it. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And the sense that this is the case often makes a Christian, when in general society, retire into himself, lest he should break his Master's precept against giving that which is holy unto the dogs, and casting the pearls of heaven before swine. If the soul is to sing the Lord's song with the lips as well as with the heart, it must be among those who can speak its own language. 2. Babylon was the land of material wealth; it was the great world-city of the age. It had its attractions, no doubt, but it was not the place in which to sing "the Lord's song." That song proclaimed in its very earliest notes—witness the one psalm of Moses, "Domine, refugium"—it proclaimed the insignificance of this human life at the best—the poverty, the perishableness of all that belongs to time. The soul of man is, after all, finite; and when the soul is filled with this world there is no room for the next. We could not ourselves well sing the "Gloria in excelsis" in the Stock Exchange or in a West End club; and the Jews felt that Babylon was not the place for singing the song of the Lord which had been the joy and the glory of their ancient sanctuary. 3. Babylon was a land in which life was overshadowed by a vast idolatry. Now, how could the old psalms of Israel, instinct with the memories of David's life and of Solomon's glory, and of the solemnities of the now destroyed temple, be sung in such an atmosphere as this? If sacred associations were to have any value—if sacred words were to mean anything, could they be prostituted to the amusement of a race which was devoted to a hideous and cruel superstition? No. Captive Israel might sing the songs of the captivity, such as was this very psalm itself. It might sing these in secret assemblies of the faithful; but to render the old temple hymns before a heathen crowd of idolaters—this, this was impossible. Is not the Christian soul often carried captive, nowadays, into the Babylon of unbelief or of half belief? Is not the place in our thoughts which is due to God often tenanted by abstractions, which are just as senseless as the idols of Babylon—creations, it is true, of our thoughts, instead of being creations of our fingers? "Nature," "force," "law," and what not—generalizations of our own minds as we look out upon the universe around us—these are, too often, placed upon the throne of the one infinite, eternal, self-existing Being. 4. There hung over all the magnificence of Babylon a dense atmosphere of sin, which made it impossible for the servant of God to sing his song—to do more than complain: "How long, O Lord? How long?" And the regenerate soul may be carried captive, some of us must know, too well, into this Babylon of deadly sin. It may be carried captive; it may at once make its

escape and return. Happy are they with whom it fares thus. But, supposing that the soul is detained in Babylon—supposing that habits of evil are formed, and that the enfeebled will is held down by bolts and bars which it cannot break—then how is it “to sing the Lord’s song”? How is it to mount upon the wings of desire and hope to the throne of the All-Holy, whose laws it the while sets steadily at defiance? How can we sing the praises of our Maker, if we have not reason to be thankful to Him for the gift of an undying existence?—or the praises of our Redeemer, if our hearts do not tell us that we have been washed with His blood, and have not defiled our garments?—or of our Sanctifier, if we know that we have grieved Him, and that He has taken Himself from us? Better far—I had almost allowed myself to say—better far sing the songs of Babylon itself, than burn out the last surviving tenderness of the conscience by a service which cannot be but as odious to God as it is degrading to ourselves. 5. We may well, indeed, feel, all of us, that this life is an exile from our true home, and that, while we live it, we cannot, at our best, sing aright the song of the redeemed. The new song of the four awful creatures, and of the four and twenty elders before the throne of the Lamb—the new song which no man could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth—the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, which is sung for ever and ever by them that have gotten the victory over the beast, and that stand on the sea of glass having the harps of God—what is all this but a description of the psalmody of the blessed, with the volume and with the perfections of which nothing that is heard on earth can compare? (*Canon Liddon.*) *The difficulty of singing the Lord’s song in a strange land.*—1. I cannot doubt that we have felt it at times despondingly. I cannot sing the Lord’s song. Difficult as I find it to pray—difficult to confess sin, difficult to ask for grace, it is still more difficult, I find, to praise; to perform that highest, that most unselfish of all offices of devotion, which is the telling forth, in the hearing of others, in the presence (we believe) of the communion of saints, dead as well as living, what God is, in act and in counsel, in power, wisdom, and love, in creation, redemption, and grace, in His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Spirit the Lord and Giver of life. (1) The very life which we live here in the body is a life of sight and sense. If we wish to realize heaven, to meditate upon eternity, to hold converse with Jesus Christ, to ask something of God, it has all to be done by strenuous resolution; by drawing down, as it were, the blinds of the mind against the sights and sounds of our street, and opening the windows of the soul to let in the light of another world. All this is difficult. And without this we cannot worship. (2) The feelings of the present life are often adverse to praise. The exiles in Babylon could not sing because they were in heaviness. God’s hand was heavy upon them. Now the feelings of many of us are in like manner adverse to the Lord’s song. Some of us are in great sorrow. We have lost a friend—we are in anxiety about one who is all to us—we know not which way to turn for to-morrow’s bread or for this day’s comfort. How can we sing the Lord’s song? And there is another kind of sorrow, still more fatal, if possible, to the lively exercise of adoration—unforgiven sin. (3) There is a land yet more strange and foreign to the Lord’s song even than the land of unforgiven guilt—and that is the land of unforsaken sin. 2. But there is a land, could we but reach it, where praise is, as it were, indigenous. In heaven praise bursts forth spontaneously from all the blessed—it is their voice—they cannot speak but in praise. But how shall we sing it? May not heaven be a strange land to us, though it is the native land of the Lord’s song? The Lord’s song will sound for ever in heaven; but shall we be there to sing it? It takes a lifetime to make heaven our own land. O how many things go to this! Heaven means—we have no other definition of it—where God is. Then, if heaven is to be our land, it must be by our knowing God—God in Christ. We must know Him in His holiness as the God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. We must know Him in His love. We must know Him in His power as the Resurrection and the Life, able to re-create in His own image those who have most utterly lost and sullied it. Then we shall be no strangers in the land that is very far off, because it is the land where we shall see the King in His beauty, and praise Him for ever with joyful lips. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The Lord’s song in a strange land.*—Babylon stands for the kingdom of this world; Jerusalem for the kingdom of God, which is above. We are sitting by the waters of Babylon while on this earth, where nothing continueth in one stay, we watch all things eddying and drifting by us, slowly or quickly carried away down the stream of time. Of course we can but too easily

learn to acquiesce in our exile, content with Babylon, and forgetting Jerusalem; and then this psalm has nothing to say to us but to condemn us for not being able to make its words our own. And often in some shape does the question flash into his mind, "How shall I sing the Lord's song in this strange land?" Many, indeed, of the songs of Zion are sung by us with but little effort. Those that tell God of our past sins, and present weaknesses, and that cry sadly but hopefully for pardon and help through Christ, readily, I say, do they come forth from every heart that knows its own history. But the Lord's song in its highest sense, the song which sings unto the Lord only of the Lord Himself, and forgetting man loses itself in giving glory and praise unto Christ, does a melody of this kind never seem as much out of place in our heaviness as it once seemed by the waters of Babylon? When a man is down of heart about himself, or those whom he cares for, when things have been going amiss with him in mind, body, or estate, through the week just past, and he is anxious indeed as to what another week will bring forth, then here on Sunday morning it may seem somewhat inopportune and out of place for him to have to say to others even as they say to him, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord," etc. Not a few of us here now have, I doubt not, some secret care or sorrow pressing sore upon us, and yet we ought to have been singing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," etc. And does it not, I say, cost us a struggle in this our heaviness to put our hearts into such words of joy? Does not this earth sometimes seem a strange land, indeed, in which to sing the Lord's songs? And yet these songs of the Lord are really among the strongest helps and aids to our comfort. The more I am feeling some evil of this land of my captivity, the more thankfully let me, while I may, make my escape from it by fixing my heart upon my Saviour. (*John Gray, M.A.*) *Sin takes all the music out of our hearts:*—Music suggests perfect harmony of character. To have a musical instrument that will adequately express musical thought in sound and harmony requires very carefully-selected woods as to acoustic properties for its construction. John Albert, who has been called "the Stradivarius of America," died the other day at the age of ninety years. His great success in making violins, that won him fame through the world, was as much due to the care with which he selected the woods from which they were made as to his skill as a workman. So much depended on the proper woods that Albert sought them sometimes at the risk of his life. Once he lay for weeks between life and death, the victim of an accident while he was on the hunt for a certain wood in an almost impassable forest. Ole Bull, the great violinist, pronounced him one of the great violin makers of the world because he possessed the greatest knowledge of the acoustic properties of woods of any man living at that time. Surely if a violin maker must pay such great heed to the character of the wood out of which he constructs a violin, in order that he may make it a perfect interpreter of musical thought to human ears, we should not wonder at the care of God in seeking to so purify and cleanse our hearts that they shall be resonant, and responsive to the slightest touch of the Holy Spirit, and thus be able to interpret the melodies of heaven. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*)

Vers. 5, 6. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.—*Recollection and preference of the Church of Christ:*—I. **THE OBJECT OF RECOLLECTION AND PREFERENCE BY THE CHRISTIAN.** The Church of Jesus Christ—the universal Church, consisting of all, throughout the world, who believe and obey the Gospel. 1. The Church of Jesus Christ is the dwelling-place of God. 2. It is the light of the world. 3. It is the depository of ordinances and truths requisite for the weal of the human race. 4. It is the sanctuary of salvation. 5. It is a type of the Church in heaven. II. **THE EMPHASIS WITH WHICH THE CHRISTIAN EXPRESSES HIS RECOLLECTION OF, AND PREFERENCE FOR, THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.** 1. Because of its wonderful revelations. 2. Because of its sacred exercises. 3. Because of its ennobling associations. 4. Because of its momentous interests—truth, righteousness, joy. (*P. J. Wright.*) *Religious public-spiritedness:*—I. **WHAT IT IS.** It is love to the Church of Christ, regulated by knowledge, and prompting to zealous and steady activity in advancing the Church's interests. It is in the kingdom of God on earth what patriotism is in the body politic. It directs and rules him; he lives for the Church; he consecrates to her welfare all that he is, and all that he has. II. **HOW IT IS TO BE EXEMPLIFIED.** 1. By self-denial for the sake of the Church. This includes a disposition to forego everything, however innocent and lawful in itself, which we cannot enjoy without doing less than we ought to do for the interests of religion. 2. By identifying ourselves

with the interests of the Church. 3. By promoting the purity of the Church. Not only is the Church of Christ a holy community, but holiness is the very thing which distinguishes it from the world. 4. By strenuously maintaining the integrity of the Church. It is not a mutilated, vitiated Christianity that is to convert the nations. It is when the Church goes forth in all the might of her Divine simplicity and integrity that she will take the world captive to Christ. 5. By labouring for the extension of the Church. III. WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD STIMULATE THE OPERATION OF A RELIGIOUS PUBLIC SPIRIT? 1. Consider what is due to God. Is obedience due to Him? Well, cherish and exemplify public-spiritedness in religion, for God requires it of every one of you. Is gratitude due to God? due to Him more especially as the God of the Church? Cherish and exemplify public-spiritedness in religion: there is no "sacrifice of praise" more pleasing to the Lord. 2. Consider what is due to Jesus Christ. 3. Consider what is due to the Church. 4. Consider what is due to a perishing world. Will you not pity it, pray for it, do all you can to reclaim it? (*D. Young, D.D.*) *Patriotism*.—I. SOME OF ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES. 1. A spirit of enterprise in behalf of religion. The Jew professed his religion in Babylon; he did not merge his Judaism in Babylonianism. He stood out in Babylon a Jew. Why not stand out a Christian? "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," says one. You are not to blow the trumpet; but there is another thing you are not to do—you are not to hide the light; you are not to place it under a bed, or under a bushel, or hide it in a cupboard. 2. A lively sympathy with the state of the Church. 3. Zeal for the Church's purity. This must be tempered with prudence and steeped in charity. 4. Prayer and effort for the Church's prosperity. II. SOME OF ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES. They are to be found in the Bible. 1. The love of God. This love has prompted the noblest exertions. Shall I take you over the traces where this public spirit has displayed itself? shall I take you to the spots where apostles suffered, where martyrs bled, where confessors were burnt? Shall I take you to Smithfield and its fires, or the Grass Market in Edinburgh and its martyrs' fires? What prompted men to such a nobility? It was this mighty principle—the love of God, the love of Christ. 2. A consideration of the connection subsisting between a Christian and Christ and His Church. No Christian lives to himself. The Christian is no isolated man; he is no solitary soldier. He feels himself one of a brotherhood; one of a great fellowship. 3. In proportion as we feel not only for our own things, but for the things of others, and especially for the things of grace, and Christ Jesus, just in that proportion do we most promote our own honour and our own happiness. God, in constructing the human heart, putting it together—putting his labours together, and lacing them together, has so adjusted the chemistry of the heart, the mechanism of the heart, that, if you do good to anybody—either to the body or soul of a man, especially the latter—if you do good, a feeling of pleasure will weave all around the pulsation of your heart; for it is your law, your constitution. God has made you all, so that you cannot do good and not promote your own happiness and your own honour. (*J. Beaumont, M.D.*) *How to preserve and increase patriotism*.—By keeping in remembrance the virtues and principles of the noble and patriotic men who laid the foundations of this republic. While the memory of the immortal Washington and his co-patriots is green, and the principles of his "Farewell Address" are cherished by us, we are safe. 2. By honouring with suitable memorial services those who have sacrificed ease and fortune and life itself at their country's call, in behalf of liberty, principle, the right. 3. By the enactment of wise and equitable laws, and a faithful and impartial execution of them. Never was the necessity of this greater or more imperative than now. 4. By elevating patriotism into a Christian virtue. Patriotism without piety; patriotism divorced from Christianity and the institutions of religion; the State, civil society, politics, given over to infidelity, to ungodliness, to the tyranny of human passions and selfish seeking, cannot be long maintained. And here is our greatest danger to-day. (*Homiletic Review*.) *Religious attachments*.—Do cultivate religious attachments. Do not let all things be equally common: do let us have a little enthusiasm about some men, and some places, and some books, and some scenes. Oh, it is not living to live with a person to whom all places are alike,—who does not know what he is eating, whether it is the very best or the worst. There is no comfort in living with such an individual, on whom the best of your things are wasted. There is no comfort in living with an individual to whom all systems, and all churches, and all rituals are alike. Do have your preferences,—not that you may antagonize the preferences of other

people, and make yourself unpleasant to those who may differ from you; but do get to love some particular seat in the church—some particular corner. A man cannot go slied down to hell, surely, if he loves one little bit of the sanctuary better than he loves any place else on the earth. Oh, we can surely get hold of him there: we can surely touch him through that one little preference. It is a very poor hold to have upon him, but it is better than nothing. Do you mourn your distance from Zion, and are you unable to sing when you are in far-off Babylon? There is hope for you. One day the Jew that hung his harp upon the willow shall take it down. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-9. Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem.—Imprecation against the enemies of the Church:—1. False brethren are the chief instruments of persecution of the true members of the Church whensoever they find occasion. 2. Whosoever do delight in the Church's calamity, and do endeavour the Church's ruin by word or deed; by their stirring up of others to afflict them; or by any oppression which may tend to the Church's prejudice, when the Lord is visiting her, their sin shall not be forgotten of God in the day when the Lord judgeth His people, but shall be severely punished. 3. No less will suffice the adversaries of the Church than the utter ruin and razing of it to the ground. 4. The estate of the Church at the worst is better than the estate of Babylon, or any estate of her adversaries, how prosperous soever at the best; for albeit the Church be in captivity and oppressed, yet she shall not be destroyed, but it is not so with her adversaries. 5. Faith is neither blinded by the prosperity of the wicked, nor by the adversity of the Church, but doth see through the prospect of the Lord's Word, both her approaching delivery of the Church and the ruin of her enemies. 6. As the enemies of God's Church have measured out unto the Lord's people, so it shall be measured back again and more, for a reward unto her adversaries. 7. There is a happiness, wherein blessedness doth not consist, which neither is a part or branch of blessedness, nor a proper mark of blessedness, but only signifieth some happiness in the consequence of a man's work, tending to the glory of God and good of His Church; and such is the happiness of the Medes and Persians here spoken of, who, whatsoever were their corrupt intentions in their war, did work, albeit not as religious servants, yet as God's instruments, a good work of justice upon the oppressors of God's people, and a good work of delivery of the Lord's people. 8. Albeit it be a sinful thing to satisfy our carnal affection in the misery of any man; yet it is lawful in God's cause to wish that God be glorified, albeit in the confusion of His enemies; and here great need is to have the heart well guarded with the fear of God, for wheresoever to allow the dashing of little ones against the stones might make a man guilty of savage cruelty. (*D. Dickson.*)

PSALM CXXXVIII.

VERS. 1-9. I will praise Thee with my whole heart.—Moral features of a good man's life:—I. The GRAND RESOLVE of a good man—to serve God (vers. 1, 2). 1. Entirely. "I will praise Thee with my whole heart." Unless the Almighty is thus served He is never served at all. 2. Courageously. "Before the gods," etc. No shame, no timidity, but exulting courage. 3. Intelligently. He is infinitely good and true. II. The NOBLE TESTIMONY of a good man (ver. 3). What good man who has ever prayed could not furnish similar testimony? III. The SANGUINE HOPE of a good man (vers. 4, 5). 1. This hope implies a very desirable object. To have all the kings of the earth praising God, what patriotic, philanthropic, and religious ends could be more desirable? 2. This hope implies a reasonable expectation. Would it not be natural to expect that when kings heard of God, the words of His mouth, they would worship and serve Him? We have here—IV. The THEOLOGICAL BELIEF of a good man (ver. 6). 1. No creature is too humble for the Divine regard. He is not so taken up with the vast as to ignore the minute, so sublimely exalted as not to condescend to the meanest. 2. No creature is too vile to escape His notice. "The proud He knoweth afar off."

V. THE SUBLIME CONFIDENCE of a good man (ver. 7). 1. The universal law of human life. What is that? Progress, walking. Implying—(1) A constant change of position. (2) A constant approximation to destiny, every step leading nearer to the end. Life is a constant walk. No pause. A rapid walk. "Swifter than a post." An irretraceable walk. 2. The saddening probabilities of human life. "In the midst of trouble." The path is not through flowery meads and under azure skies, but rugged, tempestuous, perilous. 3. The grand support of human life. "Thou wilt revive me." The support is all-sufficient, the only effective and ever available. (*Homilist.*) *Open praise and public confession*:—David was vexed with rival gods, as we are with rival gospels. Nothing is more trying to the soul of a true man than to be surrounded with vile counterfeits, and to hear these cried up, and the truth treated with contempt. How will David act under the trial? For so should we act. He will—I. SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE (ver. 1). 1. His song would openly show his contempt of the false gods: he would sing whether they were there or no. They were such nothings that he would not change his note for them. 2. It would evince his strong faith in the true God. In the teeth of the adversary he glorified Jehovah. His enthusiastic whole-hearted song was better than denunciation or argument. 3. It would declare his joyful zeal for God: he sang to show the strong emotion of his soul. Others might be pleased in Baal, he greatly rejoiced in Jehovah. 4. It would shield him from evil from those about him; for holy song keeps off the enemy. Praise is a potent disinfectant. If called to behold evil let us purify the air with the incense of praise. II. WORSHIP BY THE DESPISED RULE. "I will worship toward Thy holy temple." 1. Quietly ignoring all will-worship, he would follow the rule of the Lord, and the custom of the saints. 2. Looking to the Person of Christ, which was typified by the temple. There is no sinning like that which is directed towards the Lord Jesus, as now living to present it to the Father. 3. Trusting in the one finished Sacrifice, looking to the one great Expiation, we shall praise aright. 4. Realizing God Himself. III. PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES. 1. Loving-kindness in its universality. Lovingkindness in its speciality. Grace in everything. Grace to me. Grace so much despised of Pharisees and Sadducees, but so precious to true penitents. Concerning the grace of God, let us cling close to the doctrine and spirit of the Gospel all the more because the spirit of the age is opposed to them. 2. Truth. Historic accuracy of Scripture. Absolute certainty of the Gospel. Assured truthfulness of the promises. Complete accuracy of prophecy. IV. REVERENCE THE HONOURED WORD. "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name." God has magnified His sure word of testimony beyond all such revelations as we receive through creation and providence, though these declare God's Name. The Gospel word is—1. More clear. Words are better understood than nature's hieroglyphs. 2. More sure. The Spirit Himself sealing it. 3. More sovereign. Effectually blessing believers. 4. More complete. The whole of God is seen in Christ. 5. More lasting. Creation must pass away, the Word endures for ever. 6. More glorifying to God. Specially in the great Atonement. V. PROVE IT BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. "In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me," etc. He had used his knowledge of God derived from the Word. 1. By offering prayer. "I cried." What do men know of the truth and grace of God and the virtue of His Word if they have never prayed? 2. By narrating the answer. "Thou answeredst me," etc. We are God's witnesses, and should with readiness, care, frequency, and courage testify what we have seen and known. 3. By exhibiting the strength of soul which was gained by prayer. This is good witness-bearing. Show by patience, courage, joy, and holiness what the Lord has done for your soul. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Whole-hearted praise before the world*:—He who praises God with his whole heart is like a man on fire, he is terrible to the adversaries of the Most High. When the great Spanish Armada was ready to swoop down upon the English coast, our brave Admiral Drake took some of his small ships, and placed them where the wind would carry them right among the Spanish fleet. He filled the vessels with combustible material, and set them alight. Then the wind just took the fire ships and drifted them up against the Spanish galleons that floated high out of the water, and exposed a vast surface to the air, and one and another of the big unwieldy monsters were soon in a blaze, and a great victory was won without a blow being struck. So, I like to get a red-hot Christian, full of music and praise unto Jehovah, and just let him go, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, right into the middle of the adversaries of truth. They cannot make him out, they do not know how to handle a man of fire. It

was a wise plan, this of David, of getting in among the heathen gods and singing to the praise of Jehovah. (*Ibid.*) *Courage in praising God*:—Singing unto Jehovah before the gods was good for David's own soul. It is perilous to attempt a secret fidelity to God, it is so apt to degenerate into cowardice. A converted soldier tried at first to pray in bed, or in some secret corner, but he found it would not do; he must kneel down in the barrack-room before the others, and run the gauntlet of the men's remarks; for until he had done so he had not taken his stand and he felt no peace of mind. It is needful for our spiritual health that we come out distinctly upon the Lord's side.

Ver. 2. Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name.—*The Word of God the highest manifestation*:—I. IT IS THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. 1. The Bible is a manifestation through moral mind. This is greater than material nature; for the following reasons:—Moral mind is an uncompounded essence. It is a Divine offspring. It is a self-modifying agent. It is an original fountain of influences. You cannot predicate these things of matter. 2. It is a manifestation through the moral mind of a unique personage. Compare Christ with the greatest men. II. IT IS THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATION FOR THE HIGHEST END. 1. It is a restoration. Restoration is a greater work either than destruction or sustentation. 2. It is the restoration of immortal souls. The restoration of a wrecked vessel may be a great work, the restoration of a dead flower is a greater, that of a body is still greater, the restoration of a disorganized empire is still greater, but that of an immortal soul is the greatest of all. 3. It is the restoration of a condemned criminal to a high position in the Divine empire. "Kings and priests," etc. 4. It is the restoration of a diseased soul to immortal health and ever-increasing energy. (*Homilist.*) *The honour God puts upon His Word*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY MAGNIFYING THIS WORD ABOVE ALL THY NAME? 1. It means putting special honour upon it; and this God has done—(1) In the manner of revealing it. (2) In the subject-matter of the revelation itself; and—(3) In the special care He has taken to preserve it in its integrity and entirety. 2. It means giving it the first and chief place in the system of truths and agencies for the enlightenment and salvation of the world. And this is what God in His providence, as well as in His Sovereign purpose, has done. (1) The Scriptures alone reveal God in Christ. (2) The Scriptures alone direct the perishing soul to the Lamb of God which taketh away sin. (3) The Scriptures alone teach the immortality of existence, the resurrection of the dead, and the certainty of future awards and punishments. II. HOW GOD MAGNIFIES HIS WORD. 1. By making it the power of God in the conversion of the soul. The only voice that can calm and inspire hope is the voice that sounds from Calvary out of God's written Word. 2. By making it a sanctifying Word. Nothing but this will make them holy and fit for heaven. The philosophies and teachings of men never did and cannot do it. 3. By making it a comforting and a saving Word. It is the Christian's solace. It helps him over life's rough way. It is food, and drink, and shelter to him in his pilgrimage. It sweetens every cup. It kindles hope and assurance as the end draws nigh. It lights up the death chamber and puts the words of victory on the lips of the departing saint. (*Homiletic Review.*) *God's Word magnified*:—I. EXPLAIN. 1. God's "Word" is revelation in general, especially the doctrines of salvation—those which we justly call the fundamental principles of the Gospel. 2. God's "Name" is His renown. Whether in His works or in His providence, He has fastened it upon His Word above all others (Ps. cxi.). II. APPLY. God has magnified His Word above all other displays of Himself, of His eternal power and Godhead, and of the glory of His dominion—1. As a revelation of His nature. 2. As an instructor in His works. 3. As an interpreter of His providence. 4. As a declaration of His will. 5. As a manifestation of His grace. 6. As an exhibition of His perfections. 7. As the instrument of His power. By this He subdues and renovates the obstinate and rebellious hearts of men. (*W. Collyer.*)

Ver. 3. In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me.—*Successful prayer*:—I. THE CRY. 1. A deep sense of need. 2. A feeling sense of inability. 3. Earnestness of supplication. 4. Confidence in God. II. ITS SUCCESSFUL ISSUE. 1. God heard his cry. 2. He answered it. 3. Immediately. 4. Imparting strength to his soul. (1) To work. (2) To resist enemies. (3) To suffer. (4) To be firm and persevering. III. APPLICATION. 1. Learn the saint's remedy in trouble—to cry unto the Lord, etc. 2. The importance of soul-strength.

When obtained, exercise it, etc. 3. The efficacy of fervent prayer. God will hear and bless, etc. 4. The duty of recounting God's gracious answers to our supplications. (J. Burns, D.D.)

Ver. 5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord.—*Singing in the ways of the Lord*.—According to the connection, this is spoken of kings (ver. 4). That time has not come yet, so let us sing all the more. We may (ver. 6). If we do not, surely the stones of the street will cry out against us. I. **THEY SHALL SING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.** 1. Gracious persons take pleasure in the things of religion. 2. They do not go out of God's ways to get their songs. They shall sing "in the ways." Alas! I have heard of some who go here and there, as they say, "to get a little pleasure." What? You find no pleasure in the ways of God? Then you are a hypocrite. 3. They sing as they are actively engaged in the ways of the Lord. Soldiers march to battle with sound of trumpet and beat of drum, listening to music while they march; so Christian men go on their pilgrimage, and keep step to the sound of joyous psalms and hymns. 4. The children of God sing in the ways of God because they are in a case for singing: in a right state of mind for singing. (1) When we are in the ways of the Lord we are strong; "they go from strength to strength." When we walk as God would have us walk we are made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Well may that pilgrim sing who is made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. (2) You have safety also; for in the ways of the Lord all His servants are protected from danger. In the king's highway "no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." You shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," in the ways of the Lord. Well may that traveller sing who is perfectly safe! (3) You have also guidance. (4) And provision. II. **THEY SHALL SING OF THE WAYS OF THE LORD.** Not only are God's ways the place of their song, but its subject. 1. God's ways to us. Predestination, redemption, etc. God's ways are such gracious ways, such wise ways, such holy ways, such ways of wisdom and of lovingkindness, that in any company we may talk about them, and in every place we may sing of them. We will sing of the ways of the Lord with us. 2. Our ways to God. (1) A good road. (2) Good company. (3) Good accommodation. (4) Fine prospects. (5) We have daylight to travel by, for we are not the children of darkness. III. **THOSE WHO SING IN THE WAYS OF GOD ALSO SING OF THE LORD OF THE WAY.** "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord," and then some read it, "That great is the glory of the Lord." That is the subject of their song. When they sing about the Lord of the way this psalm supplies us with the points of their song. 1. God's lovingkindness (ver. 2). 2. God's truth (ver. 2). 3. Answered prayers (ver. 3). 4. God's condescension (ver. 6). 5. God's delivering mercy (ver. 7). 6. Final preservation (ver. 8). IV. **THEY SHALL SING TO THE LORD OF THE WAY, AS WELL AS OF THE LORD OF THE WAY.** "They shall sing in the ways, for great is the glory of the Lord." 1. Let us take care that all our songs are to the honour and praise of God, for if we ever sing to our own praise it will be idolatry. I fear much public worship is thus marred. Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure—singing in which there is not so much art as heart—not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion. They shall sing to the glory of God. 2. If you and I sing with the Spirit and the understanding, we shall increase the manifested glory of God by bringing others to sing in His ways. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The joy of believers in the way of obedience*.—I. **THE WAYS OF THE LORD.** 1. The way in which God walks in regard to us. (1) Nature. (2) Dispensations of providence. (3) Dispensations of grace. 2. The way in which we walk in regard to Him. (1) Obedience. (2) Inclination. II. **HOW THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE TO BE AFFECTED IN THEM.** They not only walk in the ways of the Lord, but "sing" in them. This implies acquiescence, approbation, satisfaction, pleasure, delight. Whence springs this "singing in the ways of the Lord"? We may look after some of the near sources of it. 1. Conviction. The believer is "able to give a reason of the hope that is in him," and he is able to give a reason of the joy that is in him. 2. Renovation. Now he is born of God, therefore he savours "the things which are freely given him of God." 3. Experience. Oh, what delightful hours were those in which I have taken sweet counsel, and gone to the house of God in company;—in which I have seen His power and His glory there! 4. Fellowship. "I am a companion of all those that fear Thee, and of those that keep Thy precepts." 5. His prospects and anticipations. "Eye hath not seen," etc. 6. The accommodation. Everything is provided for these

travellers that shall make them rejoice and "sing in the ways of the Lord." Guidance, defence, strength, etc. (*W. Jay.*)

Ver. 6. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly.*—*God's greatness and condescension*.—I. WHAT IS HERE ASSERTED RESPECTING GOD. He is "high," i. e. glorious, majestic, infinite in every excellent and glorious attribute. II. THE CHEERING DECLARATION WHICH ACCOMPANIES THIS ASSERTION. "Yet hath He respect unto the lowly." 1. A character described. (1) Possessed of a humble and contrite heart. (2) Earnestly hungering and thirsting after righteousness. (3) Coming to Christ for the blessings of salvation. (4) Every Christian grace is connected with this lowliness. (5) The Scriptures represent those who were most eminent for piety as wearing this grace: Job, Daniel, Paul. 2. The great God is here represented as manifesting peculiar favour to the lowly. (1) Forgiving mercy. (2) Introduction into His family. (3) Grace. (4) Glory. (*John Pike.*) *Humility*.—I. AS IT AFFECTS THE JUDGMENTS WHICH WE FORM OF OURSELVES. Humility, as distinguished from meanness, and opposed to arrogance of mind, consists in forming a just and moderate opinion of our own endowments and merits. It disposes us to examine our character with impartiality—it suffers not self-love to magnify our good qualities—it contrasts our imperfections with our virtues—it compares our own excellencies and defects with those which are discernible in the characters of others, and permits us not to rise, in our own esteem, above the rank which we really possess among our brethren around us. II. AS IT AFFECTS OUR CONDUCT TOWARDS OUR BRETHREN. To the low it condescends without degrading the character—to the high it pays its homage without assentation or servility. Founded on a moderate conception of our own ability, it disposes us to listen with respect to the opinions of others; arising from a just sense of our own imperfection, it teaches us to make allowance for their errors and defects. In its external manner it is placid and unassuming. It expresses itself by the mildness of its look and the gentleness of its language. It claims not—it expects not any extraordinary attention; its own importance is forgotten amidst its courtesy to others. III. AS IT PREPARES US FOR DISCHARGING, IN THE MOST BECOMING MANNER, OUR DUTIES TO GOD. In the presence of that God whose majesty fills the heavens and the earth the humble prostrate themselves on their native dust. Their own limited knowledge is annihilated in their esteem when they consider the height and the depth of the judgments of God; and their own imperfect goodness is lost to their view when they contemplate that diffusive bounty by which the universe is blest. Feeling and acknowledging the feebleness of their minds, they receive with gratitude the revelation of heaven. In their religious services there is no ostentation. Their employment is with God alone. It is to acknowledge His favours, of which they confess themselves unworthy; to bewail their transgressions, which they recollect with heartfelt sorrow; to adore the mercy which continues to regard them; to repeat the vows which they regret to have broken, or to bless the grace which has enabled them to perform it. (*W. Moodie, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me.*—*Human life*.—I. THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF HUMAN LIFE. What is it? It is expressed in one word—walking. Life is a "walk," a journey. It is constant action, and constant action onward. Life is never stationary; it is always on the move; it is motion. 1. Constant change of position. Every step puts us in a fresh point of space, and surrounds us with something new in scenery. So with life. 2. Constant approximation to destiny. The grave for the body; retribution for the soul. II. THE SADDENING PROBABILITIES OF HUMAN LIFE. Life is not only a walk, but a walk often "in the midst of trouble." Since the introduction of sin into our world, it has never been a walk of unmingled pleasure. All here meet with trials on the way; but some more than others. Physical—bodily pains and diseases; moral—the conflict of passions, the remorse of conscience, and the dread of death; social—disappointments in business, the treachery of false friends, the corruption of the world, and the bereavement of death. III. THE GRAND SUPPORT OF HUMAN LIFE. "Thou wilt revive me." 1. God is an all-sufficient support. He is equal to all our emergencies. "He is our refuge and strength," etc. There is no enemy from which He cannot deliver us; there is no trial under which He cannot support us; there is no danger from which He cannot rescue us. In the fiery furnace, in the surging waters, in the "valley of the shadow of death," He is

all-sufficient. 2. He is the only effective support. No one else can support you. "Put not your trust in princes." 3. He is an available support. Available to all at any time. "Call upon Me in the time of trouble and I will deliver you." (*Homilist.*) *The Christian's comfort in the midst of troubles*.—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S TROUBLES. They arise from—1. The world within. An evil heart of unbelief; prone to distrust God, to dishonour God, to wander from God. 2. The world without. Bodily affliction, worldly trials, opposition from the world, etc. 3. The world beneath. Satan distils his venom in secret. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORTER. Though he walks in trouble, he does not walk alone. Though persecuted, he is not forsaken; though cast down, not destroyed. 1. God can enter the inner world and bring comfort there, and spread a banquet within, and open a little paradise (Ps. xciv. 19; Job xxxv. 10; Ps. xxvii. 5). 2. God can enable us to meet the world without. So He enabled Jacob to meet Esau; Elijah, Baal's priests; David, Goliath. 3. God can effectually subdue the world beneath. "Bruise Satan under your feet." III. THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE. What it is proved. 1. What He is—God of mercy. 2. What He has done. 3. What He has promised to do. (*Evangelist.*)

Ver. 8. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.—Choice comfort for a young believer.*—As every state has its dangers, so the peril of religious concern is despondency. Thoughtfulness soon degenerates into distrust, and holy anxiety easily rusts into unbelief. The more a man looks within him the less he can trust himself, and the more a man looks around him the more he feels that he is in danger, and he is apt to say, "I shall surely one day fall by the hand of the enemy." He is fearful as to the result of future temptations. Now I want to meet such fears. I. Here first we see that GOD FILLS US WITH ASSURANCE. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Then—1. God is really at work on our behalf. Get a grip at this, thou troubled one, and by a personal faith say, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Thou hast come to Jesus and trusted thy soul in His hands, then it is certain that the Lord hath brought thee to this state of mind. Every effect has a cause, and all spiritual faith is created by the Holy Ghost. Since, then, the Lord has begun to save you, your confidence must be that He who began this good work will continue to operate in your soul. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me;" not, "I will perform it myself." 2. There is the full assurance that He will be at work still in order to complete that which He has commenced. Have you obtained a religion which is not the work of God? Then I would exhort you to get rid of it. Do as the man did with the bad banknote, throw it down on the highway or into a ditch, and run away from it. But, and if the religion you have received is the work of God, then be certain that He who began the work will perfect it. The psalmist affirms—3. That He will complete the work. Did the Almighty pause in the middle of creation and leave His work unfinished? How, then, would the record run? That God had made the light, but had not made the sun? That He had made the waters, but had not divided them from the land, or said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther"? No, the first day of creation was a guarantee of the five which followed it and of the grand rest day which crowned the week. Here, then, is your confidence. You are anxiously asking Him, shall I persevere to the end? You shall be kept and perfected by the Lord in whom you trust. Now carry this confidence into everything. Into providence. The Lord will perfect that which concerns you there. You have a plan on hand. If it be God's plan for you for life you will carry it through. God often perfects that which truly concerns us by taking us away from that which never ought to concern us. But that crown of life which you have submitted to His wisdom, which you have taken up in obedience to the plain indications of His providence, which you follow out with integrity, walking before the Lord and committing your way unto Him—that crown of life shall have His blessing, and none shall be able to put you on one side. The Lord told David he should be a king. It did not look very likely, but since such was the Eternal purpose, there was no keeping the son of Jesse out of the throne. But this is more especially true in the work of grace in the heart. And it is also true of the work of grace all around us. II. THE LORD GIVES US REST IN HIS MERCY, for what says the text, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." See how this works in us rest from fear. "Alas!" sighs one troubled heart, "I fear I shall fall into many sins between here and heaven." But sing in your heart, "Thy

morcy, O Lord, endureth for ever." The blood of atonement will never fail. Then up comes another fear. "I do not see how I am to be perfected. My nature is so vile." The answer is the same. The Lord will bear with you and forbear. Some of God's children are the crookedest people that ever were in this world, and it must be sovereignty which chose them, for they are by no means naturally desirable or attractive. But His mercy endureth for ever. And some will pass through great affliction and some will experience a great many wants. And the hour of death will come. One man of God always feared death; but he might have spared himself his wretchedness, for he fell asleep one night in apparently excellent health, and died in his sleep. He never could have known anything about dying, for on his face were no tokens of pain or struggle, nor was there any reason to believe that he ever awoke till he lifted up his eyes amid the cherubim. And so, if we do not die shouting victory, we hope that we shall peacefully fall asleep, "for His mercy endureth for ever." "He will perfect that which concerneth me." Now do all of you who are just beginning life put yourselves and all your circumstances into God's hand and there leave them.

III. THE LORD PUTS IT INTO HIS PEOPLE'S HEARTS TO PRAY, AND SUPPLIES THEM WITH A PLEA. "Forsake not the work of Thine own hands. Persevere in what Thou hast begun." This is a prayer which you and I may well bring before God, whose workmanship we are. A man takes his money into the bank and leaves it. He does not come back in a quarter of an hour and say, "Have you my money safe? I want to see it." The bank would not desire such a man who has no confidence in them. Let us not act so by Christ. Put in your all with Him and leave it there. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Confidence in God*:—I. THE STRIKING EXPRESSION OF BELIEVING ASSURANCE. 1. What we are to understand by "that which concerneth me." This I apprehend, as it regards David, and as it regards every Christian, may be summed up in two things—the work of providence without them, and the work of grace within them. All that concerns present safety and future glory are thus secured. 2. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." When it is in progress He will not leave it or suffer it to be marred—He will carry it forward through its successive stages until it be finished to the glory of His name. II. THE UNCHANGING FOUNDATION OF ASSURANCE. It is from the mercy of God that He works for us, and works in us. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." His mercy and His grace are the grand springs of all the happiness and blessings we possess, and of all the hopes that inspire the heart and animate the soul. And as God thus begins the work of a sinner's salvation from mercy, it no way depends upon our merit or worth. He takes His motives entirely from Himself. He does it because it is the good pleasure of His will to do it. III. THE EARNEST PRAYER ACCOMPANYING THIS CONFIDENCE. "Forsake not the work of Thine own hands." As they are the works of His hands, they must be very dear unto Him,—He cannot but love them and delight in them, and He rests in His love. Conclusion—1. How great is the gratitude that is due to God from His saints, how innumerable are His blessings, how vast His mercy, how rich His grace and lovingkindness. 2. What encouragement the sinner has to seek God, seeing He is a God of such mercy. 3. Rejoice, ye saints of God, that you have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, who now appears in the presence of God for you. (John Jack.) *The saints' final perseverance secured by the mercy of God*:—I. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENCE. The work of grace in the soul of man is but a begun work. I know it is perfect as it regards its principle; but as it regards its actings it is most imperfect. Look at our light; how feeble is it! How little do we see of sin's sinfulness—of the baseness there is in ingratitude! What a dim sight have we of Jesus! the glory of His person, the perfection of His atonement, His perfect righteousness, the sufficiency of His grace, the tenderness of His humanity, the sympathy of His nature—Friend—Brother! How little one enters into the holiness of His example! Now all this does prove that it is but a begun work. And yet, says David, "The Lord will perfect" it. It is His own; He will maintain it, He will deepen it, and He will finish it. Here is a blessed confidence in God, that He, who had "begun the good work," would "perform it" in the midst of all its ebbs and flows and changes; acknowledging it to be but a begun work, and yet declaring—"The Lord will perfect it." But the words imply more than this. It would seem as if David did say—He will give me the entire, the full and complete and everlasting possession and enjoyment of Himself in heaven. Faith shall soon be lost

in sight; hope shall soon disappear in certainty; and prayer shall cease, and give way to endless praise. II. THE BASIS OF HIS CONFIDENCE. What is it? You may say, It is the promise. The promise is not the foundation. There must be a foundation for the promise. And what is the foundation of the promise? God; God in Christ. And here is a particular attribute, a particular perfection in God, singled out—signalized. "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." There is a sweetness and a power in the very monosyllable, "Thy mercy"; because it is peculiar to God, it is His own property, it distinguishes Him. The mercy of the creature is finite; the mercy of Jehovah is infinite. The mercy of the creature is changeable; the mercy of Jehovah is unchangeable. The mercy of the creature was of yesterday; the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting. It began in election; and when does it end? Never; but it issues in eternal glory. III. IN WHAT DID IT ISSUE? Carelessness? So say many. But the issue here is—prayer. "Forsake not the works of Thine own hands." It is a beautiful conclusion; it is a beautiful consequence; it is a blessed deduction. Because Thou "wilt perfect"; therefore "forsake not the works of Thine own hands." It is common-sense—the common-sense of religion. "I am, as Thy creature, wholly dependent on Thee; without Thee, faith must die, and hope expire; without Thee, love must decay and perish." (J. H. Evans, M.A.) *Faith in perfection*.—I. THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE. 1. A Divine confidence—"The Lord." 2. A confidence for the future—"will." 3. A large confidence—"perfect." 4. A broad confidence. "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." II. THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE—God's mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the Cross, and when we have climbed ever so high, is it not at the Cross that we end? Mercy must be the theme of our song here; and mercy enduring for ever must be the subject of the sonnets of paradise. None other can be fit sinners; nay, and none other can be fit, grateful saints. III. THE RESULT OF THIS CONFIDENCE. It leads to prayer. (*Ibid.*) *The discipline of life*.—A friend said to me one day, "How sad it is that we cannot devote ourselves more constantly to our own spiritual culture! There are so many utterly unspiritual things to be done or gone through with, that it is really very little time that we can give to the great work of this life—our preparation for a higher and better life." This would have been well said, were it not that the very condition of things complained of is a providential necessity of God's appointment, and therefore undoubtedly better for us than any method that we might deem preferable. If the soul, and God, and heaven are not fictions, we are constrained to believe that the Divine providence orders our discipline here with a view to our surest nurture and our highest good, that its school is our best school, its designated way the best way for us. I doubt whether the concentrated devotion to the soul for which the devout often yearn is the fit mode of educating the soul. Probably, even to the most religious mind, the cloister has never been so favourable to the growth of piety as the duties of an active life or of a Christian home would have been. A good man somewhat given to cant, meeting Wilberforce one day, said to him, "Brother, how is it now with your soul?" and was shocked beyond measure by the philanthropist's reply, "I have been so busy about those poor negroes, that I had forgotten I had a soul." Yet there can be no doubt that by means of "those poor negroes" Wilberforce's soul had been growing a great deal faster than that of his friend, who had perhaps spent half his time in counting the pulse-beats of devotional feeling. In speaking thus I would not have it inferred that I hold emotional piety in low repute. I look upon it as the Alpha and the Omega, the source and consummation of all that is excellent in man. But perpetual and over-anxious watching may do as little for the plants of God's planting in the heart as for those of our own planting in our gardens. Nor would I have it supposed that I undervalue the direct offices of piety, whether secret or social. I regard them as an essential part of the plan of Providence. But God trains us, for the most part, in ways which we should not choose for that purpose, and sometimes in ways which we are prone to regard as injurious rather than helpful. To some of these methods of the Divine providence I ask your attention. There is hardly anything of which we are more apt to complain than routine-work, especially that in which not hand or foot, but brain and soul, are compelled to go over the selfsame round day after day and year after year. We are sometimes inclined, in our weariness, to resort for terms of comparison to the

very Tartarus of our classical studies—the rock of Sisyphus and the sieve of the Danaides. Yet we might look for our parallel in the opposite direction; for is not the administration of this glorious universe, for the most part, a routine? Has not the infinite Creator, for unnumbered æons, renewed, day by day and year by year, the same unvarying round of beneficent ministries? And if we may be permitted to speak of that self-consciousness in which our own has its birth, must we not think of this routine as a part of God's supreme felicity, while ever new love, mercy, and compassion flow in the course of universal nature, and breathe in the benignant will, which is no less essential from moment to moment than when in the beginning it moulded chaos into form, life, and beauty? Now, so far as God's Spirit is in us, our routine-work shall be exalted, hallowed, glorified, made more and more like His. Is it for the benefit of others, and is it lovingly wrought? If so, those affections which are so essential a part of the soul's best life are exercised, fed, and strengthened by it, and we thus become—though it be without our distinct consciousness—enlarged in our sympathies, broadened in our charity, better fitted for every genial ministry of earth and of heaven. Or is our life-work one which has prime reference to self, yet imposed upon us by necessities of subsistence or position which we cannot evade? If so, it is of God's appointment—a part of our Divine service; and if it be pervaded by the true spirit of service, it is a routine only in appearance—in reality, it is a revolution on an even higher plane, in an ever larger orbit; and we shall find in God's good time that it has been training us for the unwearying service of the heavenly temple. Yet again, is our routine, as it probably is, one which admits, with every new revolution, of more of mind, and soul, and strength? Then, wearisome though it be, it is a healthful discipline, equally for the powers which it calls into exercise, and for that conscientious fidelity in our appointed sphere, which must concur with trained and tried capacity in fitting the steward of the few and small things committed to his earthly trust for the larger stewardship of the heavenly life. Another subject of frequent complaint is the waste of time in unavoidable, but unprofitable, social engagements. The hours which, if taken from more laborious pursuits, we would gladly devote to entertaining or lucrative intercourse with equals and friends, the wise and the brilliant, those whose converse is our privilege and our joy, must often be spent where we give, and receive nothing in return,—it may be, with those whom we see fit to call dull and stupid, or frivolous and empty, or with the impertinent and importunate,—with those who claim sympathy to which they seem to have no right, or aid to which they can proffer no title other than their need. Can this be a part of our spiritual education? Yes; and a most essential part. It comes to us through the ordering of Providence, and is therefore, no doubt, better for us than the great things which we would gladly do instead, but for which the opportunity is not afforded us. We shall one day own that no time has been better spent, if on these occasions we have exercised patience, forbearance, unwearying kindness, persevering helpfulness, if we have given pleasure, diffused happiness, relieved burdens, cleared perplexity, shed sunlight on those who live under the shadow, quickened dull minds, lightened heavy hearts. But in such ways as I have spoken of, solid portions of time that might have been given to our own mental culture are often invaded and frittered away. Can this be good for us? Yes, if Providence so wills. Growing knowledge is, no doubt, an unspeakable benefit; yet we may be too impatient for its acquisition. We may feel too much as if this world gave the only opportunities for mental cultivation and growth. A part of what we may regret that we lose here will be of no interest or worth to us when we go hence; and for all that we can then desire and need there is ample room in the limitless future. Another often uncomfortable method of spiritual discipline consists in the seemingly excessive annoyance and mortification occasioned by what we account as slight mistakes, follies, and faults. In the vexation and discomfort which we bring upon ourselves by some momentary and almost unconscious deviation from the fitting and the right, we often have an impressive practical commentary on the text, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" But in these experiences we have a most essential and blessed part of our providential education. How should we ever recognize our failures and faults, did they not leave these vivid traces in our experience? Equally is Providence educating us by those trials and griefs—the lighter and the heavier—which belong to our condition as mortals. But it is never to be forgotten that the ministry of affliction is wholly contingent on our

receptivity. The sands of the desert drink in the spring rains, but are not fructified by them. The untilled field returns their blessing in unsightly and noxious weeds. But in the prepared soil they reappear in growing grain and swelling fruit-buds—the prize of faithful toil, the hope of the year; and those dreary, chilly, sunless days of the early rain are the harbingers of all that is bright, beautiful, and gladdening in garden, field, and orchard. Thus the dews and rains of God's afflictive providence in some souls are absorbed and lost, and leave no sign; others they sour, or madden, or hopelessly depress; but where there are already germs of the heavenly Father's planting, they quicken growth, they create inward grace and beauty, they fructify all peaceful thoughts, pure desires, and holy aspirations; they ripen the harvest whose reapers are the angels. But not only through these sadder ministries is God's providence perfecting that which concerneth us. Equally is all that is mirthful and gladdening a part of our education for our immortal being. How vast is our receptivity of gladness! How kindly the necessity—not only in childhood and youth, but under our severest cares and labours, and even under the burden of many years—of recreation and pleasure! Thus by His various discipline is God perfecting that which concerneth us, giving us a far better education than we could plan for ourselves. Let us yield ourselves lovingly to the training of His providence, assured that, ordered by Him, all things shall work together for our good. (*A. P. Peabody, D.D.*) *The Divine purpose concerning us*:—Every man's character is a germ capable of large development. There are slumbering possibilities in us all. We are made for ends known to God, and there is an ideal in His mind concerning each one of us. I. **THE PSALMIST'S TRIUMPHANT CONVICTION.** "The Lord will perfect." This is what we need to impart interest to life. There is no cry so pitiful as "Nothing to live for." On all hands there are disappointed folk who, thinking of condition rather than character, find life "tame." But once let a man or woman reach this assurance that through all the various scenes of life God is moulding them, and even by the "strokes of doom" fashioning them "to shape and use," and all the life sparkles with glad significance. II. **THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE CONVICTION IS BASED.** 1. God's mercy. "Thy mercy, O Lord," etc. This must ever be our first appeal, to mercy. For which of us has a flawless record of submission to the Divine purpose? With our past of perversity, what can we do but cast ourselves on God's infinite pity? And in Christ we have the plan of God's redeeming mercy made known to us as it was not to prophet and psalmist of old. We see that mercy has provided for the ruined life to be restored and built up again according to the plan of the great Architect. 2. God's justice. "Forsake not the works of Thine own hands." This is a plea that every reconciled soul may urge. "Thou hast made me: I reverently challenge Thee to complete Thy work." He is a "faithful Creator," and if you are seeking to answer the end for which He made you, His everlasting honour binds Him to fulfil His part. How full are the New Testament pledges to this effect that He will complete His work in our character—Phil. i. 6. (*Anon.*)

PSALM CXXXIX.

VERB. 1-24. O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me.—*God's exhaustive knowledge of man*:—This lyric has always been the subject of praise. Aben Ezra said there was none like it in the five books. Lord Brougham spoke of it as "that singularly beautiful poem." Herder said that language utterly failed him in its exposition. Erskine of Linlathen wanted this to be before him on his death-bed. The title ascribes it to David, an ascription corroborated by its originality and majesty and its correspondence with psalms undoubtedly Davidic. Probably the Aramaic colouring is a mere dialectic variation, existing during the whole period of Hebrew history, and occasionally coming to the front as circumstances suggested it. I. **THE DIVINE OMNISCIENCE** (vers. 1-6). The poet multiplies expressions to indicate how complete is God's knowledge of him. Whether he be at rest or in motion, in every posture and state, God knows him. Not only his outward acts, but the thoughts from which they spring are at once discerned. Nothing can escape Jehovah's eye, for He is behind and before, *i. e.* on all sides of man, and

His hand is upon him to restrain and control. The strophe closes with a frank confession of the writer's impotence and awe. He cannot comprehend it, which is not strange, for how is the finite to comprehend the infinite? But he knows it and bows in reverence before the sublime truth. II. THE DIVINE OMNIPRESENCE (vers. 7-12). God is everywhere; not only above all as transcendent, but also through all and in all as immanent in nature. This thought is expanded and enforced by its application to all measures of space. Were man to scale the azure vault overhead, it would only confront him with the Divine personality; were he to sound unimaginable depths in the other direction, the result would be the same. If a man mounted on wings, not those of the sun (Mal. iv. 2), nor of the wind (Ps. xviii. 10), but of the dawn, and pursued the farthest flight westward, if he should fly with the same swiftness as the first rays of the morning shoot from one end of the heavens to the other, still he would not get beyond the Divine presence. Beyond the sea, and far out of the sight of man, God's hand would lead him, and God's right hand grasp him. III. OMNIPOTENCE IN THE CREATION OF MAN (vers. 13-19). The singer revolves in mind the secret processes of man's birth and development, and gratitude overflows into praise. He sees how he has been made to differ from the inferior creation in constitution and destiny. It is a fearful distinction (Gen. xxviii. 17). Any signal manifestation of Jehovah's presence, however favourable, inspires awe. The consideration of this single case leads to the general statement that all God's works are marvellous, a statement which the writer reaffirms as from an experimental conviction of its truth. In the next verse the curious growth and unfolding of the embryo is referred to. It goes on in secret, as far from human vision as if it were deep down in some subterranean cavern, but God sees it and directs the mysterious and complicated tissue, as if it were a piece of delicate embroidery. Even in its most rudimental form, invisible to any other ken, it is still open to His eyes, and He determines all its subsequent development, recording in His book the days to come, *i. e.* the various events and vicissitudes of life, even before one of them existed. Struck by this view of God's omniscience as embracing the beginning, the unfolding and the completion of all things, the singer bursts out into a recognition of its value. To him God's thoughts, *i. e.* His plans and purposes as displayed in these miracles of creation, are precious beyond measure. Nor are they few or slight, but amount to a vast sum, more numerous than the sands of the sea. They are ever before David as an object of adoring wonder, not by day only, but by night; not merely in the watches of the night, but even in his sleep. His meditations are continuous. His communion is unbroken. IV. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION (vers. 19-24). The greater any man's nearness to God, the more intense is his abhorrence of the impiety which disowns or despises the living God. Nor does such a feeling indicate malevolence. "When a foul crime has been perpetrated, tender-hearted Christian women who would not harm a hair of the enemy's head, but would rather feed him, will express keen resentment, and will be disquieted in mind till they hear that the perpetrator has been convicted and duly punished." The conclusion of the strophe is striking. The poet returns to the opening words of the psalm, and prays for a new experience of Jehovah's searching scrutiny, that he may not be given over to self-conceit. The petition is a proof of humility. Although he had avowed so strongly his aversion to the wicked, he prays that this may be no mere outward separation. The All-seeing Eye may detect in him some way that leads to sin and sorrow, though he is unconscious of it. Hence he entreats God to see and disclose it, and then taking his hand to lead him in a way which, unlike the way of the wicked (Ps. i. 6), does not perish, but ends in everlasting life. (T. W. Chambers, D.D.) *God's omniscience and omnipresence:—I. SOME SCRIPTURAL VIEWS OF THE DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPRESENCE.* God is everywhere present—1. By His presence. 2. By His power or agency. 3. In the immensity of space. 4. In highest heaven. 5. In hell. 6. We cannot get away from God's presence. 7. Human inspection is very limited. But God's eye penetrates the darkest abode, the deepest cell, the obscurest corner, the blackest night. 8. Men only see what a man says and does; God sees all that a man is. "To Him all hearts are open, all desires known." God knows us, not relatively, but personally. 9. Specially with His people. "Where are you going?" said Collins, the infidel, to a poor but pious man. "To church, sir," was the reply. "What to do there?" "To worship God." "And can you tell me," said the infidel, "whether your God is a great or a little God?" "He is both, sir." "How can He be both?" "He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.

and so little that He can dwell in my heart." II. LESSONS. 1. If God is omniscient and omnipresent, then the moral character of His creatures is unveiled to His gaze, and clearly and distinctly known to Him. 2. If God is omniscient and omnipresent, then the final judgment will be a time of full and complete revelation, as well as a time of righteous retribution (Eccles. xi. 14; Rev. xx. 12). Will the disclosures of that day fill us with joy, or cover us with shame? 3. The importance of an interest in Christ. 4. Try to cherish an abiding sense of God's presence. 5. Pray at all times and in all places. 6. Be comforted in every time of trouble. (*H. Woodcock.*) *The all-seeing God*:—I. IS THERE AN ALL-SEEING GOD? If not, whence our own existence? Whence our expectations of reward for doing right, of punishment for wrong-doing? Whence the material universe? Whence the original plan, stupendous beyond conception, more minute than the most powerful microscope can reveal, which must have preceded the first act of creation? Whence the march and trend of history, always revealing "a power not ourselves, which makes for righteousness," and which sweeps away opposition like dust before the oncoming storm? Who conceived the character of Christ, in an age overlaid and penetrated through and through with error? Whose works of grace, in that same earth, have steadily built up a kingdom of love, of peace, of righteousness? If there is a creator of the universe, He must also be its sustainer: He cannot press material forces into service and go and leave them, as we do a windmill to draw water, for all force depends upon Him for its existence. He who superintends all must be all-seeing, and He who presides over all history must take cognizance of every event. II. WHAT CONCERN HAS OUR LIFE, HERE AND HEREAFTER, WITH THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD? 1. That exquisite pleasure in sin, which comes from its fancied concealment, is utter folly. 2. God is patient with wrong and sin, because He sees the end from the beginning. 3. Patience under trial and strength in adversity thrive under the all-seeing eye. 4. The friends of God are glad in the sure hope of being more and more consciously under His eye. 5. Corresponding judgments await those who, shrinking from that all-seeing eye, with a repugnance predominant and increasing, must abide its searchings for ever. 6. How priceless the blood of Calvary, in which the saints have "washed their robes and made them white"! (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The all-seeing and all-present One*:—I. THE ALL-SEEING ONE. 1. He sees the whole of an object. At best we can only see the outside of a thing, the curve, the angle, the colour. 2. He sees the whole of every object. How few are the objects we see even thus externally and partially! Some are too small and some too distant. But He sees all, His eye takes in the immeasurable universe. 3. He sees the whole of everything at the same time. II. THE ALL-PRESENT ONE. 1. He is present everywhere, in the entirety of Himself. 2. He is present in all things, yet distinct from all things. Practically, this subject serves three important purposes. 1. To refute some popular errors of human life. (1) There is the error that supposes that formal worship can be of any real worth. "God is a Spirit," etc. (3) There is the error that imagines that death will make some fundamental alteration in their relation to God. 2. To reprove some prevalent impieties in human conduct. (1) Atheism. (2) Indifferentism. 3. To reveal the supreme interest of human life. Cultivate a loving affection for Him. (*Homilist.*) *God and ourselves*:—This psalm sings of—I. GOD. 1. His omniscience. (1) He knows our actions, ways, words, thoughts. (2) His knowledge of us is entire, complete. 2. His omnipresence. He is in—(1) Heaven. (2) Unseen world. (3) Everywhere. (4) In the dark as well as the light. 3. His omnipotence (vers. 13–16). 4. The separate, personal thinking of God toward every one of us. (1) Innumerable. (2) Constant. II. OURSELVES. Our relation toward such a God should be—1. That of adoring and constantly thoughtful reverence (vers. 17, 18). 2. That of siding with Him against evil (vers. 19–22). 3. That of welcoming the Divine searching (vers. 23, 24). Said Milton, speaking of his travels abroad when a young man: "I again take God to witness that in all places where so many things are considered lawful, I lived sound and untouched from all profligacy and vice, having this thought perpetually with me, that though I might escape the eyes of men, I certainly could not the eyes of God." 4. That of a prayerful seeking of the Divine guidance (ver. 24). (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *God's knowledge of man*:—One of the most remarkable characteristics of a rational being is the power of self-inspection. Like the air we breathe, like the light we see, it involves a mystery that no man has ever solved. Self-consciousness has been the problem of the philosophic mind in all ages; and the mystery is not yet unravelled. But if that knowledge whereby man

knows himself is mysterious, then certainly that whereby God knows him is far more so. That act whereby another being knows my secret thoughts and inmost feelings is most certainly inexplicable. I. GOD ACCURATELY AND EXHAUSTIVELY KNOWS ALL THAT MAN KNOWS OF HIMSELF. He may be an uncommonly thoughtful person, and little of what is done within his soul may escape his notice; nay, we will make the extreme supposition that he arrests every thought as it rises, and looks at it; that he analyzes every sentiment as it swells his heart; that he scrutinizes every purpose as it determines his will; even if he should have such a thorough and profound self-knowledge as this, God knows him equally profoundly and equally thoroughly. Nay, more, this process of self-inspection may go on indefinitely, and the man grow more and more thoughtful, and obtain an everlastingly augmenting knowledge of what he is and what he does, so that it shall seem to him that he is penetrating so deeply into those dim and shadowy regions of consciousness where the external life takes its very first start, and then he may be sure that God understands the thought that is afar off, and deep down, and that at this lowest range and plane in his experience he besets him behind and before. II. GOD ACCURATELY AND EXHAUSTIVELY KNOWS ALL THAT MAN MIGHT, BUT DOES NOT, KNOW OF HIMSELF. Though the transgressor is ignorant of much of his sin, because, at the time of its commission, he sins blindly as well as wilfully, and unreflectingly as well as freely; and though the transgressor has forgotten much of that small amount of sin, of which he was conscious, and by which he was pained, at the time of its perpetration; though, on the side of man, the powers of self-inspection and memory have accomplished so little towards this preservation of man's sin, yet God knows it all, and remembers it all. He compasseth man's path, and his lying down, and is acquainted with all his ways. And here let us look upon the bright as well as the dark side of this subject. For if God's exhaustive knowledge of the human heart waken dread in one of its aspects, it starts infinite hope in another. If that Being has gone down into these depths of human depravity, and seen it with a more abhorring glance than could ever shoot from a finite eye, and yet has returned with a cordial offer to forgive it all, and a hearty proffer to cleanse it all away, then we can lift up the eye in adoration and in hope. The worst has been seen, and that too by the holiest of beings, and yet eternal glory is offered to us! It is perfectly plain from the elevated central point of view where we now stand, and in the focal light in which we now see, that no man can be justified before God upon the ground of personal character; for that character, when subjected to God's exhaustive scrutiny, withers and shrinks away. Before the Searcher of hearts all mankind must appeal to mere and sovereign mercy. Justice, in this reference, is out of the question. Now, in this condition of things, God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The simple question, then, which meets us is, Wilt thou know thyself here, and now, that thou mayest accept and feel God's pity; or wilt thou keep within the screen, and not know thyself until beyond the grave, and then feel God's judicial wrath? The self-knowledge, remember, must come in the one way or the other. It is a simple question of time; a simple question whether it shall come here in this world, where the blood of Christ "freely" flows, or in the future world, where "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." (*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.*) *God's presence*:—The fact that God is always present and knows every minute trifle in our lives, and that His unerring judgment will assuredly take count of every detail of our character and our conduct, neither exaggerating nor omitting, but applying absolute justice; this truth is one of those which lose force from their very universality. God has made us so. We become unconscious of everything by long use. We could never discharge our duties properly if we were to be perpetually distracted by the consciousness of what was around us: and, above all, we might be daunted by the perpetual thought of the presence of God, and so he paralyzed instead of helped. There is, therefore, nothing wrong in our forgetting that we are in the presence of God any more than there is anything foolish in our forgetting that we need air to breathe or light to see by, or that if we fall we may hurt ourselves: just in the same way as we very often, and quite rightly, forget that we are in the company of men who will take notice of our faults. The right state of mind plainly is to have the thought of God's presence so perpetually at hand that it shall always start before us whenever it is wanted. So that whenever we are on the point of doing or saying anything cowardly, or mean, or false, or impure, or proud, or conceited, or unkind, the

remembrance that God is looking on shall instantly flash across us and help us to beat down our enemy. This is living with God. This is the communion with Him, and with Christ, which unquestionably helps the struggling, the penitent, the praying, more than anything else. And this perpetual though not always conscious sense of God's presence would, no doubt, if we would let it have its perfect work, gradually act on our characters just as the presence of our fellow-men does. We cannot live long with men without catching something of their manner, of their mode of thought, of their character, of their government of themselves. Those who live much in a court acquire courtly manners. Those who live much in refined and educated society acquire refinement insensibly. Those who are always hearing pure and high principles set forth as the guides of life learn to value and to know them even faster than they can learn to live by them. From the just we learn justice; from the charitable we catch an infection of charity; from the generous we receive the instinct of generosity. So, too, by living in the presence of God and, as it were, in the courts of heaven, we shall assuredly learn something of a heavenly tone, and shake off some of that coarse worldliness, that deeply ingrained selfishness, that silly pride and conceit which now spoils our very best service. In short, to live with God is to be perpetually rising above the world; to live without Him is to be perpetually sinking into it, and with it, and below it. And lest the presence of God should be too much for us, Christ has taken human nature on Him, and has provided that He will be always with us as long as the world shall last. How shall we learn to walk by His side? The daily prayer in the closet, the endeavour to keep the attention fixed when praying with others, either in our regular services or in family worship, the regular habit of reading the Bible at a fixed time, the occasional reminders of ourselves that God is looking on,—these are our chief means of learning to remember His presence. But yet there is another, not less powerful than any, which deserves special mention. Our hearts will put us in mind of God's eye being upon us every now and then involuntarily. The thought will flash across us that God sees us. And this will generally be just when we are tempted to do wrong, or perhaps just when we are actually beginning to do it: some secret sin of which no one knows or dreams perhaps, some self-indulgence, which we dare not deny that God condemns. Then is the moment to choose whether or not we will live in the presence of God; then when the finger of conscience is pointing to Him and saying, "He is looking at you." (*Archbishop Temple.*) *God all-seeing*:—In the mythology of the heathen, Momus, the god of fault-finding, is represented as blaming Vulcan, because in the human form, which he had made of clay, he had not placed a window in the breast, by which whatever was done or thought there might easily be brought to light. We do not agree with Momus, neither are we of his mind who desired to have a window in his breast that all men might see his heart. If we had such a window we should pray for shutters, and should keep them closed. *God omniscient*:—While the Americans were blockading Cuba, several captains endeavoured to elude their vigilance by night, trusting that the darkness would conceal them as they passed between the American war-ships. But in almost every case the dazzling rays of a searchlight frustrated the attempt, and the fugitives' vessel was captured by the Americans. The brilliant searchlight sweeping the broad ocean and revealing even the smallest craft on its surface is but a faint type of the Eternal Light from which no sinner can hide his sin. (*Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.—*God knows and takes strict and accurate notice of all our ways*:—This is so, because—I. **GOD RULES AND GOVERNS MEN.** But this could not be without such knowledge. And so at times He governs men's secret projects. 1. By discovering them, making them known to others. 2. By preventing them. 3. By turning them to other ends than men purposed (*Isa. vii. 7; Gen. xlv. 5*). II. **HE GIVES LAWS TO REGULATE THEM.** III. **HE WILL JUDGE THEM.** 1. He does so in this life where He often gives foretaste of the future (*Deut. xxix. 18*). 2. In the day of judgment (*Luke xii. 2*). IV. **HE IS OMNISCIENT AND OMNIPRESENT** (*Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13*). Then—1. Presumptuous sin is atheism. 2. Let secret sinners be afraid. Such are those who sin in thought and desire only. God judges such, for they are the roots of sin. Spiritual wickedness is worst wickedness. And they are the product of the man himself, as his actions sometimes are not. And there are secret sins not only thought, but acted, only con-

cealed from men (2 Sam. xii. 12; Habak. ii. 11; Gen. iv. 10). God will judge them. 8. Let sincere-hearted Christians be comforted. The same sun-rising and break of day that terrifies the robber is a comfort to the honest traveller. Thou that art sincere, God sees that sincerity in thee that others cannot discern; perhaps thou canst not fully discern it thyself. And He will exalt thee. (*R. South, D.D.*)

The record of our lives.—I. THAT RECORD IS COMPLETE. II. THAT RECORD MAY BE PRESENTED TO OUR CONDEMNATION. Men are making efforts to recover the secrets of another's brain. It is hard to conceive what the possibility means, as suggested by the results of rapid photography in the vitascope. It is not position that is presented, but action; even the change of face with change of thought. It is the publication of a partial set of records. Who could risk the scrutiny of their whole lives with such publicity? III. BUT THAT RECORD CAN BE BLOTTED OUT. A photographer can remove the sensitive salts in a bath. The picture then has no existence and cannot be exhibited. But we cannot trust our forgetfulness to do this, nor man's charity. But God in mercy has provided a cleansing flood. (*W. J. Gregory.*)

God's winnowing.—The word in the Hebrew original for "compasses" is "winnowest." This calls up before the mind an image which helps to illustrate the meaning of the verse in a most interesting manner. The mere compassing of our path by God is an elementary, commonplace truth which requires no argument or proof. It is a truism which loses very much the power of truth through our familiarity with it. But when we substitute the winnowing of our path by God's dealings with us, we have not in that case a commonplace fact, but a most suggestive and instructive metaphor. Harvest operations in the East are all carried on in the open air, for the weather at that time of the year is uniformly fine. When the corn is reaped it is not piled into stooks, or gathered into barns, as with us, but threshed on the spot, on some piece of rising ground, beaten hard and smooth, and exposed to the wind. The sheaves are heaped on this spot, arranged in a circle, and over them are driven rude, heavy sledges of wood, having their under-surface stuck full of sharp pieces of hard basalt. Oxen are yoked to these sledges, and a man stands on them to increase their pressure, while another man drives the oxen round and round upon the sheaves until they are mashed to pieces, the straw being broken and crushed, and the grains of corn separated from it. When the grain is all threshed out in this manner, the heaps of mixed corn and broken straw are tossed up before the breeze with a shovel; and then the grain, being heaviest, falls straight down, and the broken straw and chaff, being lighter, is carried by the wind, and forms a heap a little farther on. This explanation will make perfectly clear the allusion of the psalmist: "Thou compasses, or winnowest, my path." It refers to the oxen going round and round on the sheaves laid on the threshing-floor, in order to separate the corn from the straw and chaff. In like manner, the psalmist, by a bold figure, represents God going round and round our path by His dealings with us in providence and grace, in order to purify our nature, and to separate the good from the evil. God humbles Himself to do for us the work which the oxen do for the corn. We are valuable to Him as the corn is to the husbandman. How patiently do the oxen plod on hour after hour, going their constant round, treading down the corn until their task is accomplished. And so how patiently and unweariedly does God compass your path with His providences and gracious dealings, till He has fulfilled in you the good pleasures of His goodness, and prepared you for being presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Life to every one is a common round of continual beginnings and endings. Each day is a little circle returning where it began. 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. He will not go round on your sheaves with His heavy dispensations oftener than is required to separate the chaff from the wheat; and you may be certain that not one grain of good in you will be destroyed, not one element of lasting benefit will be injured—only the chaff will be blown away and the straw removed. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.**—*God's all-knowledge*:—If we had to take our trial for our lives before the tribunal of an earthly judge, there are probably three questions which we should ask ourselves with no little anxiety: Has the judge himself the power, or does he represent some one who has the power, to enforce the sentence which he may pronounce? Is the judge a man of that integrity of character which is fearless when interpreting the plain sense of the law that is to be administered, and equitable when some indistinctness in that law obliges the interpreter to fall back on his own sense of what is probably right? Can the judge command the means of knowing enough of those facts upon which his decision must be based to judge righteous judgment, to have himself and to inspire others with the assurance that innocence is acquitted and that guilt is punished? When we turn our thoughts upwards to the Judge of all men, we know how a serious believer in God must answer such questions as these. I. But, as we look more closely at the subject, CERTAIN FEATURES OF THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS POSSESSED BY THE DIVINE MIND stand out before us more distinctly. They show how that knowledge differs from knowledge as it exists in ourselves, and they enable us to understand how the knowledge which belongs to God, as God, is knowledge of an extent and of a kind which makes it certain that when seated on the throne of judgment the Holy Judge of all the earth does right. 1. And first of all, then, so far as we know, all, or nearly all, of our knowledge is acquired, and most of it is acquired at very considerable cost of time and labour. Now, nothing corresponding to this can hold good of the mind of God. God does not acquire His knowledge; He ever possessed it. Acquisition implies ignorance to begin with; it implies a limited prospect which is gradually enlarged by effort; it implies dependence upon intermediate sources of knowledge, upon books, teachers, the testimony of others, evidence, experiment. All this is inadmissible in conceiving of the Divine Mind which never could have been ignorant, never dependent upon anything or any person external to itself for obtaining information. Man may be very—nay, utterly ignorant—not, indeed, without grave loss, but certainly without forfeiting his manhood. In man, knowledge, however important, is yet an accident of his life: it is conceivably separated from it. In God, on the other hand, knowledge is not a separable accident, a dispensable attribute of His existence. As God, He cannot but know, and know on an infinite scale. In God, as St. Augustine finely says, to know is the same thing as to exist. There can be in Him no progress from a lower to a higher plane of knowledge, still less from ignorance to knowledge. In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge have ever been exactly what they are. Now, consider how this bears on the duties of a judge. A human judge, whatever his knowledge of the statute book, whatever his experience of proceedings in the courts, is dependent upon the evidence which is brought before him, when charging the jury or when forming his own judgment. If the evidence is confused or imperfect, if it is perjured or untrustworthy, still it is all he has to go upon; he must do the best he can with it; he has no means of arriving at a bound at the truth of the facts independently of that which is deposed to before him. Alas! however excellent his intentions, however absolute his integrity, he cannot escape a liability—the human liability—to make mistakes. In the Divine Judge this liability does not exist, because His knowledge of facts, not being acquired by weighing evidence, is ever and immediately present to His mind. He sees everything—men, events, characters—at a glance, and as they are. 2. And as human knowledge is acquired, so it is liable to decompose in our minds. It is less easily acquired than it is forgotten. Here, again, we must see that nothing corresponding to this process, so familiar in the experience of the human mind, is even imaginable in the mind of God. It knows "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." All that is, all that might have been and is not, all that might yet be, whether it is to be or is not to be, is eternally present to it, and it could not forfeit its hold upon any part of this, to us, inconceivably vast field of knowledge without ceasing to be itself. And here, again, the Divine Judge must differ from any human judge. No human judge can prudently trust

his memory even to retain what is brought before him in a case that lasts but a few hours; he can only trust his notes. Memory, he knows, is treacherous; it gives way just when we need it most; it refuses to recall a date, a name, a figure, a fact, unimportant generally, but of critical importance then and now. Its impotence is, so we think, as capricious as are its good services. In the Awful Mind above and around us nothing like this is possible, because it does not ever, as we do, look back upon any fact as upon something past; it is always in contact with all facts, whether, from our point of view, they be past or present or future, as eternally present to it. 8. And, once more, human knowledge is very limited. "We know in part." As the generations of men who devote themselves to the work of marshalling and increasing the stock of human knowledge succeed each other, each generation is largely occupied in showing how defective was the knowledge of those who immediately preceded it, while it knows that in turn it, too, will be exposed to a like criticism on the part of its successors. So far are we men from possessing the field of universal knowledge that a man never entirely masters any single subject. In the Divine Mind, on the contrary, we cannot conceive partial knowledge of any subject whatever. God knows all, because He is everywhere. The Omnipresent cannot but be also omniscient. What need is there to say that the knowledge of the human judge is, I will not say partial, but very limited indeed? Were it otherwise, how superfluous would be the machinery which now justice adopts in order to achieve its ends. How different with the Divine Judge! He can gain nothing from any external source of knowledge, and nothing can intercept or divert His all-surveying, all-penetrating, all-comprehending intelligence. II. OF THIS KNOWLEDGE POSSESSED BY GOD THERE ARE SOME FEATURES WHICH, FROM THEIR BEARING ON LIFE AND CONDUCT, DESERVE SPECIAL ATTENTION. 1. Thus God knows not only what is known to the world, or to our relations about each one of us; He knows that which each of us only knows about himself. His eye surveys our secret thoughts and words and ways. He has sometimes revealed this knowledge through the mouth of an inspired servant, as when Elisha discovered his double-dealing with Naaman to the astonished Gehazi, or when St. Peter proclaimed their crime and its punishment to the terrified Ananias and Sapphira. 2. He knows, too, the exact measure of our individual responsibility for the corporate acts of the societies to which we belong—the Church, the nation, the parish, the family. 3. And, once more, He knows what each one of us would be in other circumstances than those with which He has surrounded us. He knows this because He sees our inmost dispositions, and sees us as we are. Yes, in thinking of the judgment we have to think not only of the power, not only of the goodness of the Judge, but of His limitless knowledge, that awful attribute of a knowledge which searches us out in the depths of our being, which plays upon us, around us, within us, every moment of our lives with a penetrating scrutiny that nothing can elude; that knowledge before which the night is as the day, and the future as the present, and the possible as the actual, and the secret things of darkness as the most ordinary facts of daylight; that knowledge which nothing can impair, nothing can disturb, nothing can exaggerate or discolour; the calm, majestic, resistless outlook of the Eternal Mind will become real to us—real to you and to me—as never before in our experience. There are two resolutions which the thought of that meeting should surely suggest. The first resolution, if we can, to know something really about ourselves before we die, to dwell no longer, if hitherto we have so dwelt, on the surface of life, to see ourselves with eyes not of our friends, not of our own self-love, but, so far as may be, as the holy angels see us, as He sees us who is the Lord of angels, our Maker and our Judge. Each day some few minutes should surely be spent in the regular and fruitful practice of self-examination. And the second resolution is to fly for refuge to that one Friend who can make a true knowledge of self bearable to each of us. We can dare to be true not only because our Redeemer and our God is Himself the Faithful and the True, but because He is the All-merciful, because, if we so will, He has searched us out and known us even here, that at the last great day He may make us trophies not of His awful justice, but of His redeeming grace. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Vers. 7-10. **Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?**—*The omnipresence of God:*—I. LAY DOWN SOME POSITIONS. 1. God is intimately and essentially in all parts and places of the world. One of the heathen, being asked to give a description of what God was, tells us most admirably, "God is a sphere, whose centre is every-

where, and whose circumference is nowhere": a raised apprehension of the Divine nature in a heathen! And another, being demanded what God was, made answer, that "God is an Infinite Point"; than which nothing can be said more (almost) or truer, to declare this omnipresence of God. It is reported of Heraclitus the philosopher, when his friend came to visit him, being in an old rotten hovel, "Come in, come in," saith he, "for God is here." God is in the meanest cottage as well as in the stateliest palace; for God is everywhere present and sees all things. 2. God is not only present in the world, but He is infinitely existent also without the world, and beyond all things but Himself (1 Kings viii. 27; Isa. lxvi. 1, 2). 3. As God exists everywhere, so all and whole God exists everywhere, because God is indivisible. II. RATIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS. 1. God is present everywhere. (1) From His unchangeableness. (2) From His preservation of all things in their beings. 2. But God exists not only in the world, but infinitely beyond the world also. (1) From the infiniteness of His nature and essence. (2) From the infiniteness of His perfections. (3) From His almighty power. (4) From His eternity. III. ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS. 1. These places which speak of going to, and departing from, places, seem to oppose God's ubiquity, because motion is inconsistent with God's omnipresence (Gen. xviii. 21; Habak. iii. 3). I answer: These and the like Scriptures are not to be taken literally, but as accommodate to our capacity and conception, even as parents, when they speak to their little children, will sometimes lisp and babble in their language; so God oftentimes condescends to us in speaking our language for the declaring of those things which are far above our reach. 2. The Scripture tells us that hereafter in heaven we shall see God as He is: but is not that impossible? I answer, Such Scriptures are not to be understood as if the capacities of angels, much less of men, are, or ever shall be, wide and capacious enough to contain the infinite greatness of God. No, His omnipresence is not comprehended by angels themselves, nor shall be by man for ever; but it must be understood comparatively. Our vision and sight of God here is but through a glass darkly; but in heaven it shall be with so much more brightness and clearness that, in comparison of the obscure and glimmering way whereby we know God here, it may be called a seeing of Him face to face, and knowing Him as we are known by Him. 3. It may seem no small disparagement to God to be everywhere present. What! for the glorious majesty of God to be present in such vile and filthy places as are here upon earth? To this I answer—(1) God doth not think it any disparagement to Him, nor think it unworthy of Him, to know and make all these which we call vile and filthy places; why, then, should we think it unworthy of Him to be present there? (2) God is a Spirit, and is not capable of any pollution or defilement from any vile or filthy things. The sunbeams are no more tainted by shining on a dunghill than they are by shining on a bed of spices. (3) The vilest things that are have still a being that is good in their own kind, and as well pleasing to God as those things which we put a greater value and esteem upon. (4) It reflects no more dishonour upon God to be present with the vilest creatures than to be present with the noblest and highest, because the angels are at an infinite distance from God. There is a greater disproportion between God and the angels than there is between the vilest worm and an angel; all are at an infinite distance to His glory and majesty. IV. APPLICATION. 1. Is God thus infinitely present everywhere, and thus in and with all His creatures, then what an encouragement is here unto prayer. The voice in prayer is necessary—(1) As it is that which God requires should be employed in His service, for this is the great end why our tongues were given to us, that by them we might bless and serve God (James iii. 9). (2) When in private it may be a help and means to raise up our own affections and devotions, then the voice is requisite, keeping it still within the bounds of decency or privacy. (3) In our joining also with others, it is a help likewise to raise and quicken their affections; otherwise, were it not for these three reasons, the voice is no more necessary to make known our wants to God than it is to make them known to our own hearts; for God is always in us and with us, and knows what we have need of before we ask it. 2. As the consideration of God's omnipresence should encourage us in prayer, as knowing that God certainly hears us, so it should affect us with a holy awe and reverence of God in all our prayers and duties, and in the whole course of our lives and conversations. Certainly it is an excellent meditation to prepare our hearts to duty, and to compose them in duty, to be much pondering the omnipresence of God, to think that I am with God, He is present in the room with me, even in the congregation with me, and

likewise in my closet, and in all my converse and dealings in the world. How can it be possible for that man to be frothy and vain that keeps this thought alive in his heart? (*Bishop Hopkins.*) *Omnipresence of God*:—I. THE IMPORTANT TRUTH WHICH IS HERE SET FORTH. II. THE STRIKING AND EMPHATIC MANNER IN WHICH THIS GREAT TRUTH IS HERE PRESENTED (ver. 7). III. THE EFFECTS WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF THIS SUBLIME THEME SHOULD PRODUCE. 1. Let the believer draw from it the consolation which it is so peculiarly adapted to impart. "Fear not, for I am with you." 2. The omnipresence of God is adapted also to admonish. 3. This subject is full of terror to the ungodly. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The encompassing, all-pervading God*:—This psalm is as near an approach to Pantheism as the Bible ever gets; yet it is wholly distinct from Pantheism. It does not make everything a part of God, but insists that God is in everything and every place. The writer feels Him in every movement of the circling air, and hears Him in every sound. God is here, and there, and everywhere, in the heights and in the depths, in the darkness and the light, filling all star-lit spaces and searching each human heart. I. THE SPIRIT AND PRESENCE WHICH NO MAN CAN ESCAPE. It is a bit of his own story. He had not always found peace and joy in the overshadowing of Divine love. There had been a load upon his conscience, and torturing guilt in his heart. He had endeavoured to run away from the wrath which his sin had provoked, from the unsleeping justice which pursued him, from the witness of God in his own reproaching conscience. He had tried to silence the rebuking voice, to quiet the disturbing fears, to forget his own thoughts and hide himself from himself. And the effort had been vain, impotent, impossible. Everywhere he heard the still small voice, and felt the Unseen Presence. Everywhere God makes Himself felt by men, in kindness, if possible, and if not, then in wrath. Men must believe in Him; they cannot help it. Kill their religion a hundred times, and it has a hundred resurrections. It is in all men. It is the fire which never goes quite out. Atheism is never more than a wave on the sea of humanity, which rises, falls, and quickly disappears. God will not let Himself be denied and forgotten. He speaks in too many voices for that; through nature and conscience, sins, penalties, and guilty terrors; through life's changes, uncertainties, sorrows, and misfortunes; through pain, and death, and human gladness, and human mystery; through returning seasons and unerring laws; through the works of righteousness and the wages of iniquity, He is ever about us. His presence is in every heart, and He laughs at the folly which thinks to escape Him. II. REST AND CONFIDENCE AND JOY WHICH HIS SPIRIT AND PRESENCE GIVE to those who recognize Him everywhere, and walk in His light and love. If a man aspires after goodness, he will wish to be always near the one Source of goodness. If he is making a brave fight against his sins, he will always want to feel the mighty hand upon him from which alone comes victory; and if he is worn and worried with the dark problems and mysteries of life, nothing will satisfy him but the thought that Divine light and wisdom are moving and working in all that darkness. Get to feel that His light and wisdom are everywhere, that His love, pity, and forbearance are everywhere, that His providential care is everywhere, that His ear is everywhere open to your prayers, and His mercy is everywhere on the wing to bring you answers, and then your remotest thought will be how you can escape Him. Your every-day cry will be, "Come nearer, make Thyself felt. Compass me about, hold me fast." It is the all-pervading presence of God that makes life bearable to him, and the one thing which makes the Christian life possible. If God were not in your place of business your hearts would grow hard as nails. If God were not in your homes your sweetest affections would become stale and sour. If God were not in your places of temptation you would never enter them without falling. If the Spirit of God did not visit you in the thronging streets and the giddy world you would degenerate into coarse worldliness. If He were not everywhere, painting Himself afresh on your hearts and minds, you would lose all sense of His beauty. If He were absent from your scenes of sorrow, if you did not feel His hand holding yours in hours of pain, and by the death-bed side, you would be overcome with fear or die of heart-break. We live because He lives everywhere. We hope because He revives His promises in us everywhere. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The cry of the sage, the sinner, and the saint*:—Look at this language as used—I. By the SAGE. The philosopher has asked a thousand times, is God everywhere? Or is there a district in immensity where He is not? Taking the language as his question, he assumes—1. That He has a "presence," a personal existence: that He is as distinct from the universe as the musician from his

music, as the painter from his pictures, as the soul from the body. 2. That His presence is detected as far as his observations extend. He discovers Him far up as the most powerful telescope can reach, and down in the most infinitesimal forms of life: and he concludes that He is present where the eye has never reached, and where the imagination has never travelled. II. By the **SINNER**. In the mouth of the sinner this language means—1. Thy presence is an evil. His presence makes the hell of the damned. The rays of His effulgent purity are the flames in which corrupt spirits burn and writh. 2. Escape from Thy presence is an impossibility. III. By the **SAINT**. In the impossibility of escape I rejoice; for "In Thy presence there is fulness of joy," etc. (*Homilist.*) *The omnipresent God:*—I. **GOD IN ALL MODES OF PERSONAL EXISTENCE.** These are all covered by the contrast between heaven and hell, than which no words would suggest a completer contrast to every thoughtful Hebrew. Heaven was the scene of the highest personal activity; it was the abode of Him with whom was "the fountain of life"; there dwelt cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, all rejoicing in the highest exercise of thought and the noblest powers of service. Hell—or the grave, the place of the dead—was the end of thought, the cessation of employment, the abode of silence and corruption. And yet, dark and lonesome as was the thought of dying, there was this one ray of comfort in the prospect—that death was of God's appointment; as much as the heaven of His own abode, it was beneath the rule of God. There are times when to us, too, there is unspeakable rest in the assurance that God is in the appointment of death as truly, though not as clearly, as He is in His own heaven. How many who dreaded the desolation of bereavement have found that God is there. They are not alone, for the Father, the Saviour, the Comforter, is with them; the discipline of bereavement is as Divine as the sweeter training of companionship. Did we but see what noble issues have been wrought for men by death; how it has refined affection and chastened passion, and given scope to patience, and cultured hope; how it has surrounded men's pathway with angels, and breathed a saintlier spirit into common lives; we should gain a nobler vision than before of the presence and meaning of God in death. II. **GOD IN THE YET UNTRODDEN WAYS OF HUMAN HISTORY.** The ninth verse gives us an image of the psalmist, standing by the sea-shore, watching as the rising sun broadens the horizon, and brings into view an islet here and there, which, by catching the sight, serves but to lengthen still more the indefinite expanse beyond. The fancy is suggested, half of longing, half of dread, what would it be to fly until he reached the point where now the farthest ray is resting, to gaze upon a sea still shoreless, or to land in an unknown region and find himself a solitary there? But he is not daunted by the vision; one presence would still be with him. Vast as the world may be, it is contained within the vaster God; his fancy cannot wander where he would be unguarded and unled. He still could worship; he still could rest. How wonderfully history confirms faith. The lands towards which the psalmist strained his wondering vision have come at length into the record of civilization. Even while he was musing God was preparing the countries in which, in due time, the Gospel was to develop, and the races by whom it should be spread. Could he now take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, he would find God here, revealed in the progress of Christendom, and the force of Western civilization. When Christ sent the apostles on their untrodden way He gave them a blank page on which to write their history. He did not reveal to them "the times and the seasons"; He only assured them that wherever they went He was with them. All was obscure except their faith that, as seed will grow, and heaven will spread, so the kingdom of God should advance. The presence of God in human history meant the reign of Christ in human history; where have the faithful gone and not found their God? III. **GOD IN THE PERPLEXITIES OF OUR EXPERIENCE.** Most men probably look on spiritual conflict at first as a necessary evil; something which it were well if we could avoid, but which, since we cannot avoid it, we must go through with what heart we may; and they look to God to keep, and, in due time, to deliver them. But when, in the review of their struggles, they perceive what progress they have made by reason of it; how it has enriched their character, not only strengthening their piety, but also enlarging its scope and adding to their graces; when they find what a wise and benignant influence it has enabled them to exercise; what power of comfort it has given them, they begin to see that the conflict itself was of Divine appointment, and to cherish a larger, nobler view of God's purpose and of man's discipline. They perceive that the obscurity, equally

with the clearness, of a spiritual experience is ordained of God. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The present God*:—There was something almost to be envied in the simple, easy, undoubting faith in the ever-present Spirit of God that breathes in the devotional portions of the Old Testament. Science had not begun to be. Men saw and felt circumambient force on every side, and with the instinctive wisdom of their ignorance this force was to them the varied yet immutable God, Himself unchanged, yet in manifestation ever new. We think ourselves, in point of intelligence, at a heaven-wide distance in advance of them. But has not our ignorance grown faster than our knowledge—as every new field that we explore in part abuts upon regions which we cannot explore, and every solved problem starts others which cannot be solved? If science has ever been antagonistic to faith, it has not been by superseding it, or even by interfering with it, but simply because the new knowledge of nature that has flashed with such suddenness and rapidity upon our generation has so filled and tasked the minds of not a few, that they have ignored for the time the regions where light still fails and faith is the only guide. But there are among the grand generalizations of recent science those that help our faith, and furnish analogies that are almost demonstrations for some of the most sacred truths of religion. Among these truths is that suggested by our text—the presence of the Divine Spirit with and in the human soul. Now, to the soul of man, bathed in this omnipresence, receiving all thought and knowledge through its mediation, living, moving, and having its being in it, what can be more easily conceivable than that there should also be conveyed to it thoughts, impressions, intimations, that flow directly from the Father of our spirits? It has been virtually the faith of great and good men in all time. They have felt and owned a prompting, a motive power, from beyond their own souls, and from above the ranks of their fellow-men. Inspiration has been a universal idea under every form of culture, has been believed, sought, recognized, obeyed. At all other points there has been divergence; as to this, but one mind and one voice. You could translate the language of Socrates concerning his demon into the most orthodox Christian phraseology without adding or omitting a single trait, and not even St. Paul was more confident than he of being led by the Spirit. But there is no need of citing authorities. Who of us is there that has not had thoughts borne in upon him which he could not trace to any association or influence on his own plane, seedling thoughts, perhaps, which have yielded harvest for the angel-reapers, strength equal to the day in the conflict with temptation, comfort in sorrow, visions of heaven lifted for the moment above the horizon like a mirage in the desert? These experiences have been multiplied in proportion to our receptivity. As the message on the wires is lost if there be none to watch or listen at the terminus, so at the terminus of the spirit-wire there must be the listening soul, the inward voice, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." But while we thus acknowledge God in the depths of our own consciousness, can we not equally feel His presence in the glory, beauty, joy-giving ministry of His works? Are they not richer to our eyes every year? Has it not happened to us, over and over again, to say, "Spring, or summer, was never so beautiful before"? This is true every year to the recipient soul. Not that there is any added physical charm or visible glory; but it is the Spirit of our Father that glows and beams upon us, that pours itself into our souls; and if we have grown by His nurture, there is in us more and more of spiritual life that can be irradiated, gladdened, lifted in praise and love, with every recurring phase of the outward world. Is not this ordained, that the vision of Him in whom are all the archetypes of beauty, and whose embodied thought is in its every phase, may be kept ever fresh and vivid—that there may be ever new stimulants to adoration and praise—that with the changing garb of nature the soul may renew her garment of grateful joy, her singing robes of thanksgiving to Him who has made everything beautiful in its time? But God is still nearer to us than in the world around us. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." When I reflect on the mysteries of my own being, on the complex organism, not one of whose numberless members or processes can be deranged without suffering or peril; when I consider my own confessed powerlessness as to the greater part of this earthly tabernacle in which I dwell, and the narrow limits of my seeming power as to the part of it which I can control; when I see the gates and pitfalls of death by and over which I am daily led in safety; when I resign all charge of myself every night, and no earthly watch is kept over my unconscious repose—oh, I know that omnipotence alone can be my keeper, that the unsleeping Shepherd guides my waking and

guards my sleeping hours—that His life feeds mine, courses in my veins, renews my wasting strength, rolls back the death-shadows as day by day they gather over me. Equally, in the exercise of thought and emotion, must I own His presence and providence. (*A. P. Peabody, D.D.*) *Universal presence of God*:—The laws and forms of nature are only the methods of God's agency, the habits of His existence and the turns of His thought. Each dewdrop holds an oracle, each bud a revelation, and everything we see is a signal of His presence, present but out of sight. Every colour of the dawning or the dying light; every aspect of the changing seasons and all the mysteries of electricity make us feel the eternal presence of God. "Shores," says one, "on which man has never yet landed lie paved with shells; fields never trod are carpeted with flowers; seas where man has never dived are inlaid with pearls; caverns never mined are radiant with gems of finest forms and purest lustre. But still God is there." (*R. Venting.*)

Ver. 8. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.—*God's presence in the under-world*.—We are told that the Jew had no knowledge of a heaven for the soul, that the only future he knew was that of a mysterious under-world where the spirits of the dead reposed. It is this under-world which the psalmist here designates by the word translated "hell"; it is the universal Old Testament name for the place of the dead. But, in the hands of this writer, the under-world becomes well-nigh as fair as the upper; it receives the very glory of heaven. What is the glory of heaven? Is it not the fact that to depart is to be with God? The heaven of Christianity is not beautiful to its votaries by reason of its pearly streets and golden gates; it is beautiful because it is conceived to be the home of God. Now, this is the thought which the psalmist makes his own. He, too, recognizes that the joy of heaven is the joy of being with God; but, to him, God is everywhere. To say that at death the soul does not ascend is not necessarily to say that it is banished from heaven. God is in the under as well as in the upper world; and the pure soul will find Him there as in all places. Death cannot rob a good man of his God; whither can he flee from His presence? That presence will follow him equally whether he ascend up into heaven or whether he make his bed in the unknown under-world. However unknown it may be, it is not outside of Him; and whatever is not outside of Him may be the heaven of the soul. Such is the thought of the psalmist, a thought which flashes a ray of glory around the Jewish vision of death and throws back its light on the Jewish doctrine of immortality. We see that the Judaic faith in God had enclosed within itself a hope of eternal life. The Jew did not, like the Greek, conjure up the images of a locality which the disembodied soul would inhabit after death; he had no figure in his imagination wherewith to body forth his conception of the dark vale. But he knew of a Presence that belonged alike to his own world and the under-world, the Being of the Eternal God; and, in that knowledge, death itself ceased to be a foreign land. It lost much of its strangeness. It held something which the earth held, and that the source of all that is in earth or heaven, the very life of the universe. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *God's omnipresence*:—If you were called to take some such awful journey as Virgil and Dante have fabled in their poems when their heroes descended into the dread Avernus, you need not tremble, though it were said of you, as of them:—

"Along the illuminated shade,
Darkening and lone, their way they made."

If, I say, you were bound to traverse the sepulchral vaults, and all the gloomy dungeons of Hades, yet you need not fear, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 9, 10. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.—*Christianity the universal religion*:—The traveller who passes from one quarter of the globe to another feels that the encircling sky which girdles the ocean is but a type of the unseen power that surrounds us all. It is the expression of the same truth as that which drew from the first navigator who, from the shores of England, reached the shores of America, "Heaven is as near to us on the sea as on the land." The philanthropist whose wide charity embraces within its grasp the savage and the civilized man—the white man and the negro—feels that the hand of God is with him in his enterprises, because in the face of

all his fellow-men he recognizes, however faintly and feebly expressed, the image of the likeness of God. The philosopher who endeavours to trace out the unity of mankind, and the unity of all created things, consciously or unconsciously, expresses the same truth—namely, that the Divine eye saw our substance yet being imperfect, and that in His book were all our members written, which day by day were fashioned and evolved, while as yet there were none of them—while all was as yet rudimental and undeveloped, alike in the individual and in the race. The heart-stricken, lonely, suffering, or doubting soul, who sees only a step before him, who can but pray, "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom"—he, too, can echo the old psalmist: "The darkness is no darkness to Thee; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But in the especial form of the words of the text there is a peculiar force, which it is my purpose to bring before you. . . . The psalmist wishes to indicate that God could be found in those regions of the earth into which it was least likely that any Divine influence should penetrate, and he expresses it by saying, If I were to take the wings of the morning; if I were to mount on the outspreading radiance which, in the eastern heavens, precedes the rise of dawn, if I were to follow the sun on his onward course and pass with him over land and ocean, till I reach the uttermost parts of the sea, far away in the distant and unknown west, even there, also, strange as it may seem, the hand of God will lead me, the right hand of God will hold me; even there, also, beyond the shadows of the setting of the sun; even there, beyond the furthest horizon, the furthest west of the furthest sea, will be found the Presence which leaps over the most impassable barriers. That which seemed to him so portentous as to be almost incredible, has become one of the familiar, we might almost say one of the fundamental, truths of our religious and social existence. Not only in the East—so we may venture to give his words their fullest and widest meaning—not only in the East, consecrated by patriarchal tradition and usage, but in the unknown and distant islands and seas of the West, the power of God shall be felt as a sustaining help and guiding hand. I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST IS ONE OF THE MOST VIVID WHICH STRIKES THE MIND OF MAN. Of the great geographical impressions left on the most casual observer, none is deeper than that which is produced when a child of the Western civilization sets foot on the shores of the Eastern world. And so in history, "two distinct streams of human interest have followed always the race of Shem and the race of Japhet; and the turning-points, the critical moments of their history, have been when the two streams have crossed each other and met—as on a few great occasions—in conflict or in union." It is the very image which is presented to us in the splendid vision of the evangelical prophet in Isa. lx. 8, 9. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" They are the "isles"; that is, the isles, and coasts, and promontories, and creeks, and bays of the Mediterranean and Atlantic shores. "The isles shall wait for Him, and the ships of Tarshish first." Tarshish—that is, the West—with all its vessels of war and its vessels of merchandise. The ships of Tarshish first, and of Venetia, and Carthage, and Spain—these first brought the shores of Cornwall, the name of Britain, within the range of the old civilized world. All these, with their energy and activity, were to build up the walls and pour their wealth through the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem. And so, in fact, it has been. Christianity, born in the East, has become the religion of the West even more than the religion of the East. Only by travelling from its early home has it grown to its full stature. The more it has adapted itself to the wants of the new-born nation which it embraces, the more it has resembled the first teaching and character of its Founder and of its followers. Judaism, as a supreme religion, expired when its local sanctuary was destroyed. Mohammedanism, after its first burst of conquest, withdrew itself almost entirely within the limits of the East. But Christianity has found not only its shelter and refuge, but its throne and home, in countries which, humanly speaking, it could hardly have been expected to reach at all. The Christian religion rose on the "wings of the morning"; but it has remained in the "uttermost parts of the sea," because the hand of God was with it, and the right hand of God was upholding it. II. CONSIDER WHAT WERE THE PECULIAR POINTS OF CHRISTIANITY WHICH HAVE ENABLED IT TO COMBINE THESE TWO WORLDS OF THOUGHT, EACH SO DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER. In its full development, in its earliest and most authentic representation, we see gathered the completion of those gifts and graces which East and West possesses separately, and which each of us is bound, in his measure, to appropriate and

imitate. And, first, observe, on the one hand, in the Gospel history, the awe, the reverence, the profound resignation to the Divine will, the calm, untroubled repose which are the very qualities which the Eastern religions possessed, at a time when, to the West, they were almost wholly unknown, and which, even now, are more remarkably exhibited in Eastern nations than amongst ourselves. Christ has taught us how to be reverential, and serious, and composed. He has taught us no less how to be active, and stirring, and manly, and courageous. The activity of the West has been incorporated into Christianity, because it belongs to the original character and genius of its Founder, no less than its awe and its reverence. Again, in every Eastern religion, even in that which Moses proclaimed from Mount Sinai, there was darkness, a mystery, a veil, as the apostle expressed it—a veil on the prophet's face, a veil on the people's heart—a blind submission to absolute authority. There was darkness around the throne of God; there was darkness within the Temple wall; there was in the Holy of Holies a darkness never broken. To a great extent this darkness and exclusiveness must prevail always, till the time comes when we shall see no longer through a glass darkly. This we have in Christianity, in common with all the East; but yet, so far as the veil can be withdrawn, it has been withdrawn by Jesus Christ and by His true disciples. He is the Light of the world. In Him we behold the open face, the glory of the Father. Again; there was in all Eastern religions, whether we look Godward or manward, a sternness and separation from the common feelings and interests of mankind. We see it, as regards man, in the hardness and harshness of the Eastern laws. We see it, as regards God, in the profound prostration of the soul of man, displayed first in the peculiarities of Jewish worship, and to this day in the prayers of devout Mussulmans. And this, also, enters in its measure into the life of Christ and the life of Christendom. The invisible, eternal, irapproachable Deity, the sublime elevation of the Founder of our religion above all the turmoils of earthly passion and of local prejudice—that is the link of Christianity with the East. And, on the other hand, there was another side of the truth which, until Christ appeared, had been hardly revealed at all to the children of the older covenant. In Christ we see how the Divine Word could become flesh, and yet the Father of all remain invisible and inconceivable. In Christ we see not merely, as in the Levitical system of Christianity, man sacrificing his choicest gifts to God; but God, if one may so say, sacrificing His own dear Son for the good of man. III. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS? Surely, the mere statement of the fact is an almost constraining proof that the religion which thus unites both divisions of the human race, was, indeed, of an origin above them both; that the light which thus shines on both sides, so to speak, of the image of humanity is, indeed, the light that lighteth every man. There is no monopoly, no sameness, no one-sidedness, no narrowness here. The variety, the complexity, the diversity, the breadth of the character of Christ and of His religion is, indeed, an expression of the universal omnipresence of God. It is for us to bear in mind that this many-sidedness of Christianity is a constant encouragement to hold fast those particles of it we already possess, and to reach forward to whatever elements of it are still beyond us. Say not that Christianity has been exhausted; say not that the hopes of Christianity have failed, nor yet that they have been entirely fulfilled. In our Father's house are many mansions. In one or other of its many mansions each wandering soul may at last find its place, here or hereafter. (*Dean Stanley.*)

Ver. 12. *The darkness and the light.*—*The changes of the sky:*—What is the lesson conveyed by the great alternate changes of the sky? Now it is sweetly luminous, and now a solemn darkness. Strictly speaking, as we all know, there is no change in the sky at all. It is always an infinite darkness, and always lit up by myriads of stupendous suns. But we should not know this if the earth did not turn on her axis, and successively face the sun, and again turn away from him. To the turning of our planet from the sun we owe our knowledge of the universe. In the symbolism of its darkness and light we have our sublimest revelation of God. Light which is called God, and is God, issues for ever from the Infinite Bosom of His darkness. Darkness and light are both alike to Him; for He is as much one as the other. The Son of God, the only-begotten Light, reveals the "Father of Lights," as suns reveal the ether. God presents Himself in the light, but also conceals Himself; as we both present ourselves, and hide ourselves, in our garments. "Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment." As the infinite ether is hidden by the daylight, even so is God hidden by the light of the

angelic heavens which reveal Him. Therefore, all those who dwell in the Eternal Light worship the unseen God, and live "as seeing the invisible." They know that light is but His effluence. They worship the Light as God, and, again, with silent, ineffable adoration, they worship what is behind the Light. (*John Pulsford, D.D.*)

Vers. 13-18. For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.—God as the Creator of man:—I. **HE CREATED MAN, WHO IS A WONDER TO MAN'S SELF** (vers. 13, 14). II. **HE CREATED MAN, WHO COMES BY THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION** (vers. 15, 16). The oak is not less a Divine creation because it came out of the acorn, nor the acorn a less Divine production because it is composed of various substances of the earth: and man is not less the creation of God because he came by a process of evolution. III. **HE CREATED MAN, WHO APPEARS BY A DIVINE PLAN** (ver. 16). Everything in the universe, from the smallest to the largest, is constructed on a fixed and unalterable type. In truth, the whole creation existed in His mind in archetype millions of years before it took its present form. "In Thy book," metaphorically, God is represented as having written a "book"; it is the book of an architect, full of plans. There are the plans of worlds and systems that have all been and are no more. The plans of all that now exist, and the plans of all that are yet to appear. 1. Because God works by method, we should study all His works as revelations of Himself. 2. Conformity to His methods should be the supreme aim of all our activities. Whatever we do out of keeping with His plans will come to ruin, and involve us in distress. IV. **HE CREATED MAN, WHO IS CAPABLE OF APPRECIATING HIS THOUGHTS** (vers. 17, 18). God's thoughts are indeed absolutely "precious." They are original, all comprehensive without succession, infinitely beneficent, immutable, and essentially holy. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 14. I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.—Man adoring his Maker:—I. **THE EXPRESSIVE DECLARATION**—"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." 1. The wonders and mysteries of the human frame are little thought of, or understood, by the children of men; yet surely we may say, "The finger of God is here." Our body is a congeries of wonders from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. The different parts are so finely, delicately, and exquisitely made that it seems as if the least thing must disjoint, disorder, or derange them. Our life is an affair of beauty, symmetry, utility, and of mystery. The configuration and the construction, the composition and the articulation, the perforations, the compressions, the expansions, the attrition, the compensation, the exhaustion, the restoration, the secretion, and the excretions of the body all prove it to be "fearfully made." The mouth, the eye, the ear, the head, the brain, and the lungs, with the heart contracting four thousand times in an hour, and sending out with unerring accuracy at every contraction one ounce of blood, are all proof of the fact. The varied apparatus for breathing, for nourishing the system, for moving the limbs, for the reception of aliment, and for the ejection of waste, all demonstrate the truth of the text. The varied secretions of the system, and the gastric juice, all of them being different in consistency, in colour, in taste, in smell, and in their uses in the animal economy; some of them thick, others transparent, some bitter and others sweet, all adapted either to cleanse, to lubricate, to defend, to digest, or to nourish, are so many confirmations of the statement that we are "fearfully made." 2. The language of the text also applies to the soul. Man is not only an animal, but also a spirit. That spirit is in the body, but not of it. So different from it, it yet influences it, and is influenced by it. It is lodged in it for "an appointed time," and then to leave it, to be again reunited indissolubly to it, and there to abide for ever. This is the most wonderful part of man; it is mind, spirit, soul; the breath of God "breathed into his nostrils, and man become a living soul." The first man, Adam, was made a living soul. Mentally, he is fearfully and wonderfully made. As a spirit he possesses the power to think, to learn, to know; he is capable of intermeddling with all wisdom, of receiving continuous supplies of wisdom and knowledge. What a power is this! It allies us to angels, to Deity! Do we value sufficiently our mental endowments? Are we careful to improve our power of reflection? Do we act as thinking beings—as creatures who must go wrong unless we exercise our minds in relation to the past, the present, and the future? 3. Socially, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." We are linked one to another, all the world

round, and from generation to generation. We are ever being brought under the influence of others, and in our turn influence those around us. We may forget it, may doubt it, or deny it, and neglect it, yet it is so; all through our existence, in childhood, youth, manhood, or old age. This influence is being ever exerted, wherever we are, whatever we do, wherever we go—at home, abroad, in quiet or in active life. Oh! how it becomes us to be guarded, lest our being shall be a curse to any immortal spirit instead of a blessing; lest we lead them astray, and cause them suffering here and hereafter; or lest it be thus with ourselves! Let us indeed "watch and pray, lest we lead or fall into temptation." 4. Morally, man is "fearfully and wonderfully made." These natures of ours are distinguished by a moral sense, as well as by a mental power and a social influence. We are gifted with a sense of right and wrong, of which we can never be divested to all eternity. We can understand the difference; can choose the evil and reject the good; or we are at liberty to choose the good and repudiate the evil. The choice is our own act; the praise, the blame our own. We may be driven to choose between conflicting duties; never obliged to choose between criminal acts, or to act criminally at all. We may be virtuous or vicious; range ourselves on the side of heaven or hell; walk with the wise, or choose to be the companions of fools. Do we regard aright this fearful responsibility? Do we live as if thus distinguished from the rest of the terrene creation? II. A BECOMING RESOLUTION. "I will praise Thee." Let us not forget that we have much to praise God for. He is our Maker, He has blessed us with existence, and it will not be His fault if that blessing be turned into a curse. He it is that has so long held our souls in life. He has rightly framed us. He has endowed us with reason, He has favoured us with health, He has provided for our comfort, and supplied our ever-recurring necessities. We should praise Him for His marvellous wisdom, skill, power, and benevolence in thus building our "house of clay"; and endowing us with such mental powers, and for putting us into such social relations with each other, and in blessing us with such astounding spiritual possibilities for time and eternity; fully meeting and providing for the wants of our fallen spiritual natures as He has done also for the physical. We should praise Him for opening up to us through Jesus Christ His Son all the stores of Divine wisdom and knowledge, and giving us through Him free and constant access, "the fulness of the Godhead," "the unsearchable riches," the riches of His grace, the treasures of His love, and the immensity and eternity of His love. (*Thomas Lord.*) *The growth and perfection of the natural man's body and mind*.—I. THE PROGRESS OF MAN'S NATURAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE FROM ITS FIRST PRINCIPLES TO MATURITY. II. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Here, then, you will find, if you have hearts to perceive, overwhelming proofs of the power, the providence, the wisdom, and the goodness of God. 2. If God has made these wonderful provisions for the formation and growth, the perfection and happiness of man; if He has endowed him with talents for comprehending the excellence of the work and the glory of its Maker, with a principle of self-action, deliberation, and choice of measures, man is bound to employ his parts and properties of body and mind with a special regard to God's glory, as the main end and purpose of His own creation. 3. The formation, increase, and maturity of our bodily parts and intellectual faculties, the provisions that are made for their sustenance and development, and the wondrous processes by which they attain to their measure of perfection are strong presumptions of the truth of what the Scriptures teach us of the resurrection of the body: and may be considered as a pledge and assurance that this portion of God's counsels and prophecies will be fulfilled. (*Bishop Bethell.*) *Man fearfully made*.—1. The expression imports the dignity of man in comparison with other creatures in this lower world. Man is so made that the sight of him impresses a terror on the beasts of the earth. Many of these are superior to man in strength and activity; and, were it not for this dread of man which is impressed on them, our life would be a state of anxiety and terror. Now, if God has given us dominion over the beasts of the earth, we ought to exercise it with justice and humanity. And if man is made superior to the beasts, he should conduct himself in a manner becoming his natural superiority. Reason is the dignity of man. Then only we maintain our dignity when we act as reasonable beings. If passion and appetite triumph over reason, we lose our superiority to the beast, and become as the horse or mule, which has no understanding. 2. We are fearfully made, as our frame demonstrates the power, wisdom, and presence of God. Such a wonderful composition as man could not be the effect of chance. It must be the work of an

Infinito, independent, all-wise Creator. And God demands, "will ye not tremble at My presence? Ye have a revolting and a rebellious heart." But we need not go out of ourselves. Shall we not tremble at His presence, when we see Him around us, and feel Him within us? He is not far from every one of us. Shall not His excellency make us afraid? Let us fear, love, and obey Him. This is our whole duty. 3. We are fearfully made, as the Creator has impressed upon us evident marks of our immortality and accountableness. In the present state we find ourselves capable of progress and improvement: but we never rise to the perfection to which, in a longer space, we might attain. Must there not, then, be another state in which we may reach the perfection of which our nature is capable, but which is unattainable here? 4. In respect of our frailty. Such is the tenderness of our frame, that in this rough and dangerous world in which we live, we are always exposed to casualties and wounds, diseases and death. It may, therefore, with much propriety be said, "we are fearfully made." Let religion possess our hearts, and peace will attend our path, and hope will brighten our prospect. We may take pleasure in infirmities, for the power of Christ will rest upon us. For us to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *The fabric of the human body*:—Wonderful as a piece of architecture, as Solomon's Temple was, the fabric of the human body is far more wonderful and far more exquisite in its beauty. It is passing strange that while men can be passionate enthusiasts in the matter of being collectors and students of moths, of first editions of books, or even of postage stamps, such vast numbers of them are content to remain in ignorance of that cabinet of marvels which is nearer to them than anything else, which they carry about with them everywhere, and upon the well-being of which depends not only so much of their comfort, but also the highest effectiveness of their lives. (*R. G. A. Bennets, B.A.*)

Vers. 15, 16. *My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret.*—*Daily growth*:—God, being one, the author of nature as of grace, worketh harmoniously in both His kingdoms. And as in other ways, so in this: in both He createth and hath created by a single act; in both He carrieth on His work, silently yet in majesty. God created us, gave us life once, and then preserves it. Men grow in stature (blessed are they if in wisdom, too), they know not how; they eat, they drink, they sleep, are nourished, they know not how; and so day by day, and year by year, pass through the stages of life, through childhood, youth, to manhood, and mature years. So should it be in our re-creation. In Holy Baptism He re-creates us in His own image; passes His hand upon us, puts the first germ of spiritual life within us, to grow, be nourished, expand, flower, bear fruit, until it take into itself all our old nature, and we become wholly new. "Fearfully indeed and wonderfully are we made;" a marvel to the blessed angels and to ourselves. Strange, through what variety of accidents, griefs, joys, terrors, fears, death, life, His encircling providence girding us round shall have fenced in our way; and He who has all creation at His command shall have made all creation, good and bad, great and small, natural and moral, the holiness of angels and men and the malice of Satan, work together to the salvation of His elect. And this amazing everlasting work is going on continually. "Which day by day were fashioned." It is the very marvellousness of God's works in nature, in the Church, in each single soul, that they go on so noiselessly. "Axe and hammer are not heard," but the house of the Lord is raised without hands. Day by day we rise, and night by night lie down, and see not, except rarely, the growth of others or our own. Did we make ourselves, we might well be concerned that we see not what we are becoming; now we may trust that, although in secret, still we are being fashioned into "a vessel fit for the Master's use." Still, although we know not where we are, how much has been, or is being, wrought in us; what our progress, we must know that something is being wrought. We may not be conscious that we are growing in grace, but we must be that we are acting under grace. We may not see how direct our path is (that we shall see as it becomes straighter), but if we are moving upward we must make efforts, and feel them. Pray we for the grace of God to do each single act, as He shall will, to His glory, and He will lead us whither as yet we know not. But although God forms us day by day, yet are there, from time to time, seasons of larger growth, as in nature so in grace. God, in His mercy, gives us fresh starting points in our Christian race. Some such most of us perhaps have passed; too many, it is to be feared, have wasted. Such are childhood's earliest trials. The bitter fruits we have felt in

ourselves from some one sin of childhood, some neglect of God's loud warning or His call, may make us sorrowfully estimate the deep value of such calls, had we obeyed. Such periods, again, when used aright, are Holy Confirmation and the first Communion. Yea, so full is this of the richness of God's treasure, that thoughtful persons have said that none ever went far astray whose first Communion was diligently prepared for, and received and treasured holily. And when these and other seasons have been wasted, God in His mercy visits us anew, but mostly in an austere form. "A mighty and strong wind" must "rend the rock" of our stony heart "before the Lord" ere He can speak to us in the "still small voice." (E. B. Pusey, D.D.)

Vers. 17-24. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God.—Thoughts of God:—The sense of God's nearness brings thoughts of God. The devout soul cherishes these thoughts, and they become to it a joy unspeakable. One thing arrests attention. It is the sense of God as a "fellow-person" which this good man had. I. **HOW PRECIOUS TO ME ARE MY THOUGHTS OF THEE.** The Jew associated the thought of God with everything. To him the grand things of nature were full of God. The mountains were the "hills of God"; the winds were the "breathings of God; the thunder was the "voice of God." The saints of God, in all the ages, have found one Being who is in everything, who is the life of everything, but they have found that they could enter into personal relations with Him. 1. Our thoughts of God are started by the history of His dealings with our fathers through the long ages. 2. By our studies of His handiwork. 3. Our best thoughts are started by our own personal experiences of His gracious dealings. For our lives have been so full of God. That seems to us now to be the supreme charm of them. 4. Our thoughts take on some new forms since we have had the helps and suggestions of our saving relations with the Lord Jesus. II. **HOW PRECIOUS TO ME ARE THY THOUGHTS OF ME.** It is a joy unspeakable to be assured that God is thinking about us, and is even enjoying His thoughts about us. Nothing can be more delightful than to feel that by our loving obediences, our sweet spirit of submission, and our devoted services to others, we are starting happy thoughts in the mind of God. We forget that as He "takes pleasure in His people," we must be giving Him pleasure. There can be little comparison between God's thoughts of us and our thoughts of God. We can get to know something of the thoughts of God, and fill our souls with the richest consolations, as we read His mind and heart. The smile on His face shines through the veil of nature, and we can tell what He is thinking that makes Him smile. His whisperings are heard in the sighing of the evening breeze, and the tender tones tell us what love-thoughts are cherished in His heart. Have we made enough of the signs which help us to read the thoughts of God? His thoughts take shape as "exceeding great and precious promises." When we are cherishing loving thoughts concerning some earthly friend, we find that we cannot satisfy ourselves without devising and bestowing some gift. And it is just the same with God. He could not satisfy Himself with merely cherishing loving thoughts about us. He must do something for us. He must give something to us. He must give Himself to us in some gift. And what shall it be? It shall be His most cherished possession, His dearest and best, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. That is indeed an unspeakably precious gift. Cannot we read the thoughts of God by the help of that gift? How the Father-heart of God must have yearned over His lost children! "How precious are Thy thoughts." We are wrapped about with God's loving thoughts, and they keep us warmed and cheered. (Robert Tuck, B.A.) **The precious thoughts of God:**—I. **THOUGHTS OF MERCY.** 1. That mercy is free—free as yon arch of heaven above our heads; free as the sunlight that shines upon all and everywhere. 2. That mercy is full. It never asks how many or how black are our sins. 3. That mercy is exhaustless. If I may say so, it has no superlative. Whatever in all the past ages of the Church He has done for any soul He can exceed that. 4. That mercy is ready. 5. That mercy gets glory to itself out of the very sins which it forgives. II. **THOUGHTS OF LOVE.** He knows our frame. He remembers that we are but dust. He tempers the trial, and brings good out of it. And He is always doing this all our lives through. III. **THOUGHTS OF GLORY.** To fit us to mingle in the society of heaven is God's purpose—a purpose which He keeps steadily in view in all His providential dealings with us. (A. C. Price.) **God's thoughts concerning us:**—To think is to exercise the prerogative of an immortal soul; thus are we distinguished from

the lower animals, who certainly cannot carry on any continued process of thought. By this power we reflect the image of God. The human intellect is man's crowning possession, that which makes him immortal. But if it is so wonderful, the power and possibility of thought to man, what shall we say of the thought of God? It is this fact which has inspired this sublime psalm and culminates in our text. No wonder David was carried out of himself at the thought of God's thoughts concerning man. The infinite shone in upon him, and he caught a vision of the limitless expanse beyond. Of these thoughts he declares—I. **THEY ARE PRECIOUS.** "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God;" costly, highly valuable. Who shall measure the value of God's thoughts to man? What currency could express their preciousness? For His thoughts are not vagrant like ours, going a-wool-gathering hither and yon, without direction or purpose. Every one becomes a creation, a star, a living creature, a cataract, a gleaming cliff, a beautiful human soul. II. **THE SUM OF THEM IS GREAT.** Great in their totality. The summary of them is beyond us. If we consider them in their generic outline they are great. We may fathom one little fact in God's world, a single thought, but how can the human mind take in the whole outline? Who knows the mind of God? What can we do with our finite minds to compass divinity? How vain and weak is man face to face with the Author of all life. How humble and reverent it should make us when we consider the works of His hands and our own feeble undertakings. "How great is the sum of them." III. **THEY ARE INCOMPREHENSIBLE.** David felt as Milton after him, that he was only picking up shells on the shore of that vast ocean he must sail so soon. How wonderful is life, in its minute forms. What delicate beauty. What exquisite harmony. What undeviating law runs through all life. (*G. F. Humphreys.*) *God's thoughts of us:*—I. **LOVING.** He thought of us when we were plunged in hopeless ruin, and His great heart of pity went out after us. But with what complacent love He thinks of those who heed His calls and are loyal to His leadership! II. **CONSTANT.** He never forgets. Husbands and wives think of each other often and tenderly when separated. So the fond mother and her darling child. But their thoughts are interrupted by necessary attention to other matters. By the very limitations of their own nature they cannot hold their minds incessantly upon one person, however dear. Not so with God. Great events do not divert Him. He may have worlds to create and govern, but He is not so absorbed in them as to forget us. No exigency can arise for which He is not fully prepared. Nothing can take Him by surprise. III. **PERSONAL.** God does not think of us in a crowd, as forming indefinite parts of a great mass-meeting. He singles us out and thinks of us individually—as if there were no other person in the universe. We are compelled to divide our thoughts and loving attentions between the different ones that come into the charmed circle of our friendship. But God thinks of me as really, as definitely, as personally as He does of the seraph nearest the throne. IV. **HELPLESS.** We may think of a person, but have no disposition to help him. But God has a disposition to help and the ability to help, and He lives and thinks of us on purpose to help. The outgoings of His loving heart are benedictions upon our heads and benefactions upon our daily pathway. (*H. Johnson, D.D.*) *Our thoughts about God's thoughts:*—I. **GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US.** 1. That the infinite, Jehovah thinks of us is absolutely certain. I know that the notion of some men is that the world is like a watch, and that God has done with it as we do with our watches—that is, wound it up, put it under His pillow, and gone to sleep. But it is not so; for in this great world-watch—to keep up the figure—God is present with every wheel and every cog of every wheel; there is no action in it apart from His present putting forth of power to make it move. Now, as God thinks and must think of the whole material universe which He has created, much more does He think of men, and most of all of us who are His chosen people. God must think of us; the blood would not flow in our veins, nor would the breath make our lungs to heave, nor would our various bodily processes go on without the perpetual exercise of His power. God must think of us especially in all the higher departments of our being, for they would speedily come to nothing apart from His constant care. 2. God's thoughts of us must be very numerous. One or two thoughts would not suffice for our many needs; if He only thought of us now and then, what should we do in the meantime? But He thinks of us constantly. 3. His thoughts of us are very tender. He looks upon His people as a father upon a child. How often He has screened us from trouble! How frequently He has prepared us for a trial, so that,

when it came, it did not crush us! How often He has rescued us out of sore perils! How often He has visited us in the night, and given us songs amid our sorrow! 4. Very wise. 5. Very practical. His thoughts are really His acts, for with Him to will is to do. II. OUR THOUGHTS UPON GOD'S THOUGHTS. 1. There is no other thought that can for a moment be compared with it. 2. How delightful it is to be thought upon by God. 3. How consoling. 4. The thoughts of God often move the souls of Christians, strengthening them in faith, arousing them to love, bestirring them to zeal. III. OUR THOUGHTS UPON GOD HIMSELF. 1. They bring us near to God. 2. They help to keep us near to God. 3. They help to restore to us God's presence if for a while we have lost it. "When I awake"—that means, "I have been asleep, and so have lost the consciousness of God's presence." Have you never known what it is, at night, to be quite sorry to go to sleep because you have been so full of holy joy that you were afraid you might lose it while you were unconscious? "When I awake, I am still with Thee." I think it means also, "When I wake up from any temporary lethargy into which I may have fallen, I am still with Thee." We all get into that state sometimes; sleeping, though our heart is awake. We wish to be more brisk, more lively; but we cannot stir ourselves up. We have fallen into a kind of stupor. What a blessing it is to be roused out of it, possibly by a severe affliction, perhaps by an earnest discourse! Then the awakened one says, "Now I have come back to Thee, my God. There was a something within me that could not forget Thee, even for a while, though it lay still and dormant." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The thoughts of the Infinite appreciated by man:—I. They must be DISCOVERED. 1. There must be a revelation of them. (1) In the material world. (2) Events of history. (3) Bible. 2. There must be a capacity to interpret the revelation. That is the distinction of man. 3. The capacity must be rightly employed. We must study the revelation. What is the scientist in quest of with his lenses, rotorts, laboratories? The thoughts of God in nature. What is the Biblical critic in search of in investigating the meaning of Scripture? The thoughts of God in the Bible. II. They must be COMPARED. We get the impression that one fabric is more precious than another, one stone more precious than another, one life more precious than another by comparison. Thus we are to get the impression of God's thoughts by comparing them with ours. They are—1. Absolutely original. All human thoughts are derived. 2. Comprehensive—taking in the whole of a thing, and the whole of everything. 3. Unsuccessful. 4. Infinitely useful. 5. Everlasting. 6. Essentially holy. Thus His thoughts are not as our thoughts. III. They must be APPROPRIATED. As light is precious only to the man who sees, food only to the man who participates, beauty only to the man who admires, so God's thoughts are only precious to the man who appropriates them. (Homilist.)

Precious thoughts:—God has thoughts, and they are infinite in number, in compass, and in importance. Some of His thoughts are expressed, many more remain unexpressed. There are at least three modes of expressing thought. One is by acting them. Creation, with its complicated laws and systems, is nothing more than God's thought expressed in act. Another mode of expressing thought is by speech. God has gifted man above the brute creation with the power of speech. God has conveyed some of His thoughts to men through the medium of speech. Moses heard His voice on Sinai; He spoke to Abraham, to Jacob, to Samuel, and others, and to these, His servants, the Divine voice was a vehicle to convey Divine thought. Under the dispensation of the Incarnation, God made extensive use of speech, in the Person of our Blessed Lord, to convey His thoughts to the children of men. Another mode of expressing thought is by writing. Men convey thoughts through the medium of books. In the Bible you have a volume of God's thoughts in writing. I. Thoughts, in order to be precious, must be good.—morally good—good in themselves, and good in their influence on those who embrace them, pure and purifying. Millions on earth, and millions more in heaven, can bear testimony that God's thoughts have elevated the mind, given to the heart quickening impulses towards virtue, and kindled aspirations after God and purity. II. Thoughts to be precious must be TRUE—great intellects sometimes waste their energies on the untrue and unreal. They live in an ideal world, a creation of their own fancy, and by their writings allure many into the same world of dreams and allegory. You must give the intellect reality, substance, truth, in order to satisfy its deeper cravings. In the Bible we have a volume of God's thoughts, and they are all true. Some portions have been written in poetry, but it is not the poetry of fiction or fancy, but the poetry of truth, eternal truth. III.

Thoughts are sometimes precious because of their ORIGINALITY. It is truly refreshing to come in contact with a great mind, who conducts you into loftier mental altitudes than usual, opens out landscapes of thought where the mind may revel with a transport of joy over thoughts which are fresh, noble, and pure. In the Bible we have a volume of God's thoughts, many of them original, belonging exclusively to God. They were hidden in the bosom of God before the beginning of creation, and God only could make them known to the intelligent universe. IV. Thoughts, in order to be precious, must be BENEVOLENTLY RELATED TO ME. The Bible assures me that God's thoughts are benevolent and merciful. The Gospel is the out-breathing of the great Father's love towards His rebel children, the yearnings of His heart over His prodigal family, the advertisement of His anxiety to see His alienated creatures return, and of His willingness to forgive and forget their infinite wrong. V. Thoughts, in order to be precious, must be PRACTICABLE. The scheme which the Gospel reveals is not hypothetical; it is not the offer of a boon on conditions which are impossible. It is gloriously possible. It is the proclamation of an all-sufficient remedy, that redemption is effected, that it is free for all, that every difficulty has been removed, every claim met, and that now nothing is wanting on the part of man but an open heart to receive and welcome the gift Divine. This is God's thought, and it is precious. (*R. Roberts.*) *God's unexpressed thoughts*:—Some of God's thoughts are expressed, but many more remain unexpressed. His unexpressed thoughts, we believe, infinitely exceed both in number and grandeur His expressed thoughts. Some think science is making very rapid progress in the discovery of God's thoughts in the realm of matter, but the progress is slow when compared with the infinite multitude of thoughts which yet remain to be disclosed. Think of the sunbeams. They have been irradiating the world from the very beginning of creation. Think, again, of the iodine in the seaweed. It has been there ever since the sea lashed its shores first. The sunbeam is God's thought, the iodine is God's thought; but there is a third thought, springing from the combination under certain conditions of the ray of light and the iodine. You take the iodine from the seaweed, sprinkle its vapour on a piece of glass, hold that glass in the sunlight, stand in front of it, and you have yourself photographed. This third thought of photography has only been recently discovered. The thought was present to God when He created the first ray of light and put the first drop of iodine in the seaweed, and yet it has taken man thousands of years to discover that thought, so simple now that we know it. So still there are infinite abysses which we cannot fathom, and infinite heights which we can never reach. We have only reached the alphabet of knowledge as yet. We are in the infancy of our being, mastering with difficulty our elementary primer. Neither the youth nor the manhood of mind will be reached by us in this world. We shall all die mere infants in knowledge. But there is mental manhood in store for us somewhere in the universe of God. We fondly hope and firmly believe that in heaven God will reveal to us His deeper and higher thoughts. We are now groping outside and knocking at the door of the temple of truth. Then we shall be admitted into the interior, and perhaps feel ourselves at first bewildered with its infinite vastness. The universe, with its infinitude of worlds and its unknown immensity, is that temple, and it is full of God's thoughts. Those thoughts are expressed in endless variety in every star and system, in perhaps myriads of systems never yet brought within the range of any telescope. They are written on orders of beings and intelligences of which now we have no conception, and of which the universe may be full. In our vast explorations we shall meet God's thoughts at every step we take, in the very atmosphere which souls breathe, in the canopy which encompasses them, in every spirit that flits by, or that pauses to commune with us, in the fresh and novel scenes which every system will open out to us. When we travel over infinite space, when the universe is laid open to our inspection, when there is no limit placed on our scrutiny of its infinite mysteries except the limit which a finite creature must ever feel when he has to do with the Infinite, fresh revelations of the Godhead will burst upon us, and with greater rapture than now we shall exclaim, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 18. *When I awake, I am still with Thee.*—*A Christian awakening with God*.—I. HIS DISPOSITION. 1. It is the care and endeavour of a good man when he awakes to be still with God. (1) The time. (a) When not asleep, and so

hindered by the necessities of nature. A godly man is careful to be with God in every performance and in every condition, both in regard to—(i.) Habitual inclination. He is always with God in disposition and affection; and—(ii.) Actual application. He is careful still to repair to God, and to draw near to Him, whenever he can. (b) As soon as I awake. 2. In what respects a Christian, when he is awake, may be said to be with God. (1) By meditation. (a) Our thoughts are precious things, being the immediate issue of our souls, and are not to be lightly bestowed by us, especially our first thoughts. And on whom can we better bestow them than on Him that helps us to them, and without whom we are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think (2 Cor. iii. 5)? (b) This is to be understood especially of such thoughts as are settled and deliberate and composed—such thoughts as a man sets himself to with intention, and suffers to abide in him; these are for the most part suitable and agreeable to the frame of his heart. Now, because a godly man has his heart full of heaven, and God, and goodness, and the graces of the Spirit, therefore are such things as these very often and early in his thoughts. (2) By communion. Look at friends when they meet in a morning, they have their mutual greeting between them—a loving and friendly salute one of another: even so is it with its due proportions betwixt God and the soul, the soul speaking to Him, and He returning upon it by way of reciprocation. (a) Confession of sin. (b) Petition and supplication. (c) Praise and acknowledgment. (3) By action and the businesses which are done by us; when we “awake to righteousness and sin not.” 3. The ground and equity of it. (1) Our waking thoughts are our first thoughts, and the first of everything is of right God’s. (2) Our waking thoughts are freshest thoughts; that is, the nimblest and quickest, and most active, and fullest of life. As God deserves the first, so He deserves the best. (3) Our waking thoughts are our quietest, and freest from commotion: that is the fittest time and season for converse with God, wherein we have least distraction and perplexities and troubles from the world. (4) Our waking thoughts are our purest and freest from pollution: these things are the fittest for God, which are most like to Himself. II. HIS PRIVILEGE. 1. It secures from dangers (Ps. xxvi. 1; iii. 5; iv. 8; xci. 5; xxiii. 4). 2. It quickens to duty; keeps the heart in a holy frame and temper all the day after. 3. It prevents from sin and temptation—at least the prevalencies of it. III. HOW WE MAY ATTAIN TO THIS BLESSED CONDITION. 1. Walk with God in the day. The duties of religion are linked together, and come off more easily in the conjunctive performance of each other. Thus reading and hearing, and meditation and communion of saints, conscientiously and religiously performed, do so much the better dispose to more immediate communion with God; and the actions of the day have their impressions and reflections upon the night. 2. Lie down with God in the evening. That which we think of last we shall be ready to think of first; and as we conclude the foregoing day, so we are likely to begin the following. Therefore it should be our care, as much as may be, to have God and the things of God in our thoughts when we set ourselves to rest. This is the happiness of a Christian that is careful to lie down with God, that he finds his work still as he left it, and is in the same disposition when he rises as he was at night when he laid to rest. As a man that winds up his watch over night, he finds it going the next morning; so is it also as I may say with a Christian that winds up his heart. This is a good observation to be remembered, especially in the evening before the Sabbath. 3. Observe God in the morning. A man that would be with God when he wakes must observe how God is with him. We shall find sometimes that God Himself doth awaken us, and does desire communion with us (Isa. l. 4). (T. Horton, D.D.) *Morning thoughts*:—To an earnestly devout mind there is no hour in the day to compare with the morning hour. “Evening calms the mind” when the heat and the tumult of the day are past. Not without good reason did that ancient figure meditate “in the fields at eventide.” But the morning hour largely determines what he shall meditate upon as he walks those grassy slopes. Let me show you how, by a godly man, that morning hour may be used to do at least something towards flinging into the day a light sweeter and pleasanter than its own. I. IT MAY BE SO USED AS TO IMPART, IN SOME SORT AT LEAST, A SPIRITUAL TONE TO THE ENTIRE DAY. Busy men are wont to complain, “In crowded street and busy mart the mind cannot get itself fixed on higher things.” Much, however, can be done, and in this way. When that light—so sweet, so pleasant for the eyes to behold—looks in upon us, and the tasks and duties of the day begin to marshal themselves before us, let the mind be imbued

with the Christian temper—let it be pitched, so to speak, in a Christian key; and though God through the day may not be “in all our thoughts,” He will not be far from every one of them. II. A DAY BEGUN IN THIS FASHION ACQUIRES A CERTAIN PRACTICAL STEADINESS. You have noticed, I am sure, how a day entered upon without thought, without prayer, has invariably turned out a very confused and unsatisfactory thing. There are more battles to fight than those which are won and lost on fields of blood; and the bravest, steadiest soldiers are not the men who have leaped from their beds and rushed into action. They are the men whose heads have been cleared and cooled, and whose mental and spiritual nerves have been braced by meditation and prayer. III. THIS KIND OF PRAYERFUL FORETHOUGHT GIVES A CERTAIN DESIRABLE SPECIALITY TO THE DAY. We cannot, it is true, make every day a feast-day, but we can redeem our days from a spiritless sameness. Is my work monotonous? (and whose work is always teeming with freshness of interest?) let me redeem it from being anything like drudgery by taking it up every day as a new trust. Is it uncongenial? (and whose work is always to his taste?) let me place it day by day on the highest grounds. Oh, how often would many of us turn from the incumbent disagreeable, if we did not carry it to a loftier tribunal than any our personal feelings can furnish. (*J. Thew.*) *Morning meditation*:—Accustom yourself to a serious meditation every morning. Fresh airing our souls in heaven will engender in us a purer spirit and nobler thoughts. A morning seasoning will secure us for all the day. Though other necessary thoughts about our calling will and must come in, yet, when we have despatched them, let us attend to our morning theme as our chief companion. As a man that is going with another about some considerable business,—suppose to Westminster,—though he meets with several friends on the way, and salutes some, and with others with whom he has some affairs he spends some little time, yet he quickly returns to his companion, and both together go to their intended stage. Do thus in the present case. Our minds are active and will be doing something, though to little purpose; and if they be not fixed upon some noble object, they will, like madmen and fools, be mightily pleased in playing with straws. The thoughts of God were the first visitors David had in the morning. God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept company all the day after. (*S. Charnock.*)

Vers. 19–22. **Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.**—*Indignation against the wicked*:—I. Here is a fact in relation to the MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD. That fact is the ultimate ruin of the wicked. “Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.” The wicked will ultimately be ruined. 1. This fact agrees with the dictates of conscience. The consciences of mankind the world over proclaim it. 2. This fact agrees with the principle of moral causation. Sin brings ruin, every act of transgression carries with it its penalty, and tends to death. 3. This fact agrees with the declaration of the Bible, “Be sure your sins will find you out.” “He that soweth to the flesh,” etc. II. Here is a fact in the EXPERIENCE OF PIOUS MEN. “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?” Whether these words breathe piety or not, they suggest a fact in the experience of all godly men. It is this—antipathy to the character that is opposed to God. 1. The fact is a necessity. From the laws of our mental constitution it is impossible for us to love those who hate the object we most love. Love makes the twain one, hence it is impossible for a man truly to love God and not hate that which is opposed to Him. 2. This fact is an excellence. It is morally right and grand to see the godly man rising up in indignation against all that is opposed to the character and will of God. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 22. **I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.**—*Righteous hatred*:—What, then, is a perfect hatred? What may there be which is right, worthy, and fruitful of good, in the perfection of hatred? If we look to the Hebrew psalms for an answer, we notice that such expressions of hatred as occur in them are usually of an official character; they are expressive, that is, not so much of personal feeling as of the kingly consciousness. They are portentous with the indignation of a people against wrong. But even when we read some of the imprecations of the psalms as expressions of a national sense of wrong we cannot always, with our gentler Christian training, prevent the feeling that the royal psalmist did not entirely succeed in his desire to attain to the perfection of hatred. We must look to Him in whom all the moral energies as well as pro-

phetic strivings of the life of the true Israel were fulfilled, if we would learn in what spirit of hatred of all wrong may itself reach perfection. In the light of His life we may say, then—1. That a perfect hatred of evil proceeds from love. A perfect hatred will be an expression of a tremendous love. It cannot be perfect if it does not proceed from love, as nothing can be right without love. The great hatreds of sin among prophets, reformers and martyrs have always been characterized by this pure flame and passion of love for man. All thought of self was consumed in their intense sense of justice. Because they loved the people, because they loved their city, because they loved their country, they faced the evil, they defied the wrong, they gave their lives in grand protest of their death against the sin of the world. So was it superlatively with the Christ. Because God so loved the world, the Son of His love came from heaven to live a life of daily protest against all its suffering and shame. This, then, is one note and test of any hatred of evil, by which we may search our conduct and purify our passion of righteousness: Does our sense of wrong proceed from love? Does our rebuke of any evil express love? 2. It will be an orderly hatred. Anger, which is to be condemned, is an outburst of feeling, a tumult of words, a violence of deed; but no sign of our disorder of passion ever appeared in the Christ's condemnation of sin. His wrath against human wrong was as orderly as His love of the Father. It was the pure calm of a soul at white heat. Herein, then, lies another test for us to use in searching our hearts. Are our judgments outbursts of feeling, or are they revealings of the moral order of our lives? If mere outbreakings of passion, they may belong to the whole company of the powers of confusion in the disorder of our world's sin; but if really Christlike, there will be in them both the restraint and the power of the moral order of Christ's life against the sin of the world. 3. It is a working hatred. This follows both from the motive of it, which is love, and from the orderliness which is always distinctive of the law of love. Christ's hatred of sin was a working hatred. He did more self-exhausting work in His three years of life for men and against their sins than any human soul before or since has ever endured. Right here is the difference too often between us and our Christ. We speak the momentary word of right, and do no more. He spoke the word of eternal right, and put the love of His life behind it. We feel the evil and pass on; He felt the sin, and did not pass by on the other side. We express our feeling of moral indignation, and leave the poor world to right itself; He spoke the words of eternal life, and gave Himself to be crucified that the wrong world might be made right. 4. It is a sacrificial hatred of sin. The psalmist had not comprehended this diviner element of it. His Messiah was the Lord coming to judgment, not to bear the cross. But the true Messiah, when He came, was the suffering Son of God. He bore our sins; He suffered in our stead. What is the mightiest protest against wrong ever witnessed in this or any possible world? What but the Cross of Christ. Wherein lies the Divinest condemnation of sin to the eternal ages? In the sufferings of Christ, the just for the unjust. What is the satisfaction of the law by which sin is condemned with a perfect condemnation? Oh, not in punishment, though eternal punishment were its due; but in the infinite pathos of the suffering for it of the Son of God's love. Thus we come in the end to the same characteristic of perfect hatred which we found at the beginning and motive of it; it ends as it began, in love. It ends in forgiveness, as it began in condemnation; both forgiveness and condemnation being part and process of the same eternal love of God in Christ. We might say with equal truth, God so loved the world, or God so hated the sin of the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For our God is one God, and in loving righteousness and hating iniquity He is the same God over all, blessed for ever. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*)

Vers. 23, 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.—*Man addressing God*.—I. MAN REQUESTING DIVINE SCRUTINY. 1. Reverence manifested. "O God." He realized God's presence, and his soul was filled with awe. 2. Thorough investigation invoked. "Search me," etc. Not that God was to thus obtain information unknown to Him before; but the asker, penetrated with a sense of sinfulness, desires God to search his heart, that the heart—with all its tendencies, passions, evils—may become known to himself through God's inquest. II. MAN DESIRING DIVINE DISCIPLINE. 1. Severe testing. "Try me." 2. Moral discrimination. "Know my thoughts," etc. III. MAN

IMPLOING DIVINE LEADERSHIP. 1. Spiritual ignorance confessed. 2. Divine condescension besought. 3. Perpetual guidance implored. (*M. Braithwaite.*) *God the heart-searcher*:—This is the language of prayer; but it is prayer almost in the tone of a challenge. Taken in connection with its context, it is a claim on the part of the speaker to a spotless innocence. The words of the psalmist are, in the full sense, proper only in the mouth of His Divine Son and Lord. Has, then, the text no meaning for the sinful, struggling followers of Christ? Yea! the followers of the Messiah are His members as well as followers. The prayer of our text, then, is not out of place in the mouth of a true-hearted Christian. He may offer it. In the name and strength of his Divine Surety and Head he is bound continually to cherish the spirit of one whose soul will break forth into the prayer, "Search me, O God," etc. I. **TO KNOW HEARTS BELONGETH ONLY TO THE LORD.** This is an attribute distinctively His own, not shared in any measure with any created being. 1. God's knowledge of the heart differs from that which man or angel has in this, that it is immediate. God knows,—as it were, sees,—the very spirit, and its every act and state. Man knows only certain outer signs which the spirit makes, from which he infers its thoughts and feelings. 2. The knowledge of God, and of God alone, is unintermittent and all-piercing. It alone is eternal in duration of exercise, and it alone is able to compass the infinite relations even of one spirit. And to be the Searcher of hearts is to have an incessant and all-piercing glance into the inner being and most extended relations, not only of one spirit, but of all spirits, human and angelic. To form, therefore, a truthful estimate of the moral character of any one soul, the Searcher of hearts must know the attitude it would assume if brought into the presence of each creature, and also the attitude it would assume to every manifestation of His own infinite nature. II. **HE KNOWS THE HEART NECESSARILY:** He cannot but know it. 1. Then to Him are known all the dark mysteries of iniquity which men carry about locked up in their breasts. You yourself may sometimes forget it; He never does; and He intends with a changeless purpose to discover you to the whole world in due time, to put you to open shame, and bring you to condign punishment. Struggle no more in the fruitless labour to conceal your sin. In shame and sorrow of deep repentance hasten to make confession to the Searcher of hearts; to make confession not only of your black secret, but of all the ills with which your life is filled. Cast yourself upon His mercy. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." 2. Then all hypocritical profession of the faith is vain. You may be wickedly deceiving yourselves as well as your fellow-men, like the young man in the Gospel ready to say of the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up," and in truth very near the kingdom of heaven; but the Lord marks with unerring certainty that beloved lust, that precious thing of earth, reserved, which you will not give up for Christ. And it, no matter how trivial, no matter how godlike, digs a gulf fathomless and bridgeless between you and life. 3. The Lord searcheth the heart; and, if so, "the Lord knoweth them that are His." With this truth Paul comforted himself and Timothy amid the desponding thoughts with which the apostasy of certain flaming professors in the Church of Ephesus was crushing them. With this truth, too, comfort yourself, O child of God, amid the painful doubts which the humble heart is so ready to entertain of its own sincerity and steadfastness. (*James Hamilton, M.A.*) *Prayer to God to search the heart*:—Note the psalmist's—I. **INTREPIDITY.** Here is a man determined to explore all the recesses of his own heart. Did Bonaparte, did Nelson, did Wellington ever propose to do this? Were all the renowned heroes of antiquity present I would ask them all if they ever had courage to enter into their own hearts. If you stood upon some eminence and saw all the ravenous and venomous creatures that ever lived collected before you, it would not require such courage to combat them as to combat with your own heart. Every sin is a devil. II. **INTEGRITY.** He wished to know all his sins, that he might be delivered from them. III. **WISDOM.** 1. He prefers his prayer to God Himself. God is the only Being in the universe that knows Himself—that peruses Himself in His own light. In the same light He sees all other beings; and hence it follows that, if other beings see themselves truly, it must be in the light of God. 2. He begins with his principles: his desire is to have these tried by a competent Judge, and to have everything that is evil removed from them. This is an evidence of his wisdom. The heart and its thoughts must be made right before the actions of the life can be right. IV. **EARNEST DESIRE.** "Lead me in the way everlasting." 1. The way Thou hast marked out for salvation. 2. The way of Thy law, in all the

purity and spirituality of its requirements. (W. Howells.) *God's search*.—This heart is a labyrinth more intricate than the mausoleum of the ancient kings. There are in our souls doors that have never been opened, languages which have never been translated, enigmas that have never been solved, monsters that have never been hunted down, and it was in the appreciation of that fact that the author of my text cried out, "Search me, O God, and try me." I propose to show some of the ways in which God explores a man, and the use that comes of it. 1. God searches a man by His Holy Spirit. Here is a man who feels he is all right. A few inconsistencies, perhaps, and a few inaccuracies; but upon the whole he is in tolerably good condition. The Holy Spirit seizes him. Why now does he tremble? Why now that grief-struck look? Why now can he not sleep at nights? The Holy Spirit has come upon him. He finds there are inhabitants in his soul that he never dreamed of. The reptiles begin to uncoil and to hiss at him. The man says, "Can it be that I have been carrying such a nature as this forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years?" And he immediately begins to apologize, and he reviews the better points of his character. He says, "I don't owe a man a dollar." God says by His Holy Spirit, "You have robbed me of your whole lifetime." The man says, "I am not arrogant, I don't take on airs." The Holy Spirit says, "You are too proud to kneel." The man says, "I am moral." The Holy Spirit says, "You have had many an unclean thought." The man rouses up. He says, "I must get away from this; I must get into the fresh air. I must go to business." The Holy Spirit says, "You cannot go to business; this is the mightiest of all businesses—the business of the soul." Then all the past sins of the man's life come before him troop by troop. From that point many repent and live. From that point many turn back and die. 2. God searches a man by prosperity. He was amiable, he was kind, he was generous, he was useful, while he was in ordinary circumstances; but by sudden inheritance, or by the opening of railroad communication with his land, or by some stroke of commercial genius, he gets a fortune. God is going to search that man by his prosperities; He is going to see whether he will be as humble in the big house as he was in the small one; He is going to give him enlarged resources, and see whether his charities will keep pace with those resources. When he was worth so much he gave so much. He is worth twice as much now. Does he double his charities? God says, "I will explore that man, I will try that man, I will search that man." Fifteen years ago the man said, "What good I would do if I only had the means!" He has the means now. What does he do? Of every dollar we make God demands a certain percentage. If we keep it back, it is at our peril. The old story of the miser who died in his money-chest, because the lid accidentally fell down and fastened him in, was a type of ten thousand men in our day who are in their own money-vault finding their sepulchre. Whatever be the style of your prosperity, by every dollar that you make, by every house that you own, by every commercial success that you achieve, God is searching you through and through. 3. God explores a man by adversity. Some of you are going through that process now. You say, "How beautiful it is when a man's fortunes fail to see him throw himself back on spiritual resources." Yes, it is very beautiful, but it is hard to do. There are many people who suppose they have Christian faith, when it is only confidence in government securities. They think they have Christian joy, when it is only the exhilaration that comes from worldly successes. God, after a while, sweeps His hand across the estate, and it is all gone. The man first scolds the banks. He says they are not clever; they ought to have allowed him a discount. Then he scolds the Congress, because it imposed a tariff. Then he scolds the gold-gamblers, because they excited the markets. He does not understand that all the time God has him personally in the crucible. 4. God explores us often through the persecutions of the world. How we admire all those pictures which represent the sufferings of Christ! Why? Because we admire patience, and we admire it although we may have but very little of it ourselves. And we sit down on the Sabbath, and we study patience, and we say, "Give us patience. What a beautiful grace it is—patience!" and on Monday morning a man calls you a liar, and you knock him down! That is all the patience you have. How little we understand how to bless those who curse us. It is the general rule—an eye for an eye, grudge for grudge. 5. God sometimes explores us by sickness. From other misfortunes we can run away, but flat on our backs, pain in the head, in the heart, in the limbs, we cannot run away. No school, however well endowed, however supplied with faithful instructors and professors, can so well teach you

as the school of a sick-bed. People wonder at the piety of Edward Payson, and Richard Baxter, and Robert Hall. How did they get to be so good? It was sanctified sickness. 6. God tries us with bereavement. He searches a man by taking away his loved ones. An author describes a mother who had lost her children, saying to Death, "Why did you steal my flowers?" Death said, "I didn't steal them; I am no thief; I transplanted them." "Well," said the mother, "why did you wrench them away so violently?" And Death said, "They would never be wrenched away but that you held on to them so violently." Oh! how hard it is when our friends go away from us to realize that they are not stolen, not wrenched, but transplanted, promoted, irradiated, emparadised. But unless you have had bereavement you do not know what a bad heart you have. We do not know how much rebellion of soul we possess until God comes and takes some of our loved ones away. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Our Searcher*:—You may say to your clerks, "Now let us search into our accounts and balance our books," but while you are doing it do not forget to pray, "Lord, search me." I. LET US ASK THE LORD TO SEARCH OUR PRINCIPLES. Our government have now appointed officers to see that ships which are outward-bound are not deeper in the water than the "load-line" of safety. Now, like a ship, every man has a load-line; and he says within himself, "Beyond that line I will not go." Nevertheless, many men do go beyond their load-line, and founder in the sea of vice. Every man draws the line somewhere; and, alas! it is generally as far off the standard directed by Christ as it can possibly be. Men make "load-lines" for themselves, and say, "I am all right on this side the line." But what does the Bible say about it? Is your line in the correct place for the salvation of your soul? A thief will steal, and draw his line, saying, "I will not hurt or murder anybody." Most men draw a line of conduct somewhere, and say, "I am all right so long as I do not pass beyond that line." How important to pray this prayer, "Search me, O God!" II. LET US ASK OF GOD TO SEARCH OUR PROFESSION. You may say, "Ah, I have got you there; I make no profession." Don't you? Why, you must be a rogue indeed if you make no profession of honesty or gratitude. What, have you never told anybody you were thankful to God for having created you? Are you not thankful to Jesus for having died for you? Christianity means honesty, virtue, truth, gratitude to God, and helpfulness to our neighbour; and do you make no profession of these? Well, if you don't I should not like to meet you in a lonely road at night. Of course you make professions. You profess to be honest, upright, and lovable. Now, let us ask God to search our professions. Do we act accordingly? III. WE ALSO SHOULD ASK GOD TO SEARCH OUR LIVES. We often fall and wander from the way. The text goes on to say, "and see if there be any wicked way in me." But we need not say "if"; we know full well that there is much wickedness in us. It may be the Lord will show us that we need to be more resolute. O brothers, be decided to give up sin. Rouse yourselves! It is all nonsense for you to complain day after day, saying, "I cannot help myself!" Have you not the power of God to help you? IV. WE OUGHT TO ASK GOD TO SEARCH OUR CHARACTER. Do you remember reading of the Californian mine swindle? Some men went into the interior and plastered pieces of silver upon the rocks. Then they got up a grand Mining Co. Limited, and people believed them. Engineers saw the silver on the rocks and then reported favourably of it: it was all a sham. But it is not so in your case. You are not barren rock. There is a streak of gold in every man. If it were not so Christ would not have told us to preach the Gospel to every creature. God has given you the power of noble manhood, and you shall not be disappointed if you press towards it. If you strive for the manhood that thinks nobly, speaks truthfully, and lives virtuously, you shall attain it. V. ASK GOD TO SEARCH YOUR SOUL. Is it pardoned? (*W. Birch.*) *Prayer for self-knowledge*:—I. TRUE RELIGION HAS ITS SEAT IN THE HEART. The man of real godliness has not only "a name to live," but he lives. There is a consistency in his character. The Gospel not only enlightens his understanding, but shines into his heart; not only delights his imagination, but captivates his affections. It makes his conscience tender, his thoughts humble, peaceful, holy. II. HENCE THE TRULY RELIGIOUS MAN IS ANXIOUS TO KNOW THE REAL STATE OF HIS HEART. True, he may find this self-examination painful and humiliating, but this makes no matter to him. He feels that he has the salvation of an immortal soul at stake, and he is not to lose that soul for the sake of being kept easy in his follies and proud in his sins. III. THE SINCERE CHRISTIAN IS NOT CONSCIOUS OF HAVING WITHIN HIS HEART ANY ONE CHERISHED SIN. It is one thing

to have iniquity entering the breast, and another thing to harbour it and have it reigning there. St. Paul felt a sinful "law in his members," but he felt it as "warring against the law of his mind," as opposed to the habitual frame of his soul, to that holy and heavenly principle which made him "delight in the law of God after the inward man," and enabled him to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Every Christian also feels the same warfare within. Sin tempts and harasses him, and sometimes brings him into captivity, but it cannot hold him in bondage; it cannot make him quietly submit to its bated laws. We soon see the prisoner struggling with his vile oppressor, and bursting its bonds. Trampling his lusts underneath his feet, we hear him exclaim, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." IV. **YET HE OFTEN SUSPECTS HIMSELF OF SOME UNDETECTED INIQUITY.** The best of our actions, the brightest of our graces, the most holy of our dispositions, the most fervent of our prayers, and the most ardent of our praises, are blended with so much that is evil that we despair of separating the one from the other, and are often ready to faint with disquietude and fear. V. **IN THE MIDST OF HIS PERPLEXITIES THE SINCERE CHRISTIAN HAS A FIRM AND LIVELY RELIEF THAT GOD KNOWS HIS HEART.** Like David, he knows that "the Lord searcheth the hearts," and "understandeth the thoughts," and "compasseth the path," and is "acquainted with the ways" of the children of men; and, like David, he is willing to be searched, and prays to be tried by this omniscient God. VI. **HE APPLIES TO GOD FOR SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND INSTRUCTION.** He can show us wherein we are right in our judgment of ourselves, and wherein we are wrong; what there is to be brought low in us, and what to be raised up; what we must endeavour to get rid of, and what to obtain. Laying open our hearts, He can discover to us the sin which is lurking there, and, like a worm at the root, secretly marring our comforts and withering our graces; and, shining on the work of His own hands, He can make visible to us the walls of that spiritual temple which He has begun to raise up for Himself within our souls. VII. **HE WHO SEEKS INSTRUCTION OF GOD MUST BE WILLING TO SUBMIT HIMSELF TO GOD'S GUIDANCE.** We often pray for instruction without being mindful of the necessity of this submission. Our supplications are sincere, but we know not what we ask. We forget that the Saviour employs various methods of showing His children their hearts. Affliction, frequent and severe affliction, is the school into which prayer often brings a man, and in which he first learns to know himself and his God. It is in the furnace that the gold is proved and distinguished from the secret dross. But the path of tribulation is not the only path which we must be content to enter. If we wish our prayers to be answered, we must be prepared to walk in "the way everlasting." And what is this way? It is that way of access to the Father in which the patriarchs and prophets, the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of martyrs drew near to Him—the way of reconciliation through the blood of His Son. It is that highway which is called in the Scriptures "the way of holiness." (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *On being known of God:*—This psalm is a psalm of gladness, or deep and tranquil satisfaction in the all-searching God. It is full of humility, the profound humility of one who feels that he cannot hide himself from God. But profound as is the lowliness, equally marked is the joy of David that God knoweth him altogether. The end of the psalm is a prayer; David does not deprecate the searching of his heart by the all-seeing One, he invokes it. I. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LOYALTY.** This is the subject suggested by the context. David is declaring that he has neither sympathy nor part with the wicked. "Do not I hate them," etc. He appeals to God whether this is not so. "Search me," etc. Am I not right in affirming my love for Thee? Is not my heart set upon my God? Are not all my thoughts for Thine honour? The consciousness of sin, rather than that of righteousness, is the distinguishing mark of Christian experience; nor will this contrast between Jewish and Christian piety seem strange to those who compare the Gospel with the law. The sanctity of Jesus makes all our righteousness appear as filthy rags. The love of God is far more searching than the precepts of the stony table; the heart that might have been unmelted at the demands of law is broken by the claims of affection. The loyalty that might pass unproved, did we but think of what we are bidden, proves but poor as an expression of our gratitude, our response to God's affection. The Hebrew saint contrasted himself with the sinner; Christians, searched by the Spirit of holiness and love, rank themselves among transgressors. We have to bewail many a failure, many an imperfection, but a loyal-hearted Christian should be true to himself and declare

his devotion too. At least the heart is firm in its allegiance; whatever your folly and your weakness, you mean, with all sincerity, to serve God. Now, it is an immense comfort to us to be able to rest on God's perfect knowledge of our loyalty to Him. He knows the heart that is set on serving Him; He can distinguish between ignorance and ill-intent; He is not misled by the result; He sees integrity of purpose, and marks the desire to hold true to Him; and He will bring out the righteousness of His servants, making it clear as the light. He will also correct the hidden faultiness (ver. 24).

II. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF OUR STRUGGLES.** One of the reasons why we should not judge our fellows is that we do not know the men. We see the temptation yielded to; we know not the many temptations that have been resisted, how hard was the struggle to resist. The compassionate God takes account of all this; and hence, for the returning sinner, it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. Signs of feeble piety, too, we can mark. God knows all that makes even that feeble piety a very victory of faith. We note the uncertainty of temper, we hear the captious phrase; only one eye takes note of the depression and bitterness of soul out of which this is wrung. How hard is the ignorance of the world; how hard, too, the inconsideration of the Church! God does not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Here, too, mark—the refuge of the struggling spirit is not in self-sufficiency, not in self-justification. It is a perilous thing to balance our failures with our temptations. We are not the proper judges of ourselves; our leniency would be our undoing. We need not only to be searched but also to be purged, and He is at once compassionate and firm. "Search me, O God, and know my heart"—see it all; what is pitiful as well as what is evil—"try me, and know my thoughts: and see," etc.

III. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SINS.** You know how frank confession becomes when all motive to concealment is gone. A wise parent who has detected his child in a fault which must be taken notice of will at once tell the little one he knows all. With fatherly sensitiveness for a child's conscience, he will remove the motive for concealment, that the confession may be full. God's perfect knowledge of our sins takes away the motive, because it removes the possibility, of concealment. He who has feeble conceptions of God's searching vision will be full of evasions; he will be full of self-deceit. The complete conviction of transgression follows, and does not precede, the feeling that God knows it all; for honesty in our dealings with ourselves we need to be searched of God. The Gospel offers immediate cleansing to the conscience; and its cleansing virtue lies very much in the fact that it brings so near to the sinner the God who has searched him, and who knows him altogether. It begins by speaking to us of our sins, with most considerate sympathy our Father shows Himself aware of all the pollution we would confess. The Cross of Christ supplies us with the self-condemnation we require, and with the condemnation speaks of tenderness and pardon.

IV. **THE POWER WHICH OUR EVERY GOOD RESOLVE DERIVES FROM THE FACT THAT WE CAN MAKE IT KNOWN TO GOD.** Such things crave an utterance; we are more faithful because we are pledged. But we may not speak of them to men: lest we become vain; lest after failure put us to shame; lest our good resolutions evaporate in mere talk. There is sweetness, too, and force in our uttering our love to God, our devotedness to Him. Of these things, also, we may not speak to our fellows, yet they must be breathed into some ear. We can ask our God to mark them, and we are confirmed in them by the fact that they have been noted of Him.

V. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE FACT THAT HE WHO KNOWS US THOROUGHLY IS OUR HELPER AND OUR LEADER.** A map is something for the traveller, but children-travellers as we are, we want the guide and controller of our way with us. "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." There is one way, and only one, to blessedness and goodness. God's way is the same and everlasting. Why, then, are we wanderers? Why are we not always making progress therein? Alas! there are ill ways within us; it is our way to be indolent, wilful, to run after deceitful pleasures, to stray in folly, to sit down in sloth: and our leader knows it; and He will search these out and bring us past our perils. God will help us; that is our confidence and joy. We shall go on, well and truly on, for we have One above to lead us. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) "Search me, O God":—Why should the psalmist ask for what he has just declared to be necessary from the very relation of men to God? Is he asking anything more than he declared to exist apart from his asking? Or, what is the meaning of his prayer? Now, the answer to these questions must be guided by two considerations. One

is that the prayer for searching is only a part of the psalmist's desire, and the answer to it will be but the first step in the process of which he longs to be the subject. Search, in order to cleansing, is what he asks; and that is more than necessary to Divine omniscience. Again, the prayer is not merely a petition. It is the expression of a willingness to submit to the search. He began by recognizing the fact; he ends by welcoming it; rejoicing in it and desiring to experience it in his own case. I. THE LONGING FOR THE DIVINE SEARCH. There used to be a contrivance in some prisons, where solitary confinement was the rule, by which somewhere or other in the wall there was a little hole at which, at any moment, the eye of the jailor might be glued. And men have gone mad because they sat there and felt that they were never free from possible inspection. To a great many of us, "Thou God seest me" is as unwelcome as the consciousness of the little hole in the wall and the jailor's eye was to the criminal. We think of God as an inspector, a spy, a jailor; and we shrink and shut up all the petals of our hearts that He may not see what is there. Adam and Eve concealed themselves in the garden; and their sons and daughters are made cowards by their consciences, so that "Thou God seest me" is an unwelcome thought to very many of us. But it may be made a welcome one. If we are quite sure that the Eye that looks upon us is the Eye of a loving Father we shall not shrink from it, but turn to Him, and say, "There must be wisdom with Thee; Thou lookest with other and clearer eyes than ours, and Thou shalt look me through and through." But we have here not only the thought of welcome, but I think there is suggested, too, that of helping God in His search by frank confession. A man that says truly, "Search me, and know my heart," will not be unwilling to go to God and make a clean breast of it, and tell all that he knows of his weakness and his sin. II. THE LONGING FOR THE DISCOVERY OF HIDDEN SIN. "I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified," said the apostle; "but He that judgeth me is the Lord." Similarly the psalmist does not know what there may be lying, lurking and skulking in the depths of his heart; wherefore he refers himself to God, and asks that He will come and dig into its depths. That suspicion of unrecognized evil in myself is one that we should always carry with us. By arrangement of mirrors a man can see his outward form all round. But you cannot do like that with your souls. The difficulty is that the inspector and the inspected and the instrument of inspection are all one and the same, as if star and astronomer and telescope were one. So no wonder that we make—as every autobiography that ever was written shows that men make—huge mistakes in estimating what we are. There are secret faults in us all. And so the psalmist said, "Lord, I see a bit of myself, but it is only a little bit; and there must be, deep down, many things that I have not detected yet. See, then, if there be any wicked way in me." This prayer for the discovery of the hidden evil is based also on the confidence that God can and will cast out from us all the evil that He discovers in us, and the search for which the devout heart is eager is a search with a view to a purpose—viz. the ejection of the detected evil. There is another thing to be remarked about this prayer for the detection of undiscovered evil, and that is that one way of answering the prayer is by making us more quick to see the hidden sin. The thought that He is searching my heart will make my conscience more sensitive. And one of His ways of answering the petition is to open my eyes that I may behold the unsuspected evil in myself. III. THE LONGING FOR A DIVINE LEADING UNTO THE EVERLASTING WAY. Into that way we shall be led if we have spread our hearts out before God, and loyally helped Him in His search, and welcomed the blessed light of His face. He will lead us, partly by Providence's pointing our course, partly by ejecting the evil, partly by giving to us new aims, aspirations, and desires; partly by strengthening our feet to run in the paths of holiness which He has before prepared that we should walk in them. The end of the Divine search is the Divine cleansing. God looks upon us in order that He may lead us into the way of peace. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Self-examination*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED. 1. That he had searched and tried himself. 2. That his own searching was ineffectual, or at least not perfectly satisfactory. 3. A firm belief of God's omniscience. II. THE SPRINGS OF THIS DESIRE. 1. We are liable to be mistaken in the ideas we entertain as to our state. 2. Such mistakes are very dangerous. The house built upon the sand not only falls, but falls when it is too late to build another. 3. If God do not search us in a way of mercy, He will do it in a way of wrath, either in this world or the next. (B. Beddome, M.A.) *Self-examination*:—I. "SEE IF THERE BE ANY WICKED WAY

IN ME;"—any corruption concealed, any lust harboured, any vicious appetite indulged, any sinful course persisted in. It may refer either to mental errors, or evil practices. 1. It does not imply that the psalmist thought himself entirely free from sin. He knew there was much sin in him, and committed by him: and hence his pathetic lamentations (Ps. xxxviii. and li.). 2. He hoped that sin was not predominant. 3. Though sin did not reign, yet he was afraid that more sin remained in him than he was aware of. 4. What of this nature he was ignorant of, he desires to be taught (Job xiii. 23). II. "AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVER-LASTING." 1. The object he had in view. (1) The way of acceptance with God, Christ (John xiv. 6). (2) The way of sound doctrine. (3) The way of instituted worship. (4) The way of holiness and obedience. 2. The desire. (1) Need of guidance. (2) A sense of his need. (3) He entertained high and exalted thoughts of God, as every way capable of the work he here assigns to Him (*Ibid.*) *Self-examination*.—It is a good sign when we are afraid of self-deception and court the scrutiny of God; when we are willing to know the worst of our own case, and desirous to judge impartially. For by thus examining ourselves, and submitting to Divine examination, believers are distinguished—I. From the **FORMALIST**, who will take no notice of the state of his heart in religion. Many, like the Jews of old, go to the sanctuary of God, and sit as His people sit, and hear as they hear, but "their hearts are far from Him." This is no sweeping charge, for if their hearts were "right with God" they would worship Him at home as well as in their sanctuary, and in the sanctuary by sacraments as well as by prayer or praise. It is, therefore, a good sign when the claims of all duties are seriously weighed, and the state of the heart towards and in them is chiefly regarded. II. From the **RECKLESS**—those who dare not search their heart before God; they are afraid of its whispers, and conscious that a full disclosure of its secrets even to itself would be almost as humiliating as the exposure of them to others. Thus the matter will not bear thinking of, and therefore appearances are kept up at all hazards. III. From the **INCONSISTENT**, or those who are unwilling to be led out of every "wicked way." It is the grand characteristic of "faith unfeigned" that it is willing to be kept back from all sin and to be led in the way everlasting. "Examine yourselves, therefore, whether ye be in the faith, prove yourselves," etc. (*Robert Philip, D.D.*) *Imperfections detected*.—Here is a beautiful diamond, it is apparently pure white, and it sparkles with lustre. A look with the naked eye and you are satisfied the stone is without fault, a most precious and costly gem of the first water. The expert now puts into your hand a magnifying glass of great power and tells you to look at the centre of the stone, and inquires what you can see, and in reply you say there is a black speck at its very centre. To the natural eye the stone was pure white, entirely without fault; but with the assistance of this powerful glass some startling revelations are brought to light. It is equally true respecting the life of a believer, without any exception. There is a class of people in existence who claim they are capable of a perfect life in this world, and are very enthusiastic in advancing their views in public; but if the mirror of God's truth were put to its proper use it would surely introduce them to the painful mystery of human life, and, under the powerful search-light of the Word, they would be surprised to detect the hidden faults and specks of imperfection in the holiest life. (*R. Venting.*) **And know my thoughts.**—*Man accountable for his thoughts*.—I. WHILE NO ONE CAN READ THE THOUGHT OF ANOTHER, HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY THE PROCESSES AND CHARACTER OF HIS OWN. The most occult of all sciences is that which concerns itself with questions how we perceive any truth, or receive any impression, or think at all. No object to which you can turn your attention is so full of perplexity as the attention itself that you pay. Whence arise these thoughts, that are drawing their trains perpetually through the mind? What are the laws that govern their intricate and disturbed order? How far are they involuntary and beyond our strongest efforts of control? What sets them in such opposition to one another, and often to our own wish? What makes them so easy and so intractable; so clear and confused; so rapid and slow; bewildered with dreams and delirium, and true and radiant as the light? We have little to answer to questions like these. There is One that knoweth. "Search me, O God, and know my heart." II. BUT, IMPENETRABLE AS ARE THE THOUGHTS OF MAN, HE IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEM to an extent which it is serious to consider, and which he does not consider enough. There is a proverb that "thoughts pass toll-free." And it is a truth that would be worth the mentioning, where a just liberty is brought into question; where either a political or a religious

tyranny has set up the barriers of its proscription against the rights of the mind. It would show that no "receipts of custom," and no iron hindrances can stop the progress of the understanding, which moves on with the confidence of an invisible being, and stays no question. But it is a proverb very ill applied when it gives licence to every roving imagination; when it pretends to hide us from the heavenly inspection; when it encourages the heart to grow libertine; when it denies that we are amenable in this secret region to Him from whom nothing is concealed. What are worldly thoughts but worldliness itself; and corrupt ones but corruptness of mind; and proud ones but haughtiness of heart? Who shall say, then, that thoughts cost nothing? 1. They may cost us our liberty; that very freedom which they profess to enjoy in the greatest perfection. They have their habits, like everything else in man, and may be brought slavishly under the dominion of them. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," is a striking example in the prophet of that figure of speech which reserves for the final word the most emphatic expression. For long after the foot and the hand, and the will itself, are withdrawn from iniquity, these subtle agents may be about their usual work of evil suggestions. They may refuse to retire, haunt with their empty shades the spots where they once stimulated to action, and torment the conscience that they can no longer betray. 2. They may cost us our reason. And what a price to pay for their mismanagement is that! They may be so ardent as to grow wild; or brood upon one point till they have no sight nor power for any other, and the healthy mind shall lose all its soundness. 3. They may cost the innocence of the mind, as well as its sanity;—they alone, though confined ever so closely within the breast. Man does not always judge so, for he is satisfied if the claims he makes are answered. He looks but at the outward appearance. But there is One who looks deeper than that, and to that One the great account is due. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Only they can. The heart is the eye that is made to gaze towards Him; and if that be clouded, the whole heaven is hid, however circumspectly the steps may be directed along the earth. No need of any purpose to do mischief. No need of any perpetrated guilt. Where the thoughts are base, the soul is polluted; where they will acknowledge no discipline, it is nigh to be undone. III. We make of great account the climate in which we live; and the air and the weather are unfailing topics everywhere. Why will we not make of still greater THAT INWARD TEMPERATURE AND BREATH OF THE SPIRIT BY WHICH WE ARE CONTINUALLY SURROUNDED;—that can carry sunny remembrances through rainy days, and need not mind much the troubles that are abroad and the east wind, since they themselves are "at rest and quiet"? We esteem it of high consequence what house we occupy, and what its accommodations are,—where it is situated, and how it fronts. But the house of his own thoughts is the true dwelling of man. Let it receive none but worthy guests. Let it face the sky where the light is the longest. Let it be built for the ages to come. (N. L. Frothingham.)

Ver. 24. **See if there be any wicked way in me.**—*Secret sins*:—I. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN MAY PLAINLY BE KNOWN FROM ALL OTHERS by three things:—1. He does really rejoice in all the attributes of God. He adores His justice, loves His mercy, confides in His power, bows to His wisdom, is glad that He knows all things. 2. He is anxious to know the worst of his case. He is candid with himself. He greatly desires that his aims, his heart, and his motives should be right. He fears the treachery of his own heart. 3. He hates all sin, wars against it, loathes it, and never will be satisfied till he is rid of it. He would not follow any wicked way. He would do nothing contrary to the law of God. II. THAT WE MAY DEAL ARIGHT WITH OUR SECRET SINS, let us—1. Think much of the all-seeing purity of God. His holiness is a flaming fire. 2. Often compare our acts, and words, and hearts with the perfect law of God. The commandments are spiritual. If you have wrong views of the law you cannot have right views of sin, and so you may lose your soul. 3. Hide no sin from your own eyes, and refuse not to confess it before God. 4. Be careful not to subject your principles to needless trial. "We cannot hinder the birds from flying over our heads, but we must not let them light and build nests in our hair." 5. Set a double guard against those sins to which you are very liable. Are you easily made angry? Then avoid men who are apt to provoke you. Are you inclined to undue sadness? Then study the promises and seek the society of cheerful Christians. Are you fond of high living? Rather shun than seek convivial gatherings. 6. Remember that there is

no danger of your hating sin too much, or of your being too watchful against it. 7. Cease to howl out broken cisterns which can hold no water. Cease to rely on human wisdom, power, or goodness. Cast your care on Him who careth for you. Often commit your soul to Christ. 8. When you have done your best, remember that you may be mistaken. Earnestly offer the prayer, "Search me," etc. (W. S. Plumer, D.D.) *The way of sin is the way of grief*:—It is worthy of remark that "wicked way" may be translated "way of grief." The way of sin is the way of pain and grief: it is a grief to God who would save you from it; a way of grief and pain to you if you walk in it; a way of grief and harm to others who suffer by your deeds. Get rid of it, come out from it, for it is the way of death. The way of unbelief, the way of vanity, the way of selfishness, the way of worldliness, the way of sluggishness, the way of self-dependence, the way of disobedience, the way of forgetfulness. Oh, how many, many are the ways, the tastes, the leanings within us that bring us peril, pain and grief. Let us seek a holy riddance of them, one and all, that we may move steadily, only, undistractedly, in the way of purity and peace! The everlasting way! All other ways end in sorrow, finish in gloom, suddenly terminate in night. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death. The old, true, tried way has no terminus. It leads from grace to grace, from glory to glory. *Discovery of concealed sin*:—Those people in India, in the last plague, gave no end of trouble to the sanitary authorities because they would hide away the corpses in the back of their hovels, and when the dead-cart came round said that there were no dead in the house; and so the corpse remained to poison the atmosphere and kill some more of them. If we keep our sins huddled up in the back premises of our nature and try to put a screen between them and God by impotence and locking our lips against confession, then God cannot cast out the sins that we cling to, and will keep. But if we go to Him and say, "See if there be any wicked way in me. Come into the very innermost recesses of my soul, and whatsoever is there smite with Thy searching light," which, like the old Greek legend of the arrows of Apollo, will slay the pythons, then God will answer the petition, and we shall be delivered. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) **Lead me in the way everlasting.**—*The way everlasting*:—Since we must have a way, it is of the highest importance that our way should be a right one; important, because if it be not right we shall not long be happy in our course, since the happiness of those who follow the path of evil is fleeting as a meteor, mocking as a will-o'-the-wisp, deceptive as the mirage, frail as a bubble on the wave, and unsubstantial as a phantom of the night. I. A REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTE OF THE RIGHT WAY—IT IS "THE WAY EVERLASTING." 1. It is most certain that the way of many men cannot be everlasting. (1) The way of the sinful is not so. I hope with regard to some that their way will last but for a very little time, for it is the way of evil. May they soon turn from it! May their road be so hedged up by God's providence and grace that they may be compelled to take another road. (2) The way of the merely moral man is not a way everlasting. (3) The way of the purposeless and dilettante is not everlasting. (4) The way even of some religious people is not the way everlasting. The hypocrite, the Pharisee, etc. 2. The right way—the way of faith in God and of a life that flows out of faith in God—the way indeed which Jesus trod, is the way everlasting—(1) Because it is a way which was mapped out upon everlasting principles. Truth will never die; the stars will grow dim, the sun will pale his glory, but truth will be ever young. Integrity, uprightness, honesty, love, goodness, these are all imperishable. (2) Because no circumstances can by any possibility necessitate any change in it. (3) Because such a way even death itself shall not terminate. II. THE CONFESSION. This remarkable confession and prayer should suggest two things—ignorance and impotence. When we say, "Lead me," if it is a blind man, it means ignorance; he cannot see the way, and therefore he needs to be led, though he may be strong enough to walk if he only knew the way. "Lead me, Lord," also signifies impotence if it be judged of as the child's case; he needs to be led in another sense, because he has not strength enough in his little feet to go without the help of his mother's hand. 1. Our want of knowledge. (1) Imperfect judgment. (2) Vitiated affections. (3) Wrong influences. 2. Our want of strength. We need to ask of God to give us will, which is the real power. III. THE PRAYER. How comprehensive it is! 1. Because of its object—the whole man, his intellect, emotions, tongue, actions. 2. Its modes. God leads by the law, by the life of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, by ministers, by good books, etc. 3. Its issues. "The way everlasting"

—a holy life, a happy death, and a heaven to crown it all. 4. The persons who may fitly use it. Who is there whom it would not suit? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

PSALM CXL.

VERS. 1-13. Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man.—*God preserves His servant*.—To put Luther out of harm's way for a while a prudent man took him prisoner, and kept him out of the strife in the castle of Wartburg. Luther could not be buried alive in ease; he must be getting on with his life work. He sends word to his friends that he who was coming would soon be with them, and on a sudden he appeared at Wittenburg. The prince meant to have kept him in retirement somewhat longer, and when the Elector feared that he could not protect him, Luther wrote him: "I come under far higher protection than yours; nay, I behold that I am more likely to protect your Grace than your Grace to protect me. He who has the strongest faith is the best protector." Luther had learned to be independent of all men, for he cast himself upon his God. He had all the world against him, and yet he lived right merrily; if the Pope excommunicated him he burned the bill; if the Emperor threatened him he rejoiced because he remembered the words of the Lord. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." When they said to him, "Where will you find shelter if the Elector does not protect you?" he said, "Under the broad shield of God." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 6, 7. I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God.—*David's five-stringed harp* (with vers. 12, 13).—There are five things in my text to which I want especially to draw the attention of any who are in sore trouble, and particularly those who are in trouble from enemies who are seeking to ruin them. I. **POSSESSION ASSERTED** (ver. 6). 1. What was the possession? The Lord Himself. If God be your God, all things are yours, for all things are in God, and the God who has given Himself to us cannot deny us anything. 2. The claim. He exhibited his title-deeds. 3. Who was the attesting Witness? It is a very easy thing to say to the minister, "The Lord is my God"; but it may not be true. It is a very solemn thing to be able to say to Jehovah, "Thou art my God." True believers have dialogues with their God; they are accustomed to speak with the Most High. "I said unto Jehovah, Thou art my God." 4. The occasion. When he was in trouble. I said unto Jehovah, "Thou art my God." Men said I was a castaway; but I said, "Thou art my God." They said I was without a friend; but I said unto Jehovah, "Thou art my God." II. **A PETITION PRESENTED**. "Hear the voice of my supplications." 1. His prayers were frequent. When you have double trouble, take care that you have double prayer. 2. His prayers were full of meaning. "Voice." 3. His prayers were meant for God. 4. He could not rest unless he had the Lord's attention. III. **PRESERVATION EXPERIENCED** (ver. 7). 1. God had been David's Armour-bearer. Has it not been so with us in days past? Have we not had our heads covered when God held His shield above us? Have we not been guarded from all hurt by the providence and by the grace of the Most High? 2. God had guarded His most vital part. 3. God had been the strength of his salvation. IV. **PROTECTION EXPECTED** (ver. 12). 1. He is the Judge of all the earth, and shall not He do right? 2. Moreover, God is a compassionate Friend; and when He sees any of His dear saints very poor and afflicted, do you not think that, when they cannot take care of themselves, He will take care of them? V. **PRAISE PREDICTED** (ver. 13). 1. Praise is assured by gratitude. 2. By holy confidence. 3. By abiding in fellowship with Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 8. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked.—*The desires of the wicked inadmissible*.—I. **SOME OF THE DESIRES OF THE WICKED**. 1. That there is no God. They dare not submit their conduct to Divine inspection, and would be glad if there were no Being to inspect. But against this desire the godly oppose their prayers. And there are good reasons why they thus feel. If there

were no God, everything must immediately be thrown into a state of confusion. Chaos would return. 2. If a God do and must exist, sinners wish Him to be a mere spectator of the affairs of the world. The grand objection they have to His existence is, that if He exist He must have the reins of government. But the saints not only desire God to reign, they wish Him to manage all the affairs of creation. They consider their own safety and that of others to depend on this special care of God. 3. If God must exist, and must be an active agent in governing the world, the wicked are desirous that He should work without any plan. They are afraid of Divine decrees. They fear that these decrees do not favour them. The righteous, on the other hand, found all their hopes of salvation, both as it regards themselves and others, on the purposes of God. 4. Sinners desire happiness and heaven without holiness. Between these two God has established an indissoluble connection. He has decreed that holiness shall be the only path to happiness. But this connection sinners wish to destroy. They hate holiness wherever it appears, and yet they intend to be happy. The righteous, on the contrary, love nothing so much as holiness. 5. Sinners desire that Christians may walk disorderly, and so dishonour the religion of Jesus. Against these falls the saints pray, and are grieved when they take place. They love their fellow-saints. Every spot that appears in their garments grieves their hearts. They feel some of the same distress on such occasions as is felt when they go astray themselves. 6. The wicked desire to remain ignorant of their own characters. The righteous daily pray the favour of being acquainted with themselves. 7. Wicked men are very desirous that there may be no day of judgment. They do not wish the final inspection of Omniscience. In such desires the righteous cannot unite. It is their ardent wish that there may be a day that shall bring every deed to light, and pass an impartial judgment on all the actions of men. 8. The wicked are very desirous to be left to act without restraint. Nothing do they desire more. In this particular the children of God, and all holy beings, oppose their wishes. It would ruin the world to have them gratified. Free the wicked from restraint and there would be but little difference between earth and hell. II. INFERENCES. 1. The monstrous wickedness of the heart. 2. The nature of regeneration. It is a universal change in the desires of the heart, in the affections of the soul. 3. The great difference between the righteous and the wicked. 4. Why sinners do not desire or relish the society of the righteous. They have opposing desires. (D. A. Clark.)

Ver. 12. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.—*God and the poor*.—We read in the text that God "maintains the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor," and we may think that there is not much evidence of this. If society is under God's control how is it that it is such a chaos? There seems to be no order. Yet in the midst of the apparent confusion God is ruling. He holds the winds in His fists, and the water in the hollow of His hand. What gave the psalmist this assurance? I. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S CHARACTER. We read of the pity of God, of the compassion and mercy of God in the Old Testament. Hence the numerous passages relating to God and the poor. "He delivereth the poor in their affliction." "Thou hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor." "Whoso mocketh the poor reproveth his Maker." "Thou hast been a strength to the poor." "Break off sins by showing mercy to the poor." Hence also the provision made for the poor. The gleanings of the fields and of the vineyards and oliveyards were always to be left for them. The spontaneous productions of the sabbatical year were also to form a part of their provision. Kindness to them was enjoined as a sacred duty and as a precious privilege. II. HIS SENSE OF JUSTICE. The psalmist speaks of "the right of the poor." Some would assert that the poor have no rights, except the right to starve, or get out of the way. The wealthy classes have rights. Oh yes. The sacredness of property is more inviolate than the sacredness of the Sabbath. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city," and around this strong city there are walls built by legislators. Let wealth have its rights; and let poverty have its rights too. If it is right to strengthen the weak, to lift up the feeble, to comfort the sorrowful, to heal the afflicted, to provide for the poor, then God will maintain that right. He that implanted in man this sense of justice, shall He not be just? Justice may appear tardy, but "ever the right comes uppermost, and justice shall be done." "I know that the Lord will," etc. If they have no other friend, the afflicted and poor have a Friend in heaven, whose righteousness is like the great

mountains, whose mercy endureth for ever. III. His KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD RAISED HELPERS FOR THE FEERLE AND OPPRESSED. Charity was exercised then. It was a part of the Jewish religion. The rites of hospitality were then observed, and are in a large measure observed now in the East, with great care and faithfulness. Not an enemy was betrayed who had come into a tent for hospitality. There is a fountain of sympathy in the human heart. God has made the heart, and kindled in it the emotions of love and pity. Love God, and you will be constrained to love man. Keep the first table of the law, and you will be impelled to observe the second. God is not poor, and needing our alms. But around us are men, made in the similitude of God, capable of holding fellowship with God, of thinking upon His name, and loving Him, and love to God can express itself in service to men. This is the essence of religion—love. The apostle says that all is vain without this. (J. Owen.)

PSALM CXLI.

VERB. 1-10. *Lord, I cry unto Thee.*—An invocation for the truly desirable in human life:—I. DIVINE ATTENTION TO HUMAN ASPIRATIONS (vers. 1, 2). 1. For immediate attention. 2. For favourable attention. II. A COMPLETE GUARDIANSHIP FROM WRONG IN LIFE (vers. 3, 4). 1. He prays against wrong in words. Who shall tell the evils that flow in the world every day from unguarded speech? "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." 2. He prays against wrong in practice. (1) Let my heart not be inclined to practise wicked works with wicked men. (2) Let it not be inclined to participate in the pleasures of wicked men. III. A READINESS TO RECEIVE RIGHTEOUS REPROOFS (ver. 5). What greater necessity have all than the society of men who shall reprove, rebuke, exhort? IV. THE MAINTENANCE OF A DEVOUT AND BELIEVING SOUL IN THE MIDST OF OUR ENEMIES (vers. 6, 7). 1. Devotion. 2. Confidence—(1) In the success of his teaching. (2) In the subjugation of his enemies. V. ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE FROM ALL ENEMIES (vers. 8-10). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. *Let my prayer be . . . as incense.*—The incense of prayer:—Throughout the Old Testament you find side by side these two trends of thought—a scrupulous carefulness for the observance of all the requirements of ritual worship, and a clear-eyed recognition that it was all external and symbolical and prophetic. I. THE INCENSE OF PRAYER. The temple was divided into three courts, the outer court, the holy place, and the holiest of all. The altar of incense stood in the second of these, the holy place; the altar of burnt offering stood in the court without. It was not until that altar, with its expiatory sacrifice, had been passed that one could enter into the holy place, where the altar of incense stood. There were three pieces of furniture in that place, the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of the shewbread. Of these three, the altar of incense stood in the centre. Twice a day the incense was kindled upon it by a priest, by means of live coals brought from the altar of burnt offering in the outer court. And, thus kindled, the wreaths of fragrant smoke ascended on high. All day long the incense smouldered upon the altar; twice a day it was kindled into a bright flame. I need not dwell upon the careful and sedulous preparation from pure spices which went to the making of the incense. So we have to prepare ourselves by sedulous purity if there is to be any life or power in our devotions. But I pass from that, and ask you to think of the lovely picture of true devoutness given in that inflamed incense, wreathing in coils of fragrance up to the heavens. Prayer is more than petition. It is the going up of the whole soul towards God. Do you realize that, just in the measure in which we set our minds as well as our affections, and our affections as well as our minds, on the things which are above, just to that extent, and not one hair's breadth further, have we the right to call ourselves Christians at all? Remember, too, that the incense lay dead, unfragrant, and with no capacity of soaring, till it was kindled; that is to say, unless there is a flame in my heart there will be no rising of my aspirations to God. Cold prayers do not go up more than a foot or two above the ground; they have no power to soar. There must be the inflaming before

there can be the mounting of the aspiration. It is because we are habitually such tepid Christians that we are so tongue-tied in prayer. Where was the incense kindled from? From coals brought from the altar of burnt offering in the outer court; that is to say, light the fire in your heart with a coal brought from Christ's sacrifice, and then it will flame; and only then will love well upwards and desires be set on the things above. II. **THE SACRIFICE OF THE EMPTY-HANDED.** What is implied in likening the uplifted empty hands to the evening sacrifice? First, it is a confession of impotent emptiness, a lifting up of expectant hands to be filled with the gift from God. And, says this psalmist, "because I bring nothing in my hand, Thou dost accept that, as if I came laden with offerings." That is just a picturesque way of putting a familiar, threadbare truth, which, threadbare as it is, needs to be laid to heart a great deal more by us, that our true worship, and truest honour of God, lies not in giving but in taking. In our service we do not need to bring any merit of our own. This great principle destroys not only the gross externalities of heathen sacrifice, and the notion that worship is a duty, but it destroys the other notion of our having to bring anything to deserve God's gifts. And so it is an encouragement to us when we feel ourselves what we are, and what we should always feel ourselves to be, empty-handed, coming to Him not only with hearts that aspire like incense, but with petitions that confess our need, and cast ourselves upon His grace. See that you desire what God wishes to give; see that you go to Him for what He does give. See that you give to Him the only thing that He does wish, or that it lies in your power to give, and that is yourself. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The twofold aspect of prayer:*—Prayer is designed not only to be serviceable to man, but honourable to God. It is a tax (redounding indeed with unspeakable benefits to the tax-payer, but still a tax) laid upon our time; just as almsgiving is a tax laid upon our substance; and if we would render unto God the things that are God's, the tribute-money must be faithfully and punctually paid. 1. Think of yourself before you kneel down, not simply as a suppliant for help, but as a priest addressing himself to offer sacrifice and to burn incense. The time of the morning or evening oblation is come; the altar is ready; the incense is at hand; the sacerdotal robe of Christ's righteousness waits to be put on; array thyself in it; and go into the sanctuary of thy heart, and do the priestly ministration. 2. It was the quaint but excellent saying of an old saint that a man should deal with distractions in prayer as he would deal with dogs who run out and bark at him when he goes along the street,—walk on fast and straightforward, and take no notice of them. Persevere in presenting yourself to God during the period for which the prayer ought to last, and would last under happier circumstances. He loves to draw out perseverance in prayer, loves the indication thus given that, amidst all discouragements, the soul clings obstinately to Himself; and very early in the world's history He signified His approval of this temper of mind by rewarding and crowning, as He did, Jacob's struggle with the Jehovah-Angel. It must be remembered that this quiet, resolute patience, even amidst the disorders and distractions of our own spirit, is probably the most acceptable offering which can be made to the Most High. 3. But definite practical rules may be given, which will not be long acted upon without giving a better tone to our devotions. There are parts of prayer which cannot be selfish, which directly seek either the interests of others, or the glory of God; see that these parts be not absent from your prayers. (1) Intercede for others, and acquire the habit of interceding. Consider their wants, trials, and difficulties, and bear them upon your heart as you bear your own before the throne of grace. Intercession is a priestly service. Christ, the great High Priest, intercedes for us all above. And we, if we would prove ourselves members of God's royal priesthood upon earth, and perform with fidelity those spiritual sacrifices which we were consecrated in baptism to present, must intercede for others. (2) Let praise—not merely thanksgiving, but praise—always form an ingredient of thy prayers. We thank God for what He is to us; for the benefits which He confers, and the blessings with which He visits us. But we praise Him for what He is in Himself, for His glorious excellences and perfections, independently of their bearing on the welfare of the creature. In praise the thought of self vanishes from, and is extinguished in, the mind; and therefore to be large and fervent in praise counteracts the natural tendency to selfishness which is found in mere prayer. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The incense of prayer:*—Doubtless the Jews felt, when they saw the soft white clouds of fragrant smoke rising slowly from the altar of incense, as if the voice of the priest were

silently but eloquently pleading in that expressive emblem on their behalf. The association of sound was lost on that of smell, and the two senses were blended in one. And this symbolical mode of supplication, as Dr. George Wilson has remarked, has this one advantage over spoken or written prayer, that it appealed to those who were both blind and deaf, a class that are usually shut out from social worship by their affliction. Those who could not hear the prayers of the priest could join in devotional exercises symbolized by incense through the medium of their sense of smell; and the hallowed impressious shut out by one avenue were admitted to the mind and heart by another. **As the evening sacrifice.**—*On evening prayer:*—1. As God hath sanctified the morning and evening to His service by positive laws, so He has made the face of nature, in those seasons, to invite religious sentiments, and rendered them, peculiarly, fit for devotion; for, in the evening the hurry of the world ceases, its noise is hushed, and nature itself seems to pause in a delightful calm, that man may recollect himself after the hurry of the day, that his agitated passions may subside, and his mind, without distraction, offer its grateful homage to its Maker. The evening and the morning, as it were, turn the leaf, and invite us to read the existence, the wisdom, the power, and goodness of God, engraven in different characters, and displayed in a new scene of wonders. The greatness of the stars, their number, the regularity of their motions, the swiftness of their course, the exactness of their periods, the immensity of their bulk, the profoundness of their silence, at once humble and exalt the heart, lay it in the dust, and raise it to heaven. 2. And as the Creator made the face of nature to inspire evening devotion, so it is strongly recommended by the example of our blessed Saviour; for when the crowds were dismissed, and the business of the day done, He generally retired to offer the evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. 3. Gratitude should prompt us to acknowledge the goodness of God through the day; to thank Him for that food and raiment which He bestowed; for guarding us from the open violence and hidden snares of our temporal and spiritual enemies; for shielding us from accidents and infectious diseases; and, above all, for keeping us from ignominy and atrocious crimes, from the pangs and shame and punishment of notorious sins. 4. Evening devotion is extremely useful, and very effectual, for wearing off those ill impressions that our minds receive during our intercourse with the world. There is nothing, next to the grace of God, more likely to preserve us unspotted from the world than beginning and ending every day with the fear of God and the exercises of fervent devotion. 5. Evening devotion is still further necessary, in order to make our peace with God. In many things we offend all; and besides those flagrant crimes for which our consciences reproach us, there are many sins of thought, word, and deed that escape our observation. Can we, then, with a quiet mind, lie down under this load of guilt without so much as supplicating with our families the forgiveness and mercy of our God? 6. As evening devotion is necessary to obtain pardon of the sins we committed through the day, so is it also to obtain the preservation of our lives through the night. A sleeping man is a prey to every accident: if a fire surround him, he is insensible of his danger, and may be stifled or burnt before he recover from a state of insensibility; if an enemy approach him, he can neither resist nor flee; the decays of time, or an earthquake, make his habitation totter over his head; he is unable to retire, and may be buried in its ruins; the very animals that lodge under his roof may take away his life; nay, a wrong position in his bed may make soul and body part. Can we then sink down into this helpless state without putting ourselves under the wings of Divine providence, and soliciting the protection of Omnipotence? (*J. Riddoch.*)

Ver. 3. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.—*The regulation of the tongue:*—I. IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. The use of speech is seldom considered morally. Unless on some very particular occasions, people imagine that it is perfectly optional with them what they speak and how they speak—saying, with those in the time of David, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" Hence numberless words are daily uttered with indifference, and never thought of again; and if ever people confess or pray, speech never makes an article either in their confessions or prayers. II. DANGER OF TRANSGRESSION. 1. From the depravity of our nature. The stream will always resemble the fountain. 2. From the contagion of example. 3. From the frequency of speech. 4. From the extent of our obligation. (1) There is the law

of prudence. This condemns silliness and folly—for no one has a licence to talk nonsense. This condemns all that is impertinent and unsuited to the place, the company, and the season. (2) There is the law of purity. This forbids all ribaldry; and not only everything that is grossly offensive, but all indecent allusions and insinuations, however artfully veiled. (3) There is the law of veracity. This condemns everything spoken with a view to deceive; or spoken so as to occasion deception; and which may be done by a confusion of circumstances; by an omission of circumstances; by an addition of circumstances. (4) There is the law of kindness. This condemns all calumny and tale-bearing; the circulation of whatever may be injurious to the reputation of another. This requires, that if you must speak—if you must speak—of another's fault, you do it without aggravation; that you do it, not with pleasure, but pain; and that if you censure, you do it as a judge would pass sentence upon his son. (5) There is the law of utility. This requires that we should not scandalize another by anything in our speech; but contribute to his benefit by rendering our discourse instructive, or reproving, or consolatory. (6) There is the law of piety. This requires that we should never take God's name in vain; never speak lightly of His Word, nor His worship; never charge Him foolishly; never murmur under any of His dispensations. It requires that we extol His perfections, and recommend His service.

III. INABILITY TO PRESERVE HIMSELF. 1. This conviction is well founded. "Without Me ye can do nothing." 2. This conviction is continually increasing. As the Christian, in the course of his experience, is learning to cease from man, so he is also taught to cease from himself. 3. It is a conviction the most happy. You need not be afraid of it. This self-acquaintance will only reduce you to the proper condition of a creature, and prepare you for the reception of Divine supplies. Our misery is from our self-sufficiency; it is pride that ruins us.

IV. THE WISDOM OF APPLYING TO GOD FOR THE ASSISTANCE WE NEED. 1. God is equal to our preservation. However great our danger, He can keep us from falling. Whatever difficulties we have to encounter, or duties to perform, His grace is sufficient for us. 2. His succours are not to be obtained without prayer. He has a right to determine in what way He will communicate His own favours; he is infinitely capable of knowing what method is most consistent with His own glory and conducive to our good—and He has revealed it; and however freely He has promised His influences, He has said (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). 3. Prayer always brings the assistance it implores (Isa. xlv. 19; Matt. vii. 7). (IV. Jay.)

Sins of the tongue.—**I. FOOLISH TALKING** (Eph. v. 4). 1. Some persons are so indisposed to sobriety of thought, and have so long accustomed themselves to regard seriousness as bordering upon stupidity or gloom, that the gravest concerns lose in their conversation every symptom of importance. The wisest reflections are encountered with unmeaning laughter; and conclusions of the highest moment are repelled by a paltry effort at a jest. 2. Of another class, more numerous, and, if it be possible, equally thoughtless, the conversation is altogether and uniformly idle. Day after day, at home and abroad, you hear nothing drop from their lips which manifests a cultivated mind, or a desire of mental improvement. Everything is trifling. **II. THOSE WHICH ARISE FROM IMPATIENCE AND DISCONTENT.** 1. Of this description is hasty and peevish language in common life. Thus domestic comfort is perpetually invaded by little uneasinesses, little bickerings, little disagreements; and at length perhaps falls a sacrifice to the multiplication of inconsiderable wounds. Is this to be kindly affectioned, tender-hearted one towards another? Is this to walk in love? Is this to imitate the gentleness of Christ? 2. But some men advance to bolder manifestations of impatience and discontent. Not only is their fretfulness querulous, vehement, and acrimonious in domestic and in social life; but, after tormenting man, it shrinks not from insulting God. They repine at His dispensations: they murmur against His providence. Having received so much is this your gratitude, to be indignant that you have not obtained more? Does not He who knows all things discern whether it is better that you should enjoy a greater or a less portion of His gifts? **III. THOSE WHICH MAY BE REGARDED AS THE OFFSPRING OF CONTENTION.** "Be ye angry, and sin not." If anger in its lowest degree overtake you, beware of transgression. Sin after sin is the usual consequence of anger; and among the first sins which arise from anger are sins of the tongue. The irritated mind unburies itself in passionate language. When the heart glows with resentment, heat and vehemence of language betray the inward flame. The tongue of rage blazes fiercer and fiercer; and abstains from no injury towards man or towards

God. Is this to be the disciple of the meek and holy Jesus? Is this to imitate Him who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, etc.? Why does the Almighty permit provocations to assail thee, but to prove thee, to know what is in thine heart, whether thou wilt keep His commandments or no; whether thou wilt obey the headlong impulse of wrath; or strive through the grace of thy God, and for the sake of pleasing Him, to remain unmoved? IV. THOSE SINS OF THE TONGUE WHICH OWE THEIR ORIGIN TO VANITY AND PRIDE. The boastful man speaketh of himself and seeketh his own glory. His heart is lifted up; his mouth uttereth proud things; he giveth not the honour unto God; he vaunteth himself against the Most High. Not unfrequently wickedness itself becomes his boast. He openly triumphs in the violence with which he has borne down an opponent. Solicitous in every circumstance of life to magnify himself, he speaks contemptuously and degradingly of others; and the more contemptuously and degradingly in proportion as he apprehends that they may be advantageously compared with him, or may stand in the way of his enterprises and projects. V. CENSORIOUSNESS. Some persons are censorious through carelessness; some through selfishness; some through anger; some through malice; some through envy. According to the difference of the sources from which censoriousness springs, its guilt is more or less flagrant. But even when it arises from carelessness, deem it not a trifling sin. You are not careless concerning your own character, your own welfare. Are you not to love your neighbour as yourself? VI. THOSE SINS OF THE LIPS WHICH ORIGINATE IN A BUSY AND MEDDLING SPIRIT; sins which, if not in themselves of a deeper hue than some which have already been mentioned, often prove more extensively destructive to the peace of society (Eccl. x. 11; Prov. xi. 13; xvii. 9; xviii. 18; xxvi. 20; Lev. xix. 16; 1 Pet. iv. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 11). VII. THOSE OFFENCES WHICH FALL UNDER THE GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF DECEIT. Of these the most prominent is open falsehood. The liar destroys the foundation of all confidence, whether in the public dealings of men one with another, or in the retirement of domestic life. The falsehood, however, of the lips frequently shows itself in the form of slander, which is but a more refined, and therefore more mischievous, mode of lying. What were the engines of sin by which ruin was brought upon mankind? An open falsehood and a disguised slander. As the imitators, the slaves, the children of the devil, all liars, whether they deal in open falsehood or in lurking slander, are objects of detestation to Almighty God (Prov. vi. 17; xii. 22; Rev. xxi. 8). VIII. VIOLATIONS OF MODESTY (Col. iii. 8; Eph. v. 3, 4). There is no sin which is more odious in its nature, more expressive of a depraved and polluted heart. Christ hath called you unto holiness. You are required to be holy, as He was holy; pure, as He was pure. IX. PROFANENESS. This sin comprehends every irreverent expression concerning the Deity, His titles, His attributes, His providence, His revelation, His judgments. (T. Gisborne, M.A.)

Ver. 5. *Let the righteous . . . reprove me.*—*The reproof of the righteous:*—

I. THE CHARACTER OF ONE WHO IS QUALIFIED TO GIVE REPROOF. 1. One whose life is habitually consistent with his profession. 2. One who is influenced by proper motives. (1) Aversion to sin. (2) Love to those whom he reproves. (3) Concern for the happiness and honour of a Christian brother. (4) Love to God and zeal for His glory. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH REPROOF SHOULD BE RECEIVED, AND THE EFFECT IT SHOULD PRODUCE. 1. The manner. (1) It must be esteemed a kindness. (2) We must be willing to part with every sin. (3) We must be truly humble. 2. The effect. (1) It brings to repentance. (2) It raises the reputation. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD REQUITE THOSE WHO REPROVE US. As sanctified reproof constrains us to pray for ourselves it will dispose us to pray for reprovers. A spirit of prayer is never a selfish spirit; it embraces all mankind, and enables us to offer fervent supplications in behalf of our enemies; much more will it dispose us to pray for those whom we love, and to whom we are indebted for acts of kindness. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Advantages of Christian reproof:*—I. THE OBLIGATION TO THIS DUTY (Lev. xix. 17; Prov. ix. 8; xxiv. 15; Luke xvii. 3; 1 Tim. v. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 2). II. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE TO ADMINISTER REPROOF TO OTHERS. "Let the righteous smite me." Let the sincere, humble, constant Christian, who is blameless and harmless, the child of God, without rebuke, let him administer reproof. Let the conscientious man, who endeavours to keep himself always in the love of God, who is a pattern of righteousness and peace, reprove and rebuke others. This is Christian reproof, and has the weight which God designed it to have. III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE ADMINIS-

THIRD. 1. It must be in the spirit of true Christian meekness. (1) Mingled with a sincere and tender compassion for the offender there must be a humbling conviction of our own frailty and liability to sin, and while we reprove him we must cherish a holy fear of falling ourselves. (2) All harshness, abruptness, overbearing and censoriousness are utterly opposed to the spirit in which Christian rebuke is to be administered. 2. It must be administered in a spirit of real kindness and brotherly love for the individual reproved, and with a sincere desire to do him good. 3. It is to be administered in a spirit of firmness and fidelity. This is not inconsistent with Christian meekness and gentleness, nor with fraternal kindness and tender benevolent desire to do our offending brother good. **IV. THE HAPPY EFFECTS TO BE REALIZED.** 1. It will free the Christian who performs this duty from being partaker of other men's sins, and will give him a peace of conscience which he cannot otherwise enjoy. 2. It is often the means of breaking the spell and delusions of sin on a brother's mind which have withstood all other influences. 3. It will prevent the evil of talebearing and backbiting. 4. It will promote amongst Christians a spirit of brotherly love and prayerfulness for each other. (*D. L. Carroll, D.D.*) *How we may bring our hearts to bear reproofs:—* **I. HOW REPROOFS MAY BE DULY RECEIVED.** 1. It is desirable on many accounts that he who reproves us be himself a righteous person, and be of us esteemed so to be; for as such an one alone will or can have a due sense of the evil reproved, with a right principle and end in the discharge of his own duty, so the minds of them that are reproved are, by their sense of his integrity, excluded from those insinuations of evasions which prejudices and suggestions of just causes of reflections on their reprover will offer unto them. Especially, without the exercise of singular wisdom and humility, will all the advantages of a just reproof be lost where the allowed practice of greater sins and evils than that reproved is daily chargeable on the reprover. 2. The nature of a reproof is either—(1) Authoritative. (a) Ministerial. (b) Parental. (c) Despotical. (2) Or fraternal. (3) Or friendly. 3. The matter of a reproof is duly to be weighed by him who designs any benefit thereby. **II. WHY WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE REPROOFS ORDERLY OR REGULARLY GIVEN UNTO US, ESTEEMING THEM A SINGULAR PRIVILEGE.** 1. Mutual reproofs for the curing of evil and preventing of danger in one another are prime dictates of the law of nature and that obligation which our participation in the same being, offspring, original, and end, to seek the good of each other, doth lay upon us. 2. Whereas the light of nature is variously obscured and its directive power debilitated in us, God hath renewed on us an obligation unto this duty by particular institutions, both under the Old Testament and the New. 3. A due consideration of the use, benefit, and advantage of them will give them a ready admission into our minds and affections. Who knows how many souls that are now at rest with God have been prevented by reproofs, as the outward means, from going down into the pit? Unto how many have they been an occasion of conversion and sincere turning unto God! **III. WHAT CONSIDERATIONS MAY FURTHER US IN THEIR DUE IMPROVEMENT.** 1. If there be not open evidence unto the contrary, it is our duty to judge that every reproof is given us in a way of duty. This will take off offence with respect unto the reprover, which, unjustly taken, is an assured entrance into a way of losing all benefit and advantage by the reproof. 2. Take heed of cherishing habitually such disorders, vices, and distempers of mind as are contrary unto this duty and will frustrate the design of it. Such are—(1) Hastiness of spirit. Pride and haughtiness of mind. 3. Reckon assuredly that a fault, a miscarriage which any one is duly reproved for, if the reproof be not received and improved as it ought, is not only aggravated, but accumulated with a new crime, and marked with a dangerous token of an incurable evil (*Prov. xxix. 1*). 4. It is useful unto the same end immediately to compare the reproof with the word of truth. This is the measure, standard, and directory of all duties, whereunto in all dubious cases we should immediately retreat for advice and counsel. 5. The best way to keep our souls in a readiness rightly to receive, and duly to reprove such reproofs, as may regularly be given us by any, is to keep and preserve our souls and spirits in a constant awe and reverence of the reproofs of God, which are recorded in His Word. 6. We shall fail in this duty unless we are always accompanied with a deep sense of our frailty, weakness, readiness to halt, or miscarry, and thereon a necessity of all the ordinances and visitations of God, which are designed to preserve our souls. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *A wise reprover:—*Mr. John Wesley, having to travel some distance in a stage coach, fell in with a pleasant-tempered, well-informed officer.

His conversation was sprightly and entertaining, but frequently mingled with oaths. When they were about to take the next stage, Mr. Wesley took the officer aside, and, after expressing the pleasure he had enjoyed in his company, told him he was thereby encouraged to ask of him a very great favour. "I would take a pleasure in obliging you," said the officer, "and I am sure you will not make an unreasonable request." "Then," said Mr. Wesley, "as we have to travel together some time, I beg that, if I should so far forget myself as to swear, you will kindly reprove me." The officer immediately saw the motive, and felt the force of the request, and, with a smile, said, "None but Mr. Wesley could have conceived a reproof in such a manner." (*Weekly Pulpit*.) **For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.**—*Intercessory prayer*:—Passage difficult, but we take the meaning of our Authorized Version, and would speak—I. OF THE DUTY OF INTERCESSION FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. Take as our first key-note the word obligation. The new nature in us teaches us this as does the law of the elect household. And our membership of the body of Christ, and our obligation to the intercession of others, urge this. 2. Honour. It is this to be permitted to pray for the saints, for so we are brought into close fellowship with Christ. Especially when we think what we once were—beggars for ourselves at mercy's door. Avail yourselves of this honour. 3. Excellence. Such intercession benefits those who use it, for it will suggest to you to know your brethren, and will bring love with it; and will lead you to kinder judgments, and to self-watchfulness. Have we not cause to be ashamed on account of our neglect of this duty? 4. Extent. He would pray for those who had displeased him; who had said, perhaps, severe things to him. And especially when they were in trouble. Men of the world leave their companions when they get into trouble as the herd leave the wounded deer. But we should stand by such. II. FOR SINNERS ALSO WE SHOULD INTERCEDE. It is the most essential thing we can do. We cannot change their hearts. Such prayer will fit you to become God's instrument, and will make you go to work hopefully. It is a very horrible thing to think of persons being buried alive, put underground by their friends in their coffins while yet there was breath in their bodies. Let us mind that we never bury a soul alive; I am afraid we are in the habit of doing it. We judge of such an one that he will never be converted, all effort would be useless. But we have no right thus to seal a soul's death-warrant or to limit the grace of God. In this prayer all can aid. Some things many of you cannot do, but this all can. And especially when sinners come into calamities. We may win them then. Let us all intercede more. (*C. H. Spurgeon*.)

Vers. 7, 8. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.—*The scattered bones and the uplifted look*:—The text presents in a very vivid way an aspect of death most familiar, but most striking, and it also expresses the thoughts and the earnest prayer that rise in a soul at such a sight. You have walked in an old graveyard and seen the bones scattered at the grave's mouth. There are few whom this sight does not make to think. You remember Hamlet in the graveyard with the skull of Yorick, the king's jester. What a pathos and tenderness are there. With that text in his hand, how touchingly he discourses on our poor fleeting human life. "The flashes of merriment that set the table in a roar"—"the infinite jest"—all come to this. The bones that were so carefully nurtured, that cost so much, are knocked and tossed about and thrown into a heap. Every man who contemplates such a spectacle—bones strewn about as if they were but chips and sticks where men had been chopping wood, must either go away with a dangerous sense of the vanity and worthlessness of human life, or with a spirit made intense, and raised in prayer to the infinite God. I. OUR UNION WITH PAST GENERATIONS AND THE INTENSE REALITY OF OUR PRESENT LIFE. Observe the use of the word "our." He looks at the bones and speaks as if they were partly his own, as if they belonged partly to living men. He identifies himself with those past generations. This human life that we are living now is not a new thing. It is old, very old. I understand all the struggles and wide experience of the past, for it is all in me. That history is mine. It seems as if I had lived then and been a part of all this. It is good for us to look back over the past and feel our identity with our race. It makes us humble. It makes us tender and kindly. It fills us with compassion for the human family. We are ashamed at times and vexed and grieved; but we are also elevated and enlarged as we look back over the generations that are gone. They are gone, and how fleeting they have all

been. It is like a dream to think of all these past generations of men. Their existence seems a shadow. But let us not think our present life shadowy. No; that is not the lesson which the writer of the psalm learnt from the scattered bones. He learnt intensity. "But mine eyes are toward Thee, O God the Lord. In Thee is my trust. Leave not my soul destitute." Life is new and momentous to us. It is as momentous as if it had never been lived before and would never be lived again. When you think steadily of God, it seems as if there were none but God and you standing over against each other. The man who keeps his eyes directed toward God feels life new and fresh, although the bones of many generations are scattered around him. II. IN THE TEXT WE SEE THE LITTLENES AND THE GREATNESS OF MAN. 1. The scattered bones proclaim the littleness of man. These are the remains of thinkers, poets, kings, lovers of men, great inventors, famous disputers. 2. Yet, when I think of man in his weakness turning his eyes to the infinite God; when I reflect that man can think of a boundless and perfect One, that man looks to Him, that he has an eye that sees the invisible God: that he claims the society of the Maker of all worlds, and is restless till he finds it; when I reflect on man as putting his trust in the living God amidst all the mysteries of time; when I think of man standing over the grave where his dearest ones lie, where the ruins of his hopes are, and saying there, "I believe in God; I trust in God; He will not leave my soul destitute"; then I see the greatness of man. III. A MELANCHOLY PROSPECT AND A RISING ABOVE IT. 1. The prospect before us all is this: by and by our bones will be scattered about the grave's mouth. By and by you are forgotten, and the white relics that are thrown up by the shovel of the grave-digger are quite unknown. They have no name. Does it not seem like a horrid dream that we should be all coming to this? Surely it cannot be true. We all know too well that it is true and no dream. 2. There is just one remedy, one antidote, one means of conquering all thoughts of this kind; and the text presents it. "Mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord." I see a glorious Being, infinite, eternal, everywhere present, absolute love and truth and holiness. The fact that I can think of this Being of itself inspires hope and courage. It cannot be that the eyes that look to Him can moulder into dust. Eyes that cannot but look to Him are not doomed to grow dim. He Himself has invited me to look to Him, and the sight of His face gives me joy. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) **Mine eyes are unto Thee, O God.**—*Eyes steadfastly fixed on God.*—The determination to do a certain thing involves the possibility and sometimes the probability of not doing it. The regal faculty of will controls the use of other faculties, which may be exercised in different ways and in different degrees according to its resolve. The desires and aspirations of the soul, like the organs of the body, may be employed in this direction or in that, and of all created beings on earth man has most freedom. Some creatures have eyes adapted for a use which is special and limited. The beast or bird of prey, for example, has for the pupil of its eye a vertical slit, in order that it may look up and down for its victims. The ruminants—oxen, horses, and the like—have a horizontal slit, in order that without special effort they may look for the succulent grass which spreads on each side of them in a fertile meadow. But we have circular pupils—in other words, we have no bias in one direction more than in another, and thus even in these lower capacities God gives us a hint of our responsibility for choice and of our power of will which makes our life a moral probation. Hence you may resolve as the psalmist did, "I will look up," or you may not so resolve. (*A. Rowland, B.A.*)

Ver. 9. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me.—*Prayer to be saved from plots of enemies.*—1. The adversaries of God's people, or persecutors of the righteous for righteousness, are workers of iniquity, let them pretend unto godliness, laws, or justice as they please, for so are they here described. 2. Persecutors of the righteous use not to go so openly to work as to persecute them directly for righteousness, but do make plausible laws and statutes which may seem reasonable to the world, and yet such laws as the godly cannot without sin obey, and so their commands do ensnare the godly. 3. From the plots of persecutors, and in special from iniquity established by a law, none can deliver the godly so, as they shall neither sin nor suffer the penalty, except God alone. (*D. Dickson.*) *Spiritual instinct of danger.*—When the terrible earthquake in the island of Ischia occurred some years since, instinctive presentiment of the catastrophe was given to many of the animals found there. Some time before even

the first shock, strange agitations were felt by them. They seemed to have a prophetic warning so as not to be given over to sudden destruction. God gave even to their inferior life a safeguard in these vague but powerful premonitions. So to His own children He gives full often a "moral instinct" that tells when danger is approaching. An evil-toned look, a corrupt person, a repulsion of dislike at certain surroundings, all are His hint and warning to escape as quickly as we can. (H. O. Mackey.)

PSALM CXLII.

VERS. 1-7. I cried unto the Lord with my voice.—*Religion in the trials of life*.—I. THE TRIALS HERE REPRESENTED. He speaks of himself as—1. Overwhelmed (ver. 3). 2. Walking in snares (ver. 3). 3. Destitute of friends (ver. 4). 4. Greatly reduced (ver. 6). 5. Greatly persecuted (ver. 6). 6. Imprisoned (ver. 7). Ignorance, poverty, affliction, all these imprison. II. THE RELIGION HERE DISPLAYED. 1. Religion manifesting itself in prayer to God. A practical realization of our dependence on our Maker is true prayer, and this is the essence of religion. Prayer is not language, but life: it is the soul turned ever to the Almighty, as the flower to the sun, as the river to the sea. 2. Religion manifesting itself in practical confidence in God. (1) Confidence in His personal superintendence. "Thou knowest;" not merely the path of material universes and spiritual hierarchies, but "my path." (2) Confidence in His protection (ver. 5). (1) "My refuge." What a refuge, vaster than the universe, strong as Omnipotence. (2) "My portion." Everything without Him is nothing worth, nothing with Him is everything, satisfying, glorious. 3. Religion manifesting itself in unbounded trust in His goodness (ver. 7). (*Homilist*.) *David's prayer in the cave*.—"A prayer when he was in the cave." The caves have heard the best prayers. Some birds sing best in cages. I have heard that some of God's people shine brightest in the dark. There is many an heir of heaven who never prays so well as when he is driven by necessity to pray. I. THE CONDITION OF A SOUL UNDER A DEEP SENSE OF SIN. A little while ago you were out in the open field of the world, sinning with a high hand, plucking the flowers which grow in those poisoned vales, and enjoying their deadly perfume. To-night you feel like one who has come out of the bright sunshine and balmy air into a dark, noisome cavern, where you can see but little, where there is no comfort, and where there appears to you to be no hope of escape. 1. Well, now, your first business should be to appeal unto God. Get to your knees, you who feel yourselves guilty; get to your knees, if your hearts are sighing on account of sin. 2. Make a full confession unto the Lord. 3. Acknowledge to God that there is no hope for you but in His mercy. In the cave of your doubts and fears, with the clinging damp of your despair about you, chilled and numbed by the dread of the wrath to come, yet venture to make God in Christ your sole confidence, and you shall yet have perfect peace. 4. Then, further, if you are still in the cave of doubt and sin, venture to plead with God to set you free. You cannot present a better prayer than this one of David's (ver. 7). My old friend, Dr. Alexander Fletcher, seems to rise before me now, for I remember hearing him say to the children that, when men came out of prison, they did praise him who had set them free. He said that he was going down the Old Bailey one day, and he saw a boy standing on his head, turning Catherine wheels, dancing hornpipes, and jumping about in all manner of ways, and he said to him, "What are you at? You seem to be tremendously happy"; and the boy replied, "Ah, old gentleman, if you had been locked up six months, and had just got out, you would be happy, too!" I have no doubt that is very true. When a soul gets out of a far worse prison than there ever was at Newgate, then he must praise "free grace and dying love," and "ring those charming bells" again, and again, and again, and make his whole life musical with the praise of the emancipating Christ. II. THE CONDITION OF A PERSECUTED BELIEVER. Here is a godly man who works in a factory, or a Christian girl who is occupied in book-folding, or some other work where there is a large number employed; such persons will have a sad tale to tell of how they have been hunted about, ridiculed, and scoffed at by ungodly com-

panious. Now you are in the cave. 1. It may be that you are in the condition described here; you hardly know what to do. You are as David was, when he wrote ver. 8. You are like a lamb in the midst of wolves; you know not which way to turn. Well, then, say to the Lord, as David did, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path." Have confidence that, when you know not what to do, He can and will direct your way if you trust Him. 2. In addition to that, it may be that you are greatly tempted. David said, "They privily laid a snare for me." It is often so with young men in a warehouse, or with a number of clerks in an establishment. Young Christian soldiers often have a very rough time of it in the barracks; but I hope that they will prove themselves true soldiers, and not yield an inch to those who would lead them astray. 3. It will be very painful if, in addition to that, your friends turn against you. David said, "There was no man that would know me." Is it so with you? Are your father and mother against you? Cultivate great love to those who, having come into the army of Christ, are much beset by adversaries. They are in the cave. Do not disown them; they are trying to do their best; stand side by side with them. 4. It may be that the worst point about you is that you feel very feeble. You say, "I should not mind the persecution if I felt strong; but I am so feeble." Well, now, always distinguish between feeling strong and being strong. The man who feels strong is weak; the man who feels weak is the man who is strong. III. THE CONDITION OF A BELIEVER WHO IS BEING PREPARED FOR GREATER HONOUR AND WIDER SERVICE. Is it not a curious thing that, whenever God means to make a man great, He always breaks him in pieces first? David was to be king over all Israel. What was the way to Jerusalem for David? What was the way to the throne? Well, it was round by the cave of Adullam. He must go there and be an outlaw and an outcast, for that was the way by which he would be made king. Have none of you ever noticed, in your own lives, that whenever God is going to give you an enlargement, and bring you out to a larger sphere of service, or a higher platform of spiritual life, you always get thrown down? Why is that? 1. If God would make you greatly useful, He must teach you how to pray. 2. The man whom God would greatly honour must always believe in God when he is at his wit's end (ver. 3). Oh, it is easy to trust when you can trust yourself; but when you cannot trust yourself, when you are dead beat, when your spirit sinks below zero in the chill of utter despair, then is the time to trust in God. If that is your case, you have the marks of a man who can lead God's people, and be a comforter of others. 3. In order to greater usefulness many a man of God must be taught to stand quite alone (ver. 4). 4. The man whom God will bless must be the man who delights in God alone (ver. 5). Oh, to have God as our refuge, and to make God our portion! 5. He whom God would use must be taught sympathy with God's poor people (ver. 6). If the Lord means to bless you, and to make you very useful in His Church, depend upon it He will try you. 6. If God means to use you, you must get to be full of praise (ver. 7). If thou art of a cheerful spirit, glad in the Lord, and joyous after all thy trials and afflictions, and if thou dost but rejoice the more because thou hast been brought so low, then God is making something of thee, and He will yet use thee to lead His people to greater works of grace. (D. H. Spurgeon.) *David's prayer in the cave:*—Life and liberty are sweet; but we may pay too dear a price even for the sweetest things. David is now at liberty; he has escaped out of the prison-house of Gath; but he has made his escape and obtained his liberty at much too great a price. For years past the name of Gath had been the proudest name that David's flatterers could speak in his willing ears. But after his disgraceful escape from that city to David's old age, it brought a cloud to his brow and a blush to his cheek to hear the name of Gath. We all have our Gaths. There are people and there are places in our own past life the very name of which, the very neighbourhood of which, throws a bolt into conscience and brings a blush upon the cheek. If we purchase a name, or a place, or an office, or wealth, or even a home, if we purchase any of them at the cost of truth or of justice, or of honour, or self-respect, or fair play to our competitor, we will find, when it is too late, that we have sold ourselves for naught, and have poisoned the very wells of life. So David discovered it to be when, for his liberty, he degraded himself in Gath, deceived Achish, and was hurried out of the land and escaped—a free, indeed, but a dishonoured man—to the Cave of Adullam. But then, it is out of such degradation and shame that weak and evil men rise on stepping-stones of their own transgressions to true

honour and wisdom, to stable godliness and exercised virtue. "I will take sentry myself to-night," said David to his captains one Sabbath evening. Wrapping around him the cloak that Michal had worked for him in happier days, and taking in his hand Goliath's sword, David paced the rocky shelves, and poured out his full heart to God all that Sabbath night. All in the great cave did not sleep, or all at once; and it was nights like these—when their captain shared their dangers and assured their fears, as they heard his step and listened to his deep sweet voice—it was nights like these that did more to turn the rough and ill-used men into heroes and saults than all their sufferings and all their other discipline. David says: "I cried that night unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication." I went out alone, and "I poured out my complaint before Him," and "I showed Him" that night all "my trouble." We are never content. What would we have given for a full report of all that David said about himself and his cause to God that night? We are thankful for this dramatic 142nd psalm; but it would have been a grand piece of devotional literature, aye, of national history, had we had all that David said to God that sentinel night; but what he did say was not fitted or intended for any human ear. We know that from ourselves, from our own sentinel Sabbaths. We too have troubles and complaints that our ministers do not touch upon in all their most searching Sabbath Day exercises, any more than God touched upon David's here in the cave. But David seems only to have one "complaint," and yet it was so blessed to him that it compelled him to spend the hours of the night alone with God. Keep your complaints for God, my afflicted brethren; keep your complaints for God, and for the silence of the night. No one will listen to your trouble but God; no one has time, no one has attention to give to your sorrow but God. You will only expose yourself, and weaken yourself, and humble yourself, if you take your complaints to preoccupied men. Like David, some of you may to-night be labouring and anxious under some complaint against your master, or against some of your relatives; or some of you may have received an insulting, threatening, blackmailing letter, like Hezekiah. I do not say you are not to show that letter to a lawyer; but you must show it first to God, and then, if possible, to a lawyer who knows God. Send all your house to bed to-night before you answer that letter, and again show it to God in the morning before you post it. "I poured out my complaint before God; I showed Him all my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path." "The Lord," says Newton, "is not withdrawn to a great distance from you, His eye is upon you all the time, He sees your case, and does not behold it with indifference, but observes it with attention. He knows and considers your path, and not only so, but He appointed it and all the outs and ins of it. Your trouble began at the hour He appointed; it could not begin before, and He has marked the degree of it to a hair's breadth, and its duration to a moment. He knows, likewise, just how your spirit is affected to-night under the trouble, and He will supply you, if you will take it—He will supply grace and strength in due season, and as He sees they are needful. Therefore, hope in God; for you, like David, shall yet praise Him." To be imprisoned by God was better to David than to be set free by man. In David's best moments, as sometimes when sentinel in Adullam, David felt that God's prison-house was a very hermitage, sanctuary, a grand pavilion, as he signifies elsewhere, into which God takes the soul to show it His "marvellous lovingkindness." David had broken out of God's prison in Gath before the time, but he has never ceased to repent of that insane act. And if at any time he felt the banishment of Adullam—and he had a thousand thoughts during these lonely hours—he soon recollected who held the keys; and, though the door had been opened, he would not have escaped. God Himself conspicuously delivered David henceforth. God is David's jailor, and whatever time David feels his close detention, he betakes himself anew, in all his guilt, and lies, and playing the madman and the fool to earnest, believing, and waiting prayer: "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name"; and then, as the new day broke in the east, and the shades of the night fled away, the day-star of hope arose in David's heart, and the present prayer seems almost to be prophetic. He foresaw the Lord not only as his refuge in every future time of trouble, but also as his alone "portion in the land of the living"; he saw himself set free from every prison and from every persecutor, with his "righteousness brought forth as the light, and his judgment as the noonday." "Bring my soul out of prison" was his last word to God, as the day broke in the east, "that I may

praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me." And how well was that hope fulfilled to David, how bountifully did God deal with David, and how hath the righteous compassed David about, as rapt listeners compass round the sweetest music, as rejoicing fellow-worshippers compass round a miracle of Divine grace. "There was no man that would know me," complained David in the day of his deep dejection. But all men whose knowledge is worth the having know David now. All righteous men compass him about now, and rejoice over him that his God, and their God, brought "his soul out of prison," and dealt so bountifully with him. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.—*Affliction and consolation.*—I. THE DEJECTION WHICH HE FELT. 1. A painful consciousness of past guilt. 2. An oppressive endurance of present trouble. 3. A keen anticipation of future ills. II. THE REFUGE THAT HE SOUGHT. "Then Thou knewest my path." It supposes that God was consulted about his path, that the case was distinctly brought before God in prayer, and that the case was one which would bear to be submitted to the Divine inspection. III. THE MERCY THAT HE FOUND. God did bring his soul out of prison. Every wish was accomplished (*Ps. xviii.*). 1. By the kindness of friends (*1 Sam. xxiii. 16*). 2. By promises of His Word. 3. By events in Providence. 4. By consolations of His Spirit. 5. By translating from earth to heaven. (*S. Thodey.*) *A memorial of past troubles.*—I. A HUMBLE APPEAL. "Thou knewest my path,"—Thou knewest that my cause was just, and the steps which I took for obtaining redress were holy. 1. The path of prayer (*ver. 1*). 2. The way of faith,—choosing God for his portion, trusting Him as his refuge, expecting bountiful treatment at His hands (*vers. 5, 7*). Without this choice of God as our portion, and confidence in Him, prayer is mere selfishness, and has nothing to distinguish it from the cries of the lost. II. A CONTRITE CONFESSION. Thou knewest how impatient I was even when professing meek submission. I could bear the great trial of Saul's persecution, but not the lighter one of Nabal's churlish insolence. Thou knewest the crookedness of my path, when by false pretences I evaded an enemy and deceived a friend; using sinful artifice where I should have relied in truth upon the God of truth. III. A THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LORD'S GRACIOUS CONDUCT TOWARDS DAVID WHEN HIS SPIRIT WAS OVERWHELMED. "Then Thou knewest my path:" Thou didst approve my course; and therefore didst support and comfort me under my trials. But how much greater occasion has the believer in Christ to make this thankful acknowledgment! Conclusion—1. Let the children of God lay their account for sufferings and sorrows here below: heavy sorrows and dreadful sufferings, it may be. Such things are appointed for us, because needful, as is the furnace to separate the dross from the pure ore. 2. All trouble should lead us to God—not from Him. There is in the blessed God health and cure for all diseases of the mind; balm in Gilead, and a never-failing Physician there. 3. Let us all cherish the thought that God knows our path; in the fullest sense of the words knows our every step. To the sincere Christian, to the upright soul this truth is full of comfort. (*C. Hodgson, M.A.*) *In the way where I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*—*The dangers of youth.*—I see before me a class of young men about to go forth into the world. I know their way will be strewn with dangers. By all the love I bear them I am constrained to point out to them some of their perils. I. THE DANGERS OF YOUTH. 1. A general exposedness to temptation. Full of passions easily excited, and warm as the current of their youthful blood; led on by an imagination as active as their youthful limbs and mostly unchecked by experience,—forming images which are constantly mistaken for realities,—which inflame and mislead the passions and bewilder the judgment; set down as strangers in the midst of a world whose objects and inhabitants present destructive blandishments to their inexperience,—whose beauties and amusements, in the absence of the love of God, are fatally adapted to their youthful tastes; how can they escape? at least, how dreadfully exposed are they. 2. Under all these exposures they are constantly forming habits, as uncontrollable and despotic as an Eastern sultan, and harder to be dethroned. Through inexperience and incaution, and the impetuosity of their youthful passions, they are liable to become petrified in evil habits, as fixed as the coral reefs of the ocean. 3. Young men, as they enter into business, are in danger of settling down into the love of the world, into views and aims confined

to themselves and their own circle, separating them from the great republic of man, and keeping them from employing their powers and their property in promoting the happiness of the human family. 4. Another danger to which young men are exposed is indolence in action; betaking themselves to no profession, or pursuing it saunteringly, unsteadily, and to little effect; wasting life in idleness or in pleasure; in either case enervating the man in both body and soul, and making him a burden to himself and a disgraceful cumber of the ground. 5. Young men are exposed to theological errors of every form and every degree of criminality and danger, from the slightest obliquity respecting a positive institution, up to blaspheming infidelity. II. THE DEFENCES TO BE SET UP AGAINST THEM. 1. In regard to the last-mentioned danger my advice to you is, first of all, settle your minds on the question whether the Bible is a revelation from God, and such a revelation as will guide believers into all truth unmixed with error; in order that your faith may rest on the testimony of God and not on the authority of men, you ought to find the fullest evidence that God has spoken, and spoken in a way to furnish a safe and sure rule of faith and practice. All this being settled in the affirmative, you ought to lose no time in grounding yourselves on a system of doctrines drawn from the obvious meaning of that book, supported by the general analogy of faith. Subject your reason to the Divine teachings. Put it to school to Christ as a humble pupil. 2. Avoid all kinds of professional business and all occasions which are specifically fraught with temptation. 3. Avoid all connections with bad men, and, as far as possible, with men whose influence would tend to warp you from the truth, or from a correct course of judging or of acting. 4. Vigilantly guard against the beginning of every evil habit, in heart, intellect, or conduct. By watchfulness it is easy to prevent the first irregularity; but who can vanquish an evil habit? 5. Let your reading be safe. Not many novels, not a perpetual round of angry politics, not a constant poring upon theological errors. 6. Let it be a settled rule to make some advance in knowledge every day, and every day to bring to pass something for the good of mankind. 7. Establish the settled habit of prayer. Without prayer you have no security against one of these dangers. Without Christ you can do nothing. These rules you will find it hard to keep with a fallen nature, and impossible unless you observe another; which leads me to say—8. That in the outset you must devote your hearts and souls and lives to the service of God. Without doing this you will not pray effectually, and of course will have no security against one of these dangers. Without this you will be the enemies of God: and what security against any evil can an enemy of God have in a world which He governs? (*E. D. Griffin, D.D.*) *Hidden snares*:—Recently it was announced, as one of the latest discoveries, that a kind of telescope had been constructed which would enable any one looking through it to see far away down into quiet seas, and gaze on the wrecked and sunken ships that lie there. If only we had such an instrument in the spirit realm which we could put into the hands of men and women infatuated with sin, and so show them the moral wrecks of even last year! What a gift for a young man or woman as a permanent warning against the perils of life—the opening of their eyes to the devices of the destroyer! (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 4. No man cared for my soul.—*God's care for each life*:—With normal natures happiness begins with the thought that God has time to care for each life. In a world where no grain of sand escapes Nature's notice, where there are no runaway stars or suns, where a Divine Ruler leads a beautiful world out of darkness, fire-mist, and chaos, man cannot support the thought that there is no place for him in God's loving providence. So momentous are those events named a betrothal, a marriage, the death of babe, or mother, or statesman, that men wish to associate them with a Divine Friend. Indeed, the most bitter cry that ever arises from human lips is this one: "No man cared for my soul." In a world full of conflict, full of labour, whose fruitage is often sorrow, man fulfils his journey across the wilderness towards the promised land, supported by the thought that the angels of God's providence go before him. Standing under the midnight sky, looking into the realm where stars twinkled and suns blazed, Job found it easy to believe that man moves forward under the convoy of an intimate Friend. From the thought that the millions of orbs making up the community of the sky are Divinely controlled, the mind passes easily to the larger thought that God is carrying individual men and nations upward toward a sublime culmination. But if the scholar finds a unifying power in the heavens, the

historian finds a providence in the history of nations, in that each country has its special task, each generation its own contribution. For multitudes this great truth of God's overruling care has been eclipsed by reason of the vastness of the universe. At one time the East stood close beside the West. Now the telescope has crowded back the horizon. In Newton's day the sun was known to be ninety millions of miles away. To-day, in comparison, the distance to the fixed stars, the distance to our sun is like the distance to the threshold of one's next door neighbour. Science has enlarged the universe in space, but it has enlarged the soul of man a thousandfold more. The new science has caused the mind to rise up, clothed with infinite majesty and beauty. Earth knows only one thing vast enough and precious enough to justify an overruling providence and care—the human soul. Can a human mind shape the innumerable threads into one beautiful whole, and the infinite God be unable to control fifteen hundred millions of men, leading them toward one great purpose of happiness and righteousness? The laws of light and heat, the laws of gravity and soil are so delicately related as to encourage the thought that all the mechanism of the starry world is arranged for the embroidering of violets upon the lap of spring. The vastness of Nature does but enlarge the scope of God's providential purpose. The thought, God cares for man, has also suffered injury through the over-emphasis of the reign of law. Science exhibits man as moving forward enmeshed in laws of heat and light and gravity. By law the winter recedes, by law the summer advances, by law the harvests are ripened, by law the clouds are lifted, by law the rivers are filled. Soon men began to spell the word Law with a capital "L," and Force with a capital "F." Gently law and force led the Infinite Being to the edge of the universe, and bowed Him out of existence. Men decided that law could build the world if it was spelled with large letters instead of small. But nothing could have been more foolish than this over-emphasis of law. Merchants do, indeed, have one law, by which the office opens at eight, and another law by which it is closed at six, but if some foolish person should think that these rules which the merchant has enacted have built up his trade so that it is no longer necessary to have a merchant or an inventor, and all the businesses get along by the rules and need no presiding mind, we should have that which would answer precisely with the amazing thought that the laws of nature have done away with the necessity of God. Man has certain habits that are the rules of his life. God's habits are Nature's laws. And but for their stability the universe would be without flexibility. Thus science, that once threatened to do away with Providence, has now, through the reign of law, established providence. For laws are flexible, not alone for God, but for man, who, through them, makes this world a fruitful and beautiful paradise. Now, for the individual life, how unspeakably precious this declaration of God's loving care! In hours of weakness, when baffled and beaten, when man perceives how vast is the sphere in which he is moving, how mighty are the forces whirling about him, he yearns for some power strong enough and wise enough to overrule events, and from defeat lead forth to victory. It is not enough that there is a providence over summer and winter, by which the barn and storehouse are made to overflow. In the midst of the fierce strife man cries out, "No one cares for my soul." Nature has no personal friends. On the battlefield a thousand men may lie in the orchards and thickets, weltering in their life blood, but the boughs heed not the prayers, the trees shed no tears. In the olden times, when the knight went into battle, he carried with him the name and face of his beloved one. One look upon that face armed him for his conflict. Dying, upon that face his last look fell. It is said that man's name is written upon God's hand. With the coming of each sun comes the loving providence, and after each day's going the great God remains. Happy is the man who feels that God cares for him, that he journeys forward under Divine convoy, that his Father is Regent of universal wisdom and represents the whole commonwealth of love, and commands all nature to serve His child. Such a man is weaponed against every enemy, and is invincible. He who ever carries with him this sense of God's loving providence is fitted to pass through fire, through flood, through all the thunder of life's battle. God cares for you—then you cannot live too long, and you cannot die too soon, for heaven ever lies all about you. God cares for man—then from every storm there is a harbour. (*N. D. Hillis.*) *A bad social state*:—I. A wrong social state. Each taken up with himself, and none concerned for his neighbours, is manifestly wrong. 1. It is unnatural. The constitution of our nature,—endowed as we are with social longings and sympathies.

and with faculties suited to render service one to another,—proves the unnaturalness of social indifference. What is morally abnormal is morally wrong. 2. It is unrelational. We are all the offspring of the same common Father, all united by the bonds of consanguinity. Indifference, therefore, is manifestly wrong. 3. It is un-Christian. Christ lived and died for our race, and His apostles exhorted us to care for others rather than ourselves. II. A MISERABLE social state. Though there may be much in a man's temperament, character, and procedure to alienate him from others,—he may be unsocial, irascible, and grossly immoral,—all this does not justify his fellows for utterly disregarding him. In truth it forms a strong reason why they should be interested in him. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *The care of souls*.—This psalm is the last one of eight which are, not unreasonably, associated with the persecution of David by Saul in the south country of Judah (see the heading). It was an anxious, lonely, wearisome time; all the harder to bear because David knew he was innocent of any evil intentions concerning the Lord's anointed. But it was, in some respects, a best time for David. Then there was a great crying after God. In his despondency, when everything seemed to be going wrong with him, David took up the idea that nobody really cared for him. And when a man gets into that mood and mind he is in grave danger of becoming reckless. If David had gone on to say, "And even God does not care for me," he would have become altogether desperate, and would have said, "Then why should I care for myself? Why should I any longer try to be true, and good, and faithful? Why not let things go? Nobody cares for my soul." By his "soul" David would mean his bodily life; and the history tells us that, just matching the exclamation of this psalm, towards the end of the persecution spoken of, David bitterly and hopelessly exclaimed, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." He was wrong in that. Some one did care for his soul, both in the lower sense of his "life," and in the higher sense of "his spiritual welfare." Taking the word "soul" in its higher sense, there are many around us who may use the words of the text. I. **CARING FOR SOULS IS NOT THE WORK OF THE WORLD.** Caring for one another in all the ranges of the material and the moral is the world's work. Our interest in each other as worldly men and women is limited to physical well-being, social comfort, educational progress, and moral goodness. Not until man is quickened himself with the higher spiritual life is he in the least likely to concern himself about the possibilities of the higher spiritual life for others. There is such a thing as seeking the welfare of the race. There have always been philanthropists moved by "the enthusiasm of humanity." But their efforts do not go beyond the removal of disabilities, and reformation of abuses, and uplifting in the social and intellectual planes. But man is no mere body with a material environment. God has "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Man has become a "living soul." He is a spirit, and we must find spirit forces if we would deal with his most real necessities. II. **CARING FOR SOULS IS THE PROPER WORK OF THE CHURCH.** From the Church's point of view men are perishing; they are dying in their sins, and she, and she alone, has the evangel that can save the perishing and quicken the dead. The Church of Christ may do, and ought to do, all that the philanthropist would do; but it must do more. The Church exists to do just what its Divine Lord did, seek and save the lost. Its work is to devise and carry through schemes for the salvation of souls, and whatever form its agencies and efforts may take, this, and nothing less than this, must be at the heart of them. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The reproachful outcry*.—We are all sympathetic with physical disaster, but how little sympathy for spiritual woes! There are men in this house who have come to mid-life who have never yet been once personally accosted about their eternal welfare. I. **UNSATISFIED LONGINGS.** You feel as you go out day by day in the tug and jostle of life that it is every man for himself. You can endure the pressure of commercial affairs, and would consider it almost impertinent for any one to ask you whether you are making or losing money. But there have been times when you would have drawn your cheque for thousands of dollars if some one would only help your soul out of its perplexities. There are questions about your higher destiny that ache, and distract, and agonize you at times. You sometimes think till your head aches about great religious subjects. You wonder if the Bible is true, how much of it is literal and how much is figurative law, if Christ be God, if there is anything like retribution, if you are immortal, if a resurrection will ever take place, what the occupation of your departed kindred is, what you will be 10,000 years from now. With a cultured placidity of countenance you are on fire with agitations of soul. Oh, this solitary

anxiety of your whole lifetime. You have passed up and down the aisles of churches with men who knew that you had no hope of heaven, and talked about the weather and about your physical health, and about everything but that concerning which you most wanted to hear them speak—viz. your everlasting spirit. Times without number you have felt in your heart, if you have not uttered it with your lips, "No man cares for my soul." II. **MAN'S EXTREMITY.** There have been times when you were especially pliable on the great subject of religion. It was so, for instance, after you had lost your property. Everything seems to be against you. The bank against you. Your creditors against you. Your friends suddenly become critical against you. All the past against you. All the future against you. You make reproachful outcry: "No man cares for my soul!" There was another occasion when all the doors of your heart swung open for sacred influences. A bright light went out in your household. Within three or four days there were compassed sickness, death obsequies. A few formal, perfunctory words of consolation were uttered on the stairs before you went to the grave; but you wanted some one to come and talk over the whole matter, and recite the alleviations, and decipher the lessons of the dark bereavement. No one came. Many a time you could not sleep until two or three o'clock in the morning, and then your sleep was a troubled dream, in which were re-enacted all the scene of sickness, and parting, and dissolution. Oh, what days and nights they were! No man seemed to care for your soul. There was another occasion when your heart was very susceptible. There was a great awakening. There were hundreds of people who pressed into the Kingdom of God; some of them acquaintances, some business associates, yes, perhaps some members of your own family were baptized by sprinkling or immersion. Christian people thought of you, and they called at your store, but you were out on business. They stopped at your house; you had gone around to spend the evening. They sent a kindly message to you; somehow, by accident, you did not get it. The lifeboat of the Gospel swept through the surf, and everybody seemed to get in but you. Everything seemed to escape you. One touch of personal sympathy would have pushed you into the Kingdom of God. III. **A STARTLING REVELATION.** Instead of this total indifference all about you in regard to your soul, I have to tell you that heaven, earth, and hell are after your immortal spirit—earth to cheat it, hell to destroy it, heaven to redeem it. Although you may be a stranger to the Christians in this house, their faces would glow and their hearts would bound if they saw you make one step heavenward. No one cares for your soul! Why, in all the ages there have been men whose entire business was soul saving. In this work Munson went down under the knives of the cannibals whom he had come to save, and Robert McCheyne preached himself to death by thirty years of age, and John Bunyan was thrown into a dungeon in Bedfordshire, and Jehudi Ashman endured all the malarias of the African jungle; and there are hundreds and thousands of Christian men and women now who are praying, preaching, living, dying to save souls. IV. **A STUPENDOUS INTERVENTION.** No one cares for your soul! Have you heard how Christ feels about it? I know it was only five or six miles from Bethlehem to Calvary, the birthplace and the deathplace of Christ; but who can tell how many miles it was from the throne to the manger? From the first infant step to the last step of manhood on the sharp spike of Calvary a journey for you. Oh, how He cared for your soul! V. **THE FATHER'S PATIENCE.** A young man might as well go off from home and give his father and mother no intimation as to where he has gone, and, crossing the seas, sitting down in some foreign country, cold, sick, and hungry, and lonely, saying: "My father and mother don't care anything about me." Do not care anything about him! Why, that father's hair has turned grey since his son went off. He has written to all the consuls in the foreign ports, asking about that son. Does not the mother care anything about him? He has broken her heart. She has never smiled since he went away. All day long, and almost all night, she keeps asking: "Where is he? Where can he be?" Oh, do not his father and mother care for him? You go away from your heavenly Father, and you think He does not care for you because you will not even read the letters by which He invites you to come back, while all heaven is waiting, and waiting, and waiting for you to return. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The duty of caring for souls:*—I. **WHAT IT IS TO CARE FOR THE SOULS OF OTHERS.** 1. A deep and heartfelt conviction of its worth. The soul is spiritual in its nature, noble in its capacities, and eternal in its duration. 2. A deep and thorough sense of the danger to which it is exposed. 3. Tender solicitude for its

welfare. 4. Zealous exertion for their salvation. II. ON WHOM THIS DUTY DEVOLVES. 1. On the heads of families. 2. On all the members of the Church. 3. Pre-eminently on ministers. III. THE GREAT EVIL OF NEGLECTING THIS DUTY.

1. It is cruel. A man would be considered cruel who saw one of the "heasts that perish" in danger, and did not attempt its rescue. He is cruel who, having it in his power to relieve the necessitous, or save the perishing, does not do it. But the cruelty of the man who, knowing the danger of souls, does not care for them, is beyond expression. 2. It is ungrateful. If others had not cared for us, we must have perished. 3. It is criminal. 4. It is fatal. Fatal to those who are perishing, and fatal to those who have a name to live; fatal to all genuine piety, fatal to all ardent love to the Saviour's cause, fatal to zealous exertions for others, but especially fatal to our own souls. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *A cry from the depths*.—I. A STRIKING TESTIMONY. 1. Man has a soul. 2. Man's soul is of priceless worth (Matt. xvi. 26). 3. Man's soul requires to be cared for. It needs—(1) Light (Prov. xix. 2; Hos. iv. 6; John iii. 16-21; 1 John i. 5-7). (2) Freedom (John viii. 32; Rom. vi. 12-18; Ps. cxix. 32).

(3) Holy nurture (John vi. 51; Heb. vi. 1, 2; 2 Pet. i. 5-8). (4) Christian help and companionship (Eccl. iv. 9, 10; Gal. vi. 1, 2; Rom. xii. 10; Heb. x. 24, 25; 1 Cor. xii. 12-26). II. A MOURNFUL COMPLAINT. 1. Want of sympathy (Matt. xxvii. 4; Ps. lxi. 20; Amos i. 11; Matt. xviii. 33; Eph. iv. 32). 2. Unbrotherly neglect (Deut. xx. iii. 7; Gen. iv. 9; Isa. lviii. 7-12; Gal. vi. 2; Ex. iii. 18). 3. Heart-killing repulse. III. A HEART-TOUCHING APPEAL. 1. To man. Pity. Sympathy. Brotherly help (Acts xvi. 9). 2. To God. No one cries to God in vain. The poor may look to the rich in vain, but God is the helper of the poor (Ps. x. 14). (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *Carelessness for the soul reproved*.—I. HOW THE SOUL IS USUALLY REGARDED. 1. How many a child may say, "My parents cared not for my soul. They were attentive to my body, and to my bodily health and preservation. They sought my temporal comfort; they got me bread to eat and raiment to put on. They felt for me when I lay sick upon my bed; they spared no trouble to do me service and to get me well again; but they cared not for my soul." 2. How many a servant may say this? A servant is as capable of knowledge, of holiness, and of happiness as a master. "God is no respecter of persons." 3. How many a neighbour may say this. If a neighbour meet with some sad accident, or what we usually call a misfortune, what a concern do we all feel for him! but who cares for his soul? who feels concerned for that?

II. WHY ESPECIALLY IT SHOULD BE CARED FOR. 1. Because it is the noblest part of the creation. It is in what regards the soul that "man is but a little lower than the angels." It is the soul that reasons, hopes, fears, recollects, anticipates. It is the soul that is imperishable: the body returns to the dust again; the spirit to Him who gave it. 2. On account of its vast capabilities. 3. Because of the price paid for its redemption—the blood of Christ. 4. Because if lost it will remain lost and unredeemed for ever. (*W. Mudge.*) *Isolation of soul*.—I. WHEN THIS COMPLAINT MAY BE MADE. 1. When they are at a loss with respect to soul concerns, and have none to instruct them in difficulties nor advise them (Isa. xli. 28). 2. When they have wandered out of the way, and have none to reprove them. 3. When they are visited with affliction, either in their persons or families, and have none to pray with or for them. As secret, so social prayer is a duty; and intercession is a necessary part of both. 4. When they are under distress and anguish of mind, and have none to comfort them. II. IMPROVEMENT. 1. In passing this censure, let us take care that we be not mistaken. Let us not give way to groundless jealousies, or be suspicious of our friends without a cause. 2. If none care for our welfare, what a mercy is it that God has excited in us a care of our own souls; that we are not in that stupid, insensible state in which we once were, and perhaps continued for many years! If others neglect our souls, it should more and more awaken our serious concern and anxious solicitude about them. 3. What a still greater mercy it is that God cares for our souls. 4. In order to avoid the charge in our text, let us not fall into the contrary extreme; and whilst we are busily concerned about others' souls, let us not neglect our own. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Caring for the souls of others*.—If we think only of ourselves, of our own comfort, or convenience, or safety, our selfishness is most inexcusable. It is not only vast regions, dark and dead, through the debasing influences of heathenism which beckon onward the philanthropist and the Christian to help, but there is an important work to be done at our very doors.

1. Take the case of some poor child that you know of; a child left to the tender

moroses of an ignorant, heartless parent; a child suffered to run at large without even the appearance of control. This neglected child might be brought to Sunday-school and church; might be taught to shun even petty dishonesty as a sin; might be kept from speaking the language of demons; might at least be shielded from the more alluring forms of temptation. 2. You are on friendly and familiar terms with many irreligious people, over whom you might easily exercise some influence for good. They visit often at your houses, and you chat with them daily on the street. If all of us who claim to be Christians would show by our conduct that we really cared for the souls of those who are living unmindful of their obligations to God, our labour of love would be wonderfully blessed. 3. Even when people have become members of God's family, the Church, they need and long for the kindly sympathy of those who belong to the household of faith. 4. There are those who, having learned by sad experience the folly and wretchedness of a life of sin, would gladly return into better ways if they only knew how to accomplish it. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Neglected souls*:—Vedius Pollio was a wealthy and luxurious Roman patrician. In his magnificent villa at Puteoli there reclined one day at the epicure's sumptuous table, with many other distinguished guests, the Emperor Augustus. A slave, waiting upon the company, let fall a costly crystal vase, shattering it in fragments upon the mosaic pavement. Instantly the unfortunate wretch fell at the imperial feet, piteously pleading for his life. "Why?" exclaimed the master of the world; "what danger to thy life?" The trembling suppliant replied that he expected, according to his lord's custom in such cases, to be cast into his fish-pond as food for his lampreys. A cloud of wrath darkened the monarch's brow; and, fixing his keen eye sternly upon his host, Augustus arose, seized a staff, and dashed to pieces all the crystal ware before him, in a terrific tone exclaiming—"Know thou, O miscreant and murderer! that one human life is worth more than all the crystal vases in the world!" This must have happened while One was walking the hills and vales of Palestine, who, had He been present, might have told the haughty Roman of something far more valuable even than human life. He teaches us that the soul is worth more than the earth and all its material contents, and that there is nothing in all the Creator's visible works to be named as its approximate equivalent in value. In creation the body was first constructed, and then tenanted by the "living." The soul is the life of the body, and the body is the servant of the soul. The soul uses the body as its vehicle of thought and feeling, its means of communication with the outer world; while the body ministers to the soul with all its members and organs, bringing it intelligence from all quarters, and enlarging and multiplying its joys. This, then, is the primary excellence of the soul—its spirituality; to which we must add its splendid intellectual faculties, which render it so far superior to all mere animal existences, and capable of indefinite progress and improvement. Its powers of reasoning, comparing, combining, abstracting, analyzing, classifying, imagining the unseen, forecasting the future, recalling the past with all the vividness of present reality, creating for itself ideal scenes amidst which it moves as in a fairy realm—these are strictly human faculties in which it is approximated by no other order of creatures within the range of our observation. And to the growth of these faculties we can assign no limits, and none to the knowledge which the soul may acquire by their exercise. But far loftier than its intellectual are its moral capabilities and capacities. It has a living conscience, and is responsible to a divine law. There are voices within which proclaim its immortality. There are hopes and longings which reach into other worlds. There are instincts which earth cannot satisfy, and faculties which time cannot mature. Will Jehovah cut short the career of a creature capable of eternal progress? Does He delight in such abortive creations? Man is at present but in embryo, at best but in chrysalis, and death is only a change in the mode and the circumstances of his being. For this glorious truth we are indebted to the Holy Book. All Divine revelation proceeds upon the principle of man's admitted immortality. What wonder that God cares for it, Christ dies for it, angels watch over it, and demons strive to control its destiny! And how ought you and I to estimate its value, tremble for its danger, labour for its rescue, and rejoice in its salvation! And what a fearful accusation against us is the voice of a world's sins and sorrows continually crying in the ear of God—"No man careth for my soul"! May no accusing voice in judgment, no wail from the ranks of the reprobate and the ruined ever reach our ears—"No man cared for my soul!" (*J. Cross, D.D.*) "No man cared for my

soul":—What an amount of pathos is contained in this expression! How and that any human being should ever have occasion to utter it! As long as any Christianity is left in the world, as long as common humanity even has not wholly deserted it, no one, we should think, would be so utterly forlorn as to be obliged to say, "No man cared for my soul." That the sensual and the worldly should not care for the souls of their brethren might not indeed surprise us; but that Christians should not is truly wonderful. If we feel it a duty to feed the hunger and clothe the nakedness of the body, much more should we endeavour to feed moral hunger. But there will be other voices heard on that day uttering expressions of gratitude to those who have cared for their souls; for the word spoken in season which determined the undecided will in favour of right; for the wise counsel, the pure precepts of love, the faithful rebuke, the cordial sympathy, the kind encouragement which have turned many to righteousness. They will say, "We were without hope, and you gave it to us. We were living in godlessness and sin, and your affectionate warnings opened our eyes to the perils of our condition. You came to us in our doubts with cheerful encouragement, in our despair to lead us to look to God. You have taught us the true value of life; you have set us in the right way. Others have done much for our outward prosperity, and we thank them; but you have made our souls alive, and you are the greatest of our benefactors." Why, then, do we not have more care for souls? It is partly because the god of this world has blinded our hearts; because, not being spiritual, we do not feel the reality of spiritual things; because we do not feel the infinite value of souls, the terrible evil of sin; because we have not faith in ourselves, in our own power of doing good by anything we can say; because we have not faith that God will help us to say what we ought; and because, moreover, we sometimes say as Cain did, "Am I my brother's keeper?" though in a different spirit from that in which he said it. We carry independence in religion too far, till it becomes mere individualism; and we neglect the great law of love, which binds soul to soul, and ordains that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. There is still another feeling which prevents us from direct attempts to help each other's soul,—the feeling that more can be done indirectly than directly; that we can do more for others by the influence of a good life and good example than by direct exhortation or advice. There is, indeed, great weight in this consideration. Certainly one way, and perhaps the most important way, in which we can help the souls of others is by manifesting good principles, living convictions, helpfulness to right, a tender and loving humanity in our own lives. Yet I cannot but think that direct influence might often with advantage be added to indirect; and that, without urging upon reluctant minds spiritual considerations, without prematurely pulling open the folded end of the spiritual life, without violating the sacred retirement and holy privacy of the interior soul, we may yet, if we are watchful, find many opportunities of saying words of direct counsel, which shall come at the right time, shall fall into the right place, and be like seed, to bear thirty, fifty, and a hundredfold. But though Christians are not faithful to this duty, though their love grows cold, and though many are obliged to say, "No man cares for my soul," yet there is One who always cares for the souls of all His children. God cares for souls evermore. All souls are His, and He will not let them go without many an effort to draw them up to Himself. He sends many blessed influences, He sends many holy providences ever to those who are neglected and forsaken by man. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*) *The soul neglected*:—"Two things a master commits to his servant's care," saith one, "the child and the child's clothes." It will be but a poor excuse for the servant to say at his master's return, "Sir, here are all the child's clothes neat and clean, but the child is lost!" Much so will be the account that many will give to God of their souls and bodies at the great day. "Lord, here is my body; I was very careful for it. I neglected nothing that belonged to its content and welfare; but for my soul, that is lost and cast away for ever. I took little thought and care about it." (*J. Flavel.*)

Ver. 5. *Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*—*God in Christ, the believer's refuge and portion*:—I. CONCERNING THE REFUGE. 1. God in Christ is the refuge itself (Isa. iv. 6; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12; John i. 14; Isa. xxxii. 2; Deut. xxxiii. 27). 2. This refuge is by a legal destination a refuge for lost mankind (2 Cor. v. 19; John iii. 14–16; Titus iii. 4). (1) For the oppressed (Ps. ix. 9; lxxii. 4; Rom. xvi. 20). (2) For outcasts (Ps. cxlii. 4, 5). (3) For

debtors (Isa. xxv. 4). (4) For criminals liable to death by the law (Heb. vi. 18). 8. The gate of this refuge through which sinners enter is the vail of the flesh of Christ, rent, torn, and opened to let in the guilty creature unto Jehovah as a refuge (Heb. x. 19, 20). 4. The covert in this refuge is the righteousness of Christ (Jer. xxiii. 6; Phil. iii. 9). (1) The satisfaction of Christ's death and sufferings (1 John ii. 2). (2) The righteousness of Christ's life and conversation, who obeyed the commands of the law as a public person, as well as He suffered the penalty of it in that capacity (Rom. v. 19). (3) The holiness of His birth and nature (Heb. vii. 26). 5. The several apartments in this refuge for the various cases of the refugees are all the attributes and perfections of God the Lord Jehovah (Prov. xviii. 10). 6. The boundaries of this refuge are the everlasting covenant (Ps. xlv. 7). 7. The sinner's entering into the refuge is by faith. II. CONCERNING THE PORTION. 1. The same God in Christ, who is the refuge for poor sinners, is also the portion for them to live by. 2. God in Christ is what one may live on (Ps. xvi. 5, 6). In Him man has a dwelling-place (Ps. xc. 1); raiment (Rev. iii. 18); meat and drink (John vi. 55); and all in a word (Phil. iv. 18; 2 Cor. vi. 10). And hereto belongs the sanctification of the soul in the beginning, progress, and consummation of it, as that which is for the perfecting of the soul (1 Cor. i. 80). (T. Boston, D.D.)

Ver. 7. **Bring my soul out of prison.**—*The soul in prison*:—I. THE PRISON INTO WHICH SO MANY SOULS ARE CAST. David said, "In the way wherein I walked, the hunters laid a snare for me." No one had better intentions than David; and I believe that nobody has better intentions than ourselves. But the best of wishes will do us little benefit unless we have brave resolves. To intend well is one thing; but if the intention stop short of action, it is worth nothing. When we intend well without practical resolution, it seems as if a trap were laid for us. We are oftenest caught in what seems our strongest point because we do not guard and watch ourselves where we are unconscious of weakness. Therefore, we all need to take heed lest we also be caught tripping. David further said, "The hunters are stronger than I." What makes our enemies strong? It is one's own weakness, the result of sin. David again cries, "Bring my soul out of prison!" It is a blessed thing when a man feels that his inclination to sin is like having his soul in prison. What man who is worthy of the name would not prefer liberty to bondage? II. THE WAY TO GET ONE'S SOUL OUT OF PRISON. We read in Bunyan's marvellous parable that when Christian had been beaten sore by a giant and thrust into Doubting Castle, he gave himself up to misery and despair. But one day he said, "Why, what a fool am I to stay here in all this wretchedness, when I have in my breast a key to unlock the gates of Doubting Castle." And taking out the key he found it fitted the lock, and he escaped. It was, says Bunyan, a key called Promise. This should teach us that when we seek in God's Word and find His promises, they are to us as a key to open the door of the prison into which our sins have thrust us. Would you have this priceless, this wonderful key always within your reach? Then hold on to God's promises, which apply to every individual case. (W. Birch.) *Man, morally considered*:—I. MAN'S MORAL IMPRISONMENT. All sinners are in a state of bondage. They are "spirits in prison." Like fallen angels they are in "chains of darkness." 1. A state of darkness. Justice shuts out the light from the prisoner in the cell. How morally benighted is the unregenerate soul! Having "the understanding darkened." 2. A state of confinement. Materialism—intemperance—avarice—prejudice—unholy associations and habits manacle his faculties. 3. A state of criminality. A prisoner is under sentence of condemnation. So every sinner is a moral criminal, condemned alike by God and by his own conscience. II. MAN'S MORAL LIBERATION. "Bring my soul out of prison." 1. A consciousness of its wretched condition. "O wretched man that I am," etc. How can I become free? Who can level those massive walls, who can break those fetters? 2. A consciousness that God alone can deliver. "Bring my soul." He feels he cannot emancipate himself, nor can his fellow-men effect his deliverance. Hence to Him he looks who came "to preach deliverance to the captive," etc. III. MAN'S MORAL MISSION. "That I may praise Thy name." 1. Deep in the heart of all men is the feeling of obligation to worship God. 2. Moral misery consists in this, the soul feeling its obligation to worship, and yet unable to do so through the enthralling influence of its corruptions. Hence the text may be regarded as the prayer of every sin-convinced soul. (1) I must worship Thee; my conscience urges this as an essential

condition of my peace. (2) I cannot worship Thee in my state of moral captivity. (3) Come Thou, therefore, to my deliverance and set me free. (*Homilist.*) *A cry from prison*.—I. A WRETCHED CONDITION. Some of the prisons in which we sometimes find ourselves confined—1. Fearfulness. (1) Lest our conversion is only a sham. (2) Lest we may not be finally saved. (3) Dread of death. 2. Carelessness. (1) About our soul's prosperity. (2) As to the use of our privileges. 3. Discontentedness. 4. Selfishness. (1) In belief. (2) In prayers. (3) In efforts. II. A SUITABLE PETITION. It is expressive of—1. Consciousness. The spiritual dead feel not their awful condition. 2. Helplessness. We can do nothing; but He is faithful who has promised. 3. Tenderness. "Bring." The invalid cannot bear harsh treatment. And our compassionate Lord deals gently with us. Doubtless David had former proof of this, hence his present cry. Further, this would necessitate God's coming Himself, not even trusting His loved ones to His ministering spirits. "Come Lord Thyself, and bring my soul out of prison." Then it was a petition of—4. Completeness. "Bring my soul out." It is well for our souls, when we get so dissatisfied with our prisons as to want to leave them entirely. III. A JUSTIFYING REASON. How could David praise God's name? 1. By making known His wondrous power. 2. By living near to God. 3. By warning others of their danger. (*A. H. State.*) "*Bring my soul out of prison*".—I. THE MERCY IMPORED. Consider it as the language of—1. An awakened sinner. 2. A disconsolate Christian, when oppressed or persecuted, or under trouble. II. THE END FOR WHICH THIS MERCY WAS DESIRED. Mercy wanted calls for prayer; and the earnestness of the prayer should correspond with the magnitude of the blessing we implore. Mercy received requires praise; and the more importunate the prayer, the more animated will be the praise in return. 1. Praise may be considered as mental. 2. Vocal. 3. Practical. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

PSALM CXLIII.

VER. 1-12. **Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications.**—*A penitential soul in prayer*.—I. THE REASONS URGED. 1. A consciousness of moral unrighteousness (ver. 2). No man will ever pray rightly until he is made deeply conscious that he has no claims whatever upon the favour of God, and that his necessities, if relieved at all, must be relieved by sovereign mercy alone. 2. A terrible sense of danger (vers. 3, 4). 3. An encouraging reminiscence of God (ver. 5). 4. An intense craving of the heart (ver. 6). There are two figures here indicating the craving of the heart after God. The first is taken from human life. As the suffering child stretches forth its hand to its mother, as the dying patient to his physician, as the drowning man to the rope thrown out for his rescue, so the soul of the penitent stretches out its hands to God; he must have Him or die and be lost. God is the necessity of necessities, the Supreme need. Another figure indicating the craving of the heart after God is the longing of the parched earth for fertile showers. II. THE BLESSINGS INVOKED. 1. Soul deliverance (ver. 7). This has been provided in Christ. 2. Soul guidance (ver. 8). Let the morning dawn on me, and the night of darkness and sorrow depart, and show me the way in which I ought to walk,—the way of rectitude, of safety. 3. Soul loyalty (ver. 10). 4. Soul quickening (ver. 11). There must be life to struggle for deliverance, life to follow the Divine guidance, to reach the level land of rectitude, and to walk in it. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Prayer illustrated*.—As an example and illustration of prayer this psalm teaches us—1. That we should approach God in the full belief that He is the "Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." 2. We should appeal to Him not only as merciful, but also as faithful and righteous. 3. We should come as sinners imploring pardon. 4. Thus coming to God, we should seek comfort by uttering our grief in His presence and casting all our care on Him. 5. We should direct our thoughts from our sorrows to Him before whom we bow, and contemplate His character and former mercies. 6. Encouraged by such contemplation we should with renewed confidence present our petitions. 7. Expecting consolation in the path of obedience alone, we should pray to be enabled to do the will of God. 8. In our prayers we should renew

the consecration of ourselves to God, and seek protection, deliverance and salvation as His "servants." "I am Thine, save me." (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*)

Ver. 4. My heart within me is desolate.—*Trouble of soul*:—He spake before of his external calamities; now he confesseth the infirmities of his mind, that he was wonderfully cast down in heart and troubled in his soul, so that his strength was almost gone (not like the strength of a whale fish, or of a rock), but being ready to drown with sorrow, he was sustained by faith and God's Spirit, he swam under these evils. Our Saviour Himself confessed of Himself, "My soul is troubled to the death." God knoweth our mould, we are not stocks without passions or perturbations; we are not like lepers, whose flesh is senseless; but we are sensible of evils, that we may run to God for help and comfort. Had not Job his own perturbations and griefs, which made him utter hard speeches, for which God rebuked him, and he afterwards repented? yet God affirmed that he spake better of him than all his friends did. Can a ship sail along with such a constant and direct course in stormy weather as it were calm and before the wind? it is enough that it directeth the course ever towards the port, albeit it be forced to cast board twenty times. So God careth not albeit we be troubled in our course to heaven. Let us ever aim at the port of eternal glory, howsoever we be disquieted with contrary winds and tempests, God will pass by all those our frailties and imperfections, and will at last deliver us from them all, if in the midst of those our extremities our heart set itself toward heaven. (*A. Symson.*)

Ver. 5. I remember the days of old.—*The ministry of memory*:—I. AS A NECESSITY OF HUMAN NATURE. 1. By the laws of proximity, likeness, contrast, we are every day thrown back on the past, made in some measure to relive the hours that are gone. 2. This necessary action of memory shows—(1) The conscious unity of human life. However long we have to live, though for ever, from the beginning our life is one. (2) The wondrous frugality of life. Our spiritual life throws nothing away. Memory manages all with the most sparing economy. It gathers up every fragment, so that nothing is lost. (3) The growing importance of life. What a world lies behind the old man—nay, within him. (4) The inevitable retributiveness of life. II. AS A MORAL OBLIGATION OF HUMAN NATURE. "I remember the days of old." Every man should voluntarily and religiously do this with the past of his life. He should not allow the past to come up to him merely involuntarily, and thus become its victim. He should deal with it so as to make it serve the true interests of his spiritual being. He should make the past—1. Promote evangelical sorrow within him. The memory of the past must sadden all souls. 2. Promote thanksgiving to God within him. What impressions will the past give man of God's forbearance—God's guidance—God's guardianship—God's ever-flowing goodness! 3. Promote an invincible purpose to improve. The memory of past disappointments should warn us against extravagant hopes. The memory of abused mercies should lead us to a greater appreciation of our present blessings. The memory of lost years should lead us to turn every hour of the present to a right spiritual account. (*Homilist.*) *Remembrance of the past*:—I. THE PAST ENABLES US TO KNOW OURSELVES. 1. We have embodied our character. 2. We have reacted on and moulded them. 3. Hence the past shows what we are. II. THE PAST IS FITTED TO SUGGEST RULES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE FUTURE CONDUCT. 1. It has brought to light our tendencies. 2. It has shown what is dangerous in our circumstances. 3. It has revealed the temptations before which we are in danger of falling. III. A CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL PREPARE US FOR THE EXERCISE OF CONFESSION, AND WILL SHUT US UP TO CHRIST. 1. Confession should be minute—history portrayed. 2. This requires a knowledge of the past. 3. A sight of our sin drives to Christ. 4. For this sight we must turn to the past. IV. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL DISPOSE US TO THANKSGIVING, AND WILL FURNISH US WITH MATERIALS FOR PRAISE. 1. Thanksgiving is difficult, and is neglected. 2. It should be minute, ranging from, etc. 3. It should involve lively and strong feeling. 4. The knowledge and the deep feeling are dependent on, etc.—Individuals. V. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL STIMULATE US TO REDEEM THE TIME. 1. The whole life of man is short. 2. How much shorter has it become to us! 3. Had it been spent aright, its increased shortness would not be a matter of regret. 4. But only look back! VI. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL PRODUCE DEEP AND SOLEMN IMPRESSIONS OF THE FRAILTY OF MAN. 1. Look back to your childhood. 2. Where are the con-

panions of your youth? Stages marked by grave-stones—mourner—stranger on earth. VII. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL SHOW THE UTTER FOLLY OF DEPENDING ON THE THINGS OF THE WORLD FOR SUPPORT AND ENJOYMENT. 1. Ungodliness is an attempt to dispense with God and still be happy. 2. Each man makes the experiment. 3. You have made it. 4. What is the result? A failure! VIII. A CONSIDERATION OF THE PAST WILL CONFIRM THE BELIEVER IN THE CHOICE HE HAS MADE. 1. The most important part of a believer's life is that which follows his conversion. 2. In reviewing it—(1) You see the temporal consequences of your act. (2) You see the spiritual consequences. IX. THE PAST WILL SHOW TO THE UNGODLY HIS ETERNITY. 1. Alas! the sinner is not qualified to see his eternity in his time. X. THE PAST SHOWS TO THE BELIEVER THE COMPARATIVE MEASURE IN WHICH HE SHALL REAP HEREAFTER. Between the believer's present conduct and future glory—1. There is no connection of merit. 2. But there is a connection of congruity or fitness. (*Jas. Stewart.*) *Reflection*:—1. Reflection signifies to think again on what we have already thought, already conceived, to think on it more circumstantially, more steadily, more expressly, and to do this on set purpose and with consciousness in the design of dwelling longer on these thoughts, in order to dissect and analyze them, to obtain a clearer conception of the matter to which they relate, to study them in their several parts, in their principles and consequences, to compare them with others, to observe their analogies to us and to other objects, and thence to draw conclusions in regard to our conduct or to our happiness. 2. It also signifies, by the repeated representation and consideration of what we have already conceived and know, to endeavour to discover or to understand other things which we either do not yet know, or whereof we have only a dark and confused idea, or in regard to which we are still uncertain, whether they be true or false, thus or otherwise constituted. 3. Reflection has commonly in view the examination of some or all of the following questions: What is the object and the nature of it? What results from thence? Is it true and certain, and why is it so? What relations does it bear to me and my happiness? How should I act towards it? In other words, by reflection and consideration we endeavour to render our conceptions and ideas of objects more clear, more complete, more certain, more interesting and useful to us. 4. The reflecting man endeavours to render the objects, the doctrines whereon he reflects more profitable to him by applying them to his conduct, by deducing from them such principles and rules as may regulate him for the rest of his life. Thus he learns real, practical wisdom, and without that all human reflection is of no great value. (*G. J. Zollikofer, D.D.*) *I muse on the work of Thy hands*.—*God's works to be appreciated, for they declare Him*:—I heard of a good man who went down the Rhine, but took care to read a book all the way, for fear he should have his mind taken off from heavenly topics by the beauties of Nature. I confess I do not understand such a spirit—I do not want to do so. If I go into an artist's house I do that artist a displeasure if I take no notice of his works under the pretext that I am quite absorbed in himself. Why not enjoy the objects in which our heavenly Father has set forth His wisdom and power? Delight yourself in all your heavenly Father's handiwork, and make it to be a ladder by which you climb to Himself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Delight in God's works*:—The same thing will appeal differently to different people according to capacity, sensibility, experience. One may look on a flower with the eye of a florist, another of a market gardener, another of a botanist, another of an artist. William Blake saw angels amid the swaying corn or nestling in a tree. A scene which is dull and uninteresting to the listless eye may be transformed by a touch of creative and interpretative imagination; as James Swetham says, "Gerhard Dow threw a glory over our very pickled cabbage." Culture and restraint. (*Hugh Black.*)

Ver. 8. Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning.—*How to have a good day*:—There are days and days. There are days of darkness such as this psalm illustrates. Many think that David sung this psalm when he fled from Absalom. 1. IT WAS A DARK DAY FOR DAVID. 1. It was a day of hard environment. "The enemy hath persecuted my soul." Think of David fugitive, and climbing, in sackcloth, the slopes of the Mount of Olives. There are days when everything seems to go against us. 2. It was a day for David of clean discouragement. "He hath smitten my life down to the ground." Have you not been in such a discouraged day? 3. It was a day of despair. When hope has gone out and

despair has come in, your hands hang and your step stops. 4. This was a day for David when memory made contrasts (ver. 5). The only comfort for the soul in such plight is the memory of better days. That is a very bad, enervating mood when one, instead of looking forward, is perpetually looking backward. Oh, the brave apostle! Though prisoner in Rome, "forgetting the things which are behind." II. **HOW TO GET OUT OF SUCH A DARK DAY AND MOOD INTO A GOOD DAY.** 1. By prayer. "Cause me to hear." The soul addresses God; turns resolutely Godward. 2. By beginning the day with a sense of God. "Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning." Count your mercies and begin the day by doing it. There is a way of looking at disadvantage in the light of advantage. Mr. Edison, partially deaf since childhood, was told by a specialist an operation would help him. He answered, "Give up an advantage that enables me to think on undisturbed by noise or conversation? No, indeed." 3. By constancy in trust. "For in Thee do I trust." Trust, and keep on trusting anyway. 4. By determining to do, and at all hazards to do the right. "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." Notice that—the praying and the walking; the search for the right and the resolve to do it. Darkness shall surely flee from such a soul. Such turning of dark days into good ones makes—character! (*Homiletic Review.*) "In the morning"—I. **THE MORNING COMES AFTER THE NIGHT.** 1. The night of mourning. "Our light affliction," etc. This is higher and sweeter than the motto on the sundial, "I count only the sunbeams." The child of God will count, to his wealth and joy, the darkness also. The night is glorified in the morning "lovingkindness," as night-formed dew is in the morning sun. 2. The night of conflict. The morning of victory will come. 3. The night of weary waiting. There is a morning of fruition and satisfaction. 4. The night of sin. Oh the morning of fresh and wondrous purity! II. **THE MORNING COMES BEFORE THE DAY.** God's lovingkindness brings morning—the harbinger of a long day. Always, only morning; pointing on to a day whose "sun shall go no more down." A day of joy. "Everlasting joy shall be upon their head." A day of work. When men have a journey to make, or work to do, they start in the morning. So let us seek God's morning lovingkindness. 1. In the morning of every day. Let me hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning, that this whole day may be blessed and fruitful. 2. In the morning of life (Prov. viii. 17). 3. In the morning (at the beginning) of every new undertaking. Begin with prayer for God's lovingkindness and blessing. 4. In the morning of this year. It is still pure and sweet. Let its future hours be devoted to God. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) **Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.**—*The way wherein we should go.*—The text may be said to comprise every other prayer. If God gives His servant "to know the way wherein he should walk," and strength to walk in it, peace, and order, and liberty, and joy will soon come. Life is difficult. It is difficult every day; on some days, and at some times, unusually so. Are there not continual circumstances and trials and duties of ordinary life which, in one way or another, make life a continual difficulty? Think of the number of things that are to be believed, that are to be renounced, that are to be examined, that are to be distinguished in themselves and from other things, that are to be tentatively dealt with, that are to be done, that are to be left undone, that are to be waited for, that are to be suffered. All these are included in the "way wherein we should walk." Take some of them in succession. I. **OPINIONS AND BELIEFS.** There can be no living way for a man that does not involve these. A man is more than a growing tree or a grazing animal. Even those who speak slightly of opinions, and lay stress rather on what they call spirit, and instinct, and practical action, when they rigorously analyze their own thought in this matter, are obliged to confess that in one form or another, separated from other things, or solvent in them, opinion and belief must be comprehended in spirit, even in instinct, in a measure, and certainly in practical action. But how hard it is now to form opinions and settle beliefs! Harder perhaps than it has ever been before, not only because we have more than the common amount of scepticism in the world, but because (as I verily believe) men are in some ways more sincere and more earnest than they have ever been before. They cannot so easily subscribe creeds, composed of many, and some of them hard enough propositions. What, then, are we to do? From this hour any one of us, if we will, may be of "them that believe to the saving of the soul." How? By bringing the whole case fully and earnestly before God. "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." There, and there only, you have the whole case;

the meeting, and, in a measure, the settling of the difficulty. If we come really to Him, we have solved the difficulty, we have come into the new and living way, and God will make that way more and more plain before our face; whereas if we abide among the exterior things—examining, considering, comparing, putting this opinion against that, and working the whole matter simply as a high intellectual problem, without ever making the last and highest appeal—we have no certainty of a good and true issue. II. CONDUCT. Even those who know the way they should go, so far as it consists of beliefs, convictions, principles, find it still in their practice to be a way of continual difficulty. It is easy to say, "Act on principle." Of course we must act on principle, but on what principle? What is the right principle for the case? Or what is the proper combination of principles? And how are they to apply? 1. It will sometimes be that all is dark as to what is about to happen in the immediate future, and yet action must be taken at a certain time; and, in order to be well taken, preparation must be made for it now. And that darkness, perhaps, cannot be made any less by our intellectual activities, or by our moral impatience. We may knock at the doors of the future with all our importunity, but they will not open a moment before the time. What can we do? We can pray. We can use this text, and get the benefits it carries, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should go, for I lift my soul to Thee." 2. Or the case is exceedingly perplexed and intricate. It lies all open before us. There is nothing more to reveal, and yet we cannot understand it. Our way, "the way wherein we should go," lies right through the heart of those perplexed and ravelled things, and our "going" is sure to alter them somewhat, perhaps much. What shall be the ruling principle of our action? Shall we go quickly or slowly? And shall prudence or firmness have the reins? Who can tell us? And in this pause what can we do? We can ask Him who knows the way that is all unknown to us to "cause us to know it," so that, as we tread it step by step, and make it thus our actual way, it may prove to be indeed the way of righteousness and peace. 3. Or the case, in its two sides, is perfectly balanced. There is nothing to choose between them. We may cast the weight of our action on this side or on that with equally good conscience. And yet, out of the choice we make, a very different class of results will spring; and other things will come in then, and issues never contemplated as possible will arise. So that there is a right side, a "way in which we should go," even when no human wisdom could give any sufficient reason why the one side should be taken rather than the other. How shall we find it? How, but by coming to Him who knows all ways that human feet are to tread. He has His eye on that best way, that perfect way, that Christlike way, which my feet ought to mark, and if I come to Him to ask about it, it may be that, while I am yet speaking, the light of revelation will illumine it, the finger of Providence will point to it, and the voice that has directed so many pilgrims will say to me also, "This is the way, walk ye in it." (A. Raleigh, D.D.) *God's pathway for the soul of man:*—The psalms of the rebellion differ from the psalms of the persecution under Saul, in that a strain of penitence mingles with the narrative of misfortune and suffering. That an ambitious young man should have so easily overthrown a strong government was itself suggestive. Absalom's success could not be really accounted for by his good looks, or by his popular manners, or by his splendid retinue, or by the widespread discontent of the tribe of Judah with David's domestic policy. The truth was that the old respect for him had been largely undermined by his conduct; and under a system of personal government, respect for the ruler is essential to social safety. David's own conscience ratified the tacit verdict which his people had passed upon him; and when he fled across the Jordan, while Absalom took possession of his palace and his throne, he recognized the hand, not of his undutiful son, but of his Lord and Judge. And thus, in the last of those seven psalms, which have for so many ages nourished and expressed Christian repentance, David mingles with his pathetic review of his reverses a loyal prayer for mercy and guidance. I. "THE WAY THAT I SHALL WALK IN." David was thinking, no doubt, of some path across the mountains of Gilead, by which he might hope to make good his escape in that hour of danger. But that was not all. David would be thinking also of other "ways." For the soul of man is perpetually moving, in whatever direction, through the wilds of moral and intellectual space: and the various directions which its thought, feeling, and action take, are variously characterized in Scripture. On the one hand we read of "the way of understanding," "the way of righteousness," "the way of truth," "the

way of God's testimonies," "the way of wisdom," "the way of life," "the way of good mon," "the way everlasting," "the right way," "the way of the Lord," "the way of peace"; and on the other we are told of "the way of the froward," "the way of evil men," "the way of man's heart," "the way that is not good," "the way that seemeth right unto a man, while the end thereof are the ways of death." And so particular types of human life, "the way of David," "the way of Assa," "the way of Jehoshaphat," contrast with "the way of Cain," "the way of Jeroboam," "the way of the house of Ahab," "the way of Manasseh." And thus the expression comes to mean a certain moral and mental temper, or a body, or system of doctrines, or precepts, whether false or true, which claim to be, and are treated as forming the path to a higher or to a lower world. Above all, we must not forget that the spiritual sense of this expression has received a consecration which can never for long be absent from Christian thought. We know who has said, "I am the Way." II. THIS PETITION FOR GUIDANCE, LIKE ALL SERIOUS PRAYER, IMPLIES A FAITH, a faith which at once dictates and shapes it. The *lex credendi* is also the *lex supplicandi*. Two truths, at least, prompt and govern the prayer. 1. The first is, that one path enables each man to correspond with the true ideal of his life. "The way that I should walk in." One path only is perfectly loyal to the highest truth that has been placed within each man's reach. Only one path, and not many, enables each man to make the most of his faculties and of his opportunities, to develop most harmoniously his intelligence, his affections, his will, his character; to satisfy most adequately the just claims that others may make on him; to satisfy the demands of Him to whom the gift of existence itself is due. 2. And the second implied and governing truth is this—that there is one Being, at any rate, who sees and can tell each one of us what this his path should be. A clear sight of the track along which each of His responsible creatures should walk with the view of making the best of the gift of life, is the least that can be ascribed to an Intelligence that knows no bounds, and to a Will by whose good pleasure we each and all exist. A willingness to show each one of us what He thus sees to be the best for each may be reverently taken for granted in Him who is not only and chiefly Power and Intelligence, but also, and especially Goodness. III. HOW DOES GOD ANSWER THIS PRAYER? 1. First of all, and generally by the language of events, by that importunity of circumstances which, in different degrees, accompanies every human life. It matters not that the environment of every life can be traced to antecedents, and these to other antecedents that have preceded them till the long evolutionary process is lost sight of in the distant haze. It matters not because, first, we know that a point must at last be reached where no material antecedent is discoverable, and where bare existence can only be accounted for by the fiat of a Creative Will; and secondly, because the relation of each antecedent to that which precedes and follows it, the direction and law of this long evolutionary sequence—if so we must provisionally term it—itself implies, no less than its first impact implies, a presiding and guiding Mind. 2. But independently of that which belongs to single lives, there are certain broad characteristics of the pathway which God has traced for the soul of man. Man's will, as well as his understanding, needs the guidance of truth. Man's character needs the discipline of sacrifice. And He who said, "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness," said also, "Let a man take up his cross and follow Me." What then are the characteristics of this truth which can furnish true guidance to the soul of man, and which thus is the answer to the prayer of the psalmist? (1) It will first of all be positive, and not merely negative truth. The psalmist prays God to show him, not the way in which he should not walk, but the way in which he should. (2) Again, the truth which is to serve as the pathway to the human soul must be definite. The road that will bring us home at last must be plain to the eye, and firm beneath the feet. It must not lose itself in a forest; it must not sink away into a morass. The psalmist prays for guidance; and indefinite guidance is all but a contradiction in terms. (3) Once more, the truth which will conduct the soul heavenward must be truth which the soul knows to be independent of itself. "Show Thou me the way I should walk in." The truth that will support our steps is true, whatever we may think or feel about it. It has, in modern phrase, an objective existence. (4) Yet, once again, the truth that is to form a pathway for the human soul will be in its import specially practical; "The way that I should walk in" suggests practice rather than speculation. Christian truth is nothing if it be not practical. God's Word is a lantern unto the feet, and a light unto the path; Scripture is profitable

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, as well as for doctrine; Jesus Christ came to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Surely a Christian should not read his Bible or repeat his creed without asking himself the question, What does this statement say to me, what does it suggest, what does it command, what does it reprove in me? How can it contribute to lighten my path through time towards eternity? What dangers does it unveil, what encouragements does it proclaim, what obstacles does it remove, what efforts does it warrant? This practical instinct is always energetic in a seriously believing Christian, it is an inseparable corollary of the prayer, "Show Thou me the way I should walk in; for I lift up my soul unto Thee." (*Canon Liddon.*) *The guiding hand*:—There is no need more imperatively felt by the Christian than that of Divine guidance. 1. We must admit that God has an ideal or plan for each one of us in life. We also know how weak and unwise we are, and that light is needed outside of ourselves. Now we know that the Bible is a historic revelation. What was written aforetime was given for our learning. So by looking back over the history of the Church we are helped in the discovery of God's will. 2. Three special methods were used in ancient times to reveal the will of God. Dreams, the Urim and Thummim, and prophetic teaching. (1) The dream then, as now, was often incoherent, uncertain and misleading, but we have every reason to believe that God did, at times, send with a dream a firm conviction that it should be acted upon. (2) Again, the mysterious oracle was a method of guidance. The Urim and Thummim was used by David, but after his day it ceased. It gave the yes or no to the inquirer. (3) As the priestly office waned, the third method, the prophetic, came into prominence. The prophet did not necessarily predict, but "uttered forth" truth as to the past and present, as well as future. 3. The important thing is not the agency through which God reveals His will, but the fact that in some way He will lead them who trust in Him. Therefore the psalmist says, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." The lesson is one of faith in God's guiding hand. This mode of Divine direction is wholly unlike the method seen among heathen and superstitious people. It is spiritual, exalted and progressive. A moral discipline is needed, a heart in sympathy with God. The spirit of truth guides us into all truth. If we are willing to do the will of God we shall know the way. 4. The spirit of prayerfulness should be cultivated. It is on the knees that we learn the lesson of trust. It is there we are brought face to face with God. Let us, therefore, always lift our soul unto God, and, above all, seek the aid of His Holy Spirit. The example of Christ is a guide; the advice of His true disciples is helpful; our own common sense is to be used, but above all, the direction of the Holy Spirit is to be sought and followed. He will keep us from perverting the truth we hear to our own ruin. 5. Finally, if after honestly following what light you have, the issue is not what you supposed or wished, rest patiently in God till He clears the darkness. If you have erred, make it sure that He has forgiven, and then cheerfully go forward, saying, "My times are in Thy hand," knowing that all things are working together for good to them that love God and are sincerely doing His will. (*A. Foster, D.D.*) *Knowledge and love of spiritual guide*:—The relation resulting from the intercourse of an Alpine traveller with his guide, writes Dr. Parkhurst, is not exactly like anything else. The one whom you had employed in this service would henceforth stand to you quite apart from other men. The peculiar quality that is in your intimacy has not resulted merely from your walking so long together; nor has it come because of your fellowship with one another in peril, or perhaps even in suffering. You learn to know your guide by obeying him, and you learn to love him by committing yourself to him and trusting him. Something about our Divine Guide, Jesus Christ, you can learn from the Scriptures; something, too, you can gather from the testimony of other men. But if you want to know Him you have got to obey Him, and if you want to love Him you must first trust Him. (*Christian Endeavour Times.*)

Ver. 9. *I flee unto Thee to hide me.*—*Soul flight*:—I. *How?* On the pinions of thought our souls often fly more swiftly than lightnings to the remotest periods and places. This power of flight is the glory of our nature; it defies granite walls and massive chains and bolts. II. *Whither?* To Him, the eternal Source of all life, and of all good, we should ever direct our flight. We should fly to Him in all our difficulties. III. *Why?* There is danger. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Flight to God*:—I. *A PERCEPTION OF DANGER.* No man will flee if he is not afraid; there

must be a knowledge and apprehension of danger, or there will be no flight. 1. Men perish in many instances because they have no cause of danger. The noxious air is not observed, the sunken reef is not seen, the train rushes to collision unwarned. Ignorance of danger makes the danger inevitable. (1) Men will dare to die without fear of hell. (2) Men will sin and have no dread of any ill consequences. (3) Men will play with an evil habit and will not believe in its power to enslave them. (4) Men will toy with a temptation and refuse to see how certain it is to lead them into actual wrong-doing. 2. Every man is really in danger. The sinner is asleep on the top of a mast. Young and old are both in jeopardy. Even the saints are in peril of temptation from many sources. 3. Some dangers are slowly perceived. Those connected with sweet sin, those which grow out of a boastful mind, those which are countenanced by the examples of others, etc. The more dangerous the serpent, the less likely to be seen. 4. The spiritual man is led to perceive dangers by inward monitions, by a spiritual sensitiveness which is the result of devotion, by experience, by perceptible declensions, or by observing the effect of certain things upon others. II. A SENSE OF WEAKNESS. No man will flee for hiding if he feel able to fight the matter through in his own strength. 1. We are all weak and unable to cope with sin. 2. Some think themselves mighty men of valour, but these are among the very weakest of the weak. 3. Past failure should teach us not to trust our own strength. 4. In a deep sense of weakness we are made strong: in fancied strength lies the worst form of weakness. III. A PRUDENT FORESIGHT. "I flee unto Thee to hide me." 1. He would not venture into the danger or wait till it overtook him; but he took time by the forelock and fled. Often this is the highest form of courage. 2. Escape through fear is admirable prudence. It is not a mean motive; for Noah, "moved by fear, prepared an ark." 3. While we can flee we should; for time may come when we shall be unable. David says, "I flee": he means—"I am fleeing, I always do flee unto Thee, my God." A man should not live like a beast, who sees no further than the meadow in which he feeds. He should foresee evil and hide himself; for this is common prudence (Prov. xxii. 3). IV. A SOLID CONFIDENCE. "To Thee to hide me." He was sure—1. That there was safety in God. 2. That he might flee to God. 3. That he might flee there and then. V. AN ACTIVE FAITH. He did not lie passive, but aroused himself. This may be clearly seen—1. In his fleeing to God. Directness, speed, eagerness. 2. In his after-prayers. "Teach me to do Thy will; lead me; quicken me." (1) Expect your share of enemies, and prepare for them. (2) Secure your best friend. Be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus. (3) Make constant use of Him. Flee to Him at all times. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The flight of the soul*:—Never was there an eagle with reach of wing long enough, or with pinions of sufficient strength to mount so high or fly so far afield as the soul of man. God has made us so like Himself that it is impossible for the mere accidents of poverty or wealth, of physical bondage or freedom, of pleasant or unpleasant surroundings, to dictate the spiritual history of the soul. The soul dictates its own destiny. It has the power to fly from its environment and take up its abode in an entirely different atmosphere. A wicked king could shut John Bunyan up in prison at Bedford, but he could not chain his soul there. God gave him wonderful soul-flight from that little jail. Now, if we inquire into the secret of John Bunyan's joy and peace, we shall find that it was but a realization of our text. Bunyan fled from his sins to God, and found refuge in the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ. He started low enough, for he was a poor, drunken Bedford tinker, of no account to anybody till his Christian wife prayed for him and pleaded with him, until he fled for refuge to the Cross, and lost there the burden of his sin. And that is my message; that God is a refuge for every poor sinner who will flee to Him. But the fleeing is our part. We are free men and women, and God will not drive us into the kingdom. He will give us visions of the beauty of it, He will show us His own sympathy and love, and fling wide open the doors to the city of refuge; but unless we rise up and seek the refuge, we shall perish outside. (L. A. Banks, D.D.) *Flight from danger unto the Lord*:—We must fly to the Lord for shelter, not to an arm of flesh. The bird flies away to the thicket, and the fox hastens to its hole; every creature uses its refuge in the hour of danger, and even so in all peril or fear of peril let us flee unto Jehovah, the Eternal Protector of His own. No moat, portcullis, drawbridge, wall, battlement or dungeon could make us so secure as we are when the Lord of Hosts environs around. Our ramparts defy the beleaguered hosts of hell. The Lord of Hosts stands

between us and their fury, and all other evil forces are turned aside. (O. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 10. **Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God.**—*The delight of the godly.*—I. THE GODLY MAN'S PRAYER. Humility, teachableness, sense of his own ignorance should characterize the Christian; as also the greatness and glory, the wisdom and power of Him who is his God. II. THE GODLY MAN'S DELIGHT. 1. What is the will of God? (1) Our sanctification (1 Thess. iv. 8). (2) He wills that we should render Him most hearty thanksgiving for all the mercies with which He so bountifully blesses us (1 Thess. v. 18). (3) He wills that by our well-doing we should adorn the Gospel (1 Peter ii. 15). "The Christian is the true evidence of Christianity" (Drummond). "Adorn the Gospel." Let the jewels be set in gold. 2. Knowing His will, having learnt it, we must do it, and do it heartily. 3. The more we do what we have been taught, the more will the Lord our God reveal to us of His will. (H. B. Saxton.) *The supreme desire of the devout soul.*—I. THE SUPREME AIM OF THE DEVOUT SOUL. The tempest blows him to the throne of God; and when he is there, what does he ask? Deliverance? Scarcely. In one clause, and again at the end, as if by a kind of after-thought, he asks for the removal of the calamities. But the main burden of his prayer is for a closer knowledge of God, the sound of His lovingkindness in his inward ear, light to show him the way wherein he should walk, and the sweet sunshine of God's face upon his heart. There is a better thing to ask than exemption from sorrows, even grace to bear them rightly. The river of the water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb is not sent merely to refresh thirsty lips and to bring music into the silence of a waterless desert, but it is sent to drive the wheels of life. Action, not thought, is the end of God's revelation and the perfecting of man. II. THE DIVINE TEACHING AND TOUCH WHICH ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS CONFORMITY. The psalmist betakes himself to prayer because he knows that of himself he cannot bring his will into this attitude of harmonious submission. And his prayer for "teaching" is deepened in the second clause of our text into a petition which sets the felt need and the coveted help in a still more striking light, in its cry for the touch of God's good spirit to guide, as by a hand grasping the psalmist's hand into the paths of obedience. You and I have Jesus Christ for our Teacher, the answer to the psalm. His teaching is inward, and deep, and real, and answers to all the necessities of the case. We have His example to stand as our perfect law. He comes into our hearts, He moulds our wills, His teaching is by inward impulses and communications of desire and power to do, as well as of light to know. A law has been given which can give life. As the modeller will take a piece of wax into his hand, and by warmth and manipulation make it soft and pliable, so Jesus Christ, if we let Him, will take our hard hearts into His hands, and by gentle, loving, subtle touches, will shape them into the pattern of His own perfect beauty, and will mould all their vagrant inclinations and aberrant distortions into "one immortal feature of loveliness and perfection." III. THE DIVINE GUARANTEE THAT THIS PRACTICAL CONFORMITY SHALL BE OURS. The psalmist pleads with God a double motive—His relation to us and His own perfectness. "Thou art my God; therefore teach me." "Thy Spirit is good; therefore lead me," etc. Note, then, first, God's personal relation to the devout soul as the guarantee that that soul shall be taught not merely to know, but also to do His will. If He be "my God," there can be no deeper desire in His heart than that His will should be my will. And so desiring, He does it, not from any masterfulness or love of dominion, but only from love to us. And, on the other hand, if we have taken Him for ours, and have the bond knit from our side as well as from His, then the fact of our faith gives us a claim on Him which He is sure to honour. The soul that can say, "I have taken Thee for mine," has a hold on God which God is only too glad to recognize and to vindicate. And whosoever, humbly trusting to that great Father in the heavens, feels that he belongs to God, and that God belongs to him, is warranted in saying, "Teach me, and make me to do Thy will," and in being confident of an answer. And there is the other plea with Him and guarantee for us, drawn from God's own moral character and perfectness. The last clause may either be read, "Thy Spirit is good; lead me," or "Let Thy good Spirit lead me." In either case the goodness of the Divine Spirit is the plea on which the prayer is grounded. The goodness here referred to is, as I take it, not merely beneficence and kindness, but rather goodness in its broader and loftier sense of perfect

moral purity. So that the thought just comes to this—we have the right to expect that we shall be made participant of the Divine nature. So sweet, so deep, so tender is the tie that knits a devout soul to God, that nothing short of conformity to the perfect purity of God can satisfy the aspirations of the creature or discharge the obligations of the Creator. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Active obedience to the will of God*:—I. *ASPIRATION REVEALED*. The great essential to a religious life is active obedience to God's will. The knowledge is not in itself religion; but the Christian is "that faithful and wise servant whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing." Hence perfection of character consists not in knowledge, but obedience, because—1. Obedience is superior to knowledge. It is possible for a man to have a Scriptural creed and to have an ungodly heart. The question must ever be, "Is thine heart right?" For "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." 2. Knowledge alone is positively criminal. How vast the dishonour done to God, when, with a perfect knowledge of duty, the man is neglectful of his privilege, and refuses the obedience which of right he owes to God! The possession of the knowledge will be but an aggravation of the offence. II. *DEFICIENCY ACKNOWLEDGED*. It was a practical deficiency—1. As to the knowledge of God's will in the particular circumstances of life. 2. As to the knowledge of the hindrances to the performance of God's will. 3. As to the practical skill of doing the will of God. III. *DESIRE EXPRESSED*. Like the psalmist, we must seek to be taught obedience to God's will. 1. In the particular circumstances of life. It must be our prayer in the minute detail of life to fulfil the will of God. "He that is faithful in that which is least," etc. 2. In dealing with the hindrances to its fulfilment. The best and holiest must feel that they have reason to prostrate themselves before the Lord. He knows the ills and difficulties of life, and He will help us to overcome them. The mysteries of life must quicken us to place ourselves under the guidance of our heavenly Father. 3. In its active fulfilment. "Teach me to do Thy will." Self-reliance gives place to self-confidence, and hence the necessity to trust in God and not in self. (*G. Bainton.*) *Prayer for Divine teaching*:—I. *THE PSALMIST'S NEED*. 1. He felt that he was ignorant, and needed Divine illumination. He desired that God's will might be made clear to him (ver. 8). 2. He felt that he was weak, and needed strength to do, as well as enlightening to know, God's will. II. *THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER*. "Teach me to do Thy will." 1. He felt it to be his duty to do so. He would observe that all nature, man only excepted, does the Divine will and never swerves from it. 2. He felt that God's will was best. He knew that He had pleasure in the prosperity—spiritual and temporal—of His servants (Ps. xxxv. 27). He would seek to acquiesce in the will of God, who sometimes takes away temporal blessings that man's affections may be more completely fixed upon his Creator, and causes him to pass through the furnace of affliction that when he is tried he may come forth as gold (Job xxiii. 10). III. *THE PSALMIST'S PLEA*. "For Thou art my God." 1. He had realized to some extent God's love towards him. 2. He rejoiced in His love and desired to have God for his portion for ever. 3. He loved God and sought to do the things that please Him. (*H. P. Wright, B.A.*) *At school*:—I. *THE PRAYER*. 1. Its character. (1) Holy. (2) Humble. (3) Docile. (4) Acquiescent. (5) Believing. (6) Practical. 2. Its compass. "Lord, teach me to do Thy will, whether it is the will of the great ones of the earth, or the will of my influential friends, or the will of my loud-talking neighbours or not. Help me to do Thy will, to take my stand, and say, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'" It is a blessed prayer. The more we look at it the more we see in it. 3. How ought God's will to be done? (1) Thoughtfully. (2) Immediately. (3) Cheerfully. (4) Constantly. (5) Universally. (6) Spiritually. (7) Intensely. II. *THE ANSWER*. 1. There is a reason for expecting it. "Thou art my God." 2. It needs to be answered. No one but God can teach us His will. 3. It is answered. (1) In Jesus Christ, as our Example. (2) In sacred biographies. (3) In every line of the Bible. (4) By the teaching of the Holy Spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "*Teach me*":—An argument to move God to teach him, because He is his God, and doth trust in none but in Him. As if David should say: Thou promised me help of Thy free favour, help me then in this my danger. Whereby he would teach us two principal lessons. First, by this that he desireth God to teach him to do His will, because He was his God, we learn that it is not in our own arbitrament or choice to do God's will, but His special grace, who preventeth us by His favour, and becometh our God, and after frameth us to do His will and obey Him. Secondly, that if He be our God, and we will

call upon Him in our troubles, it were requisite we should frame ourselves to obey Him. If He be our God, where is His love and obedience? If He be our Father, where is His honour? So he must of necessity be an atheist who saith in his heart, there is no God; who professeth God in his mouth, and in his works denieth Him; following his own pleasure in place of God's will. (*A. Symson.*) *The doing of God's will*:—"Thy will be done" is not a prayer of resignation only. Something is to be done. It calls for action, not passivity. The will is to be done by men. When we pray that men may do it, if we pray honestly, we mean that we are ready to do it. Are we? Are we doing it? Is what we have planned to do to-day just what we think is the will of God? (*F. W. Faber.*) **Thy Spirit is good.**—*The good Spirit*:—I trust that we shall never fail to see that on God's good Spirit we are dependent for all good things, and that that Church is doomed to waste away to absolute nothingness and uselessness which does not draw its fresh supplies of strength each day and hour from God the Holy Ghost. I. First, we shall, I hope, be disposed to say "Thy Spirit is good" **WHEN WE REMEMBER HIS RELATIONSHIPS.** Whence is the Spirit? from what quarter does He reach to us? With whom is He associated? from whom does He proceed? By whom has He been sent forth to dwell amidst the Church, and in God's people's hearts? The answer is of course familiar to you. 1. This Spirit is good because He is the Spirit of God, He is God Himself. He is good because God is good. 2. Moreover He is spoken of as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God's Son. Now, Christ is good. His very enemies declared that they could discover no sort of fault in Him. 3. He is spoken of as the Spirit of promise. The Spirit of promise is bound to be a good Spirit, for He is God's promise and Christ's promise. Our earthly fathers, so far as their judgment goes, give good gifts unto their children; our heavenly Father cannot fail even in His judgment. II. We shall be still surer of this fact, I hope, **WHEN WE CONSIDER HIS ATTRIBUTES.** I have only time, of course, to glance at them. 1. He is mighty, how mighty it is not for human tongues to try to say. He is almighty; there is no limit to His power. "Thy Spirit is good" we may well exclaim, when we think both of His terrible acts, and of the might of those acts of mercy which have made Him renowned and revered to every believer. "Thy Spirit is good." He is as mighty now as He was then. What God hath done, God can do. We are straitened in ourselves. The Spirit is omnipotent still. Let us both test and trust His power. 2. He is gracious and gentle. 3. He is wise. 4. He is true. 5. He is holy. All that is sweet, and lovely, and pure, and of good report pertains to Him. III. Further, I **WANT TO CALL TO YOUR MIND HIS SEVERAL OFFICES**, for these are proofs that He is good. What He does, as well as what He is and whence He comes, substantiates this fact. He creates. By Jesus Christ the world was made, and "without Him was not anything made that was made," but the Spirit co-operated with Him. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." In the creation of man, as in all else, God the Spirit was engaged, as well as God the Father and Christ the Son. Is He not a good Spirit, then? Now, the Holy Ghost is still engaged in this sacred service, creating, recreating, making hearts new, bringing chaos out of the void, brooding over the darkness and disorder and transforming them into brightness and beauty. Proceed, good Spirit, with this good work, till all things are made new. 'Tis He who quickens and illuminates, 'tis He who teaches and leads. It was the Holy Ghost who led the children of Israel in the wilderness. The fiery cloudy pillar was the outward sign of Divine guidance, but it is written, "Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them." In special cases, where much wisdom and judgment were required, the Holy Ghost was the Author of these good things. Still He seals His saints, still He is the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." It is even now His blessed function to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. He has not forsaken His task of comforting the sorrowful: He is to this day the Paraclete. IV. The same truth is exhibited or rather illustrated by the **VARIOUS EMBLEMS BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DESCRIBED IN THE WORD OF GOD.** He is spoken of as a fire. In such guise He sat upon the heads of the disciples. He is the Spirit of burning. You know that fire is a good servant, if a bad master, but the Holy Ghost as fire is good both as master and servant. He is willing to serve us as well as to employ us, and as fire He lights, and cheers, and warms us. The Holy Spirit may be compared to dew-cheering, beautifying, fertilizing. The Holy Ghost is compared to a dove, that gentlest of feathered fowl. In this semblance He lighted upon Jesus. Listen to the voice of this celestial turtle dove as it is

heard in our land, for it speaks of spring-time come and summer-time about to appear. He is compared to the wind, a mighty rushing wind. Get into the draught of that wind, I beseech you, it is a trade wind that wafts us to our desired haven. True, it destroys, but it destroys only what we are better rid of. Dead wood, broken branches, withered leaves, these He sweeps away as with a besom. They are better gone. "Thy Spirit is good." In whatever form He works or acts upon us He is welcome. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 11. **Quicken me, O Lord.**—*What is religion?*—In the New Testament the word "quicken" sets forth an idea which is at the very core of religion. Dead in trespasses and sins originally, the man, as Christ makes him, is alive for evermore. Regeneration is a quickening; sanctification is the continuance and evolution of that quickening which began in the new birth. It is a remarkable thing that the same word "quicken" should occur in the Old Testament only in the Psalms, and there almost always as a prayer. The great advantage of the prayers for quickening, and the expressions about it in the Psalms is, that they show us the meaning of the idea and instruct us about it. What quickening is comes out in the result; and the result is variously expressed thus—quicken us and "we will call in Thy name," and again quicken me, and "so I shall keep the testimony of Thy mouth"; or, again, as a cure for worldliness the prayer is offered, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken Thou me in Thy way." The idea in these prayers is, that the praying soul does not care as it ought for these good things, but knows and confesses that this is a great defect; and consequently asks that it may have the power to care for them. You may remember the case of Darwin, who tells that through devotion to study he lost his interest in music and poetry, going so far as to say that the power to appreciate these which he used to have had died out for want of use. He was sorry for this, and he might be supposed to wish for and even to pray for the restoration of that faculty so exquisitely delightful and so much to be desired. He might be supposed to take steps to re-awaken it. His feeling, if not his words, would be, "Quicken me in this; make me sensitive in this. Let my ear have the power to appreciate, and my heart the sensitiveness to feel the power of music and of genuine poetry. Quicken me." That is just what the prayer means in higher matters still. Each one of us has lost many faculties and powers through sin. Our heart is hardened. We cannot see the good, the beauty of some things that are really good. Nothing is more common than to see this illustrated in different ways in different men. How many have a taste for what is intellectual, artistic, natural—for works of philanthropy and charity? How many have the ear that can hear the cry of the needy, or the heart to feel for the oppressed? Are not some so unpitiful and uncharitable, and cruel that they are not aware of their heartlessness? Surely then this is the time when with deep humility and penitence the prayer should be offered for quickening; that the things to which the soul is now sensitive and rejoices should cease to delight, and that the power should be given, or should be restored, of delighting in the true, the good, the beautiful as these are approved of God, and of all right men. Surely the heart's cry should be—"Quicken me so that my soul will respond as the soul of Christ to the will of the Father, and to the deep necessities of those in sin and suffering. Quicken me that I may so prize the good that my soul shall, as the soul of Christ, pity the lost, the perishing, the sinful. Quicken me, so that my present insensitiveness, and callousness, and very blindness should disappear, and something of the gentleness, the penitence, the pitifulness, the self-sacrificingness of Christ may be awakened in my soul. Quicken me that I may be a man, not a monster—a man with a heart and a conscience; and not a mere human animal with a covetous eye, a grasping hand, and a selfish, unsympathetic nature. Quicken me that in me the image of God may be renewed, the lost likeness restored, and the family tie of sonship reconstituted. (*T. M. B. Paterson.*) *The Spirit's quickening influence:*—In the winter and early spring there seems to be no life in the garden and field and forest. Everything looks dead—twice dead. But it is not so really. Under the surface roots are full of ferment, seeds are swelling, and within the bark of the trees is as much movement as in a city's noisy streets. Every fibre is tingling with vital force, and the sap is coursing along the minute channels, and all that is wanted is the breath of the south wind, the warmth of the smiling sun, and the branches will burst into buds, and the earth break out with laughing flowers. So in souls that seem dead, twice dead, the Spirit of God is often at

work, and one earnest heaven-sent message calls out the buds of penitence and faith, and it is seen as a very garden of the Lord. Spiritual winter may hold a springtide of blessing and resurrection glory in its chill grasp, but He who commands both can easily transform the one into the other.

PSALM CXLIV.

VERS. 1-9. **Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.**—*The Lord teaching us to fight*:—I do not know what that "Book of the Wars of the Lord" was which is referred to once or twice in the Old Testament; but I apprehend the Book of Psalms was such a Book to the Israelites, and that it has been such a book to Christendom. We may call it a collection of prayers, hymns, thanksgivings,—what we please,—but a record of fights it assuredly is. And this sentence, which occurs in one of the latest portions of it, is a fit summary of its contents, and a kind of moral to be drawn from the whole of it. I am far from thinking that this sentence applies exclusively to what we designate spiritual conflicts. I should suppose that David, or whoever the writer of the psalm was, gave thanks that he had been able to fight with the Philistines and Ammonites. Nay, I should think he gave thanks that he had been obliged to fight with them; that he had not been allowed to rust in the ease which he would have chosen for himself. Man is made for battle. His inclination is to take his ease: it is God who will not let him sink into the slumber which he counts so pleasant, and which is so sure to end in a freezing death. "Blessed be the Lord God, who teacheth the hands to war, and the fingers to fight!" 1. This thanksgiving is one of universal application: there are some cases in which we shrink from using it, and yet in which we are taught by experience how much better we should be if we dared to use it in all its force and breadth. There are those who feel much more than others the power of fleshly lusts. To withstand these is with them, through education, or indulgence, such an effort as their nearest friends may know nothing of. Oh, what help, then, may be drawn from the text! There is One who does know exactly what I am, and what I can bear. The constitution, the circumstances, are understood by Him; He has ordained them for me. And yet He is not tempting me to sink; He is tempting me to rise. He has allowed me to enter into this conflict that I may come out of it a humbler, sadder, stronger man. He does not desire me to fall in it. The falls I have had are all so many motives and goads to put that trust in Him which they show me that I cannot put in myself. 2. Violent desires or passions remind us of their presence. The fashion of the world is hemming us in and holding us down without our knowing it. A web composed of invisible threads is enclosing us. It is not by some distinct influence that we are pressed, but by an atmosphere full of influences of the most mixed quality, hard to separate from each other. How natural it is to yield to these influences! how very mischievous the effort to resist them often appears,—yes, and is! For how many a man becomes impatient of the habits of that particular society in which he is born; fancies that the habits of some other must be better in themselves or be better for him; flings himself eagerly into it, and finds that the chain which bound him before is more closely about him now. If it galls him, that is something to be thankful for. Blessed be the God of Israel for this! since surely it must be He, and no other, who shows us that we do not want to be loose from government, but to be under a stricter and a more righteous government than that of accident and convention and the floating opinion of an age; that we do not want to be more but less under the yoke of our own fancies and conceits; that self-will and vanity have been the great destroyers of all freedom and manliness in us and in our race; that these have built up that false world which has become our prison-house. Blessed be the Lord God for this! since to such awakenings of the conscience in men we owe all great and earnest reformations, all victories over desperate abuses which private interests established and sustained. 3. Least of all is there any natural energy in us to contend against that enemy who is described in Scripture as going about seeking whom he may devour. There is a natural, and therefore a very general, impression of his existence; there is a sense in all

men that in some form or other he is not far from them. But the impulse among rude people is to conciliate the adversary who, as their consciences tell them, has had, and still has, such dominion over them. He is a god whom it is worth while to persuade with litanies and sacrifices that he will spare his victims. By degrees, if there is no counteracting force, he is certain to become the god: he will demand all services for himself. Among the civilized it is otherwise. They are inclined to regard the devil as a fiction of the nursery; it is the shadow of a name which cannot be banished from conversation, nor quite from the thoughts, but it means nothing. Yet something steals over these refined people which they know not exactly how to describe. Apathy, loss of power, despondency,—these are some of the names which they invent for it. Is it not true, then, that the time which boasts to have outlived the evil spirit is the one which is most directly exposed to his assaults? May it not be that our progress, which is not to be denied, and for which we are to feel all gratitude, has brought us into a closer conflict with the spiritual wickedness in high places than our forefathers were ever engaged in? Our progress!—cause for thankfulness, if this is the result of it! Yes; blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to fight. Blessed is He for bringing us into immediate encounter with His own immediate enemies, that so we may know more than others did of His own immediate presence! It is a terrible thing indeed to have the spirits of indolence and indifference and vanity all about us, and to think that they are mere names and abstractions. But it is a glorious thing to be roused up to the apprehension of them as real enemies, from whom none but a real Friend, an actual Captain of the Lord's host, can deliver us! (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *God as our General*:—During the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, Colonel Gardiner, the friend of Dr. Doddridge, and Christian soldier, who was afterwards killed at the battle of Prestonpans, went to Stirling to a meeting of the gentlemen of that town to devise means of opposing the Highlanders, who were approaching under Prince Charles. Wishing to encourage his listeners to make every effort, he dwelt on the deficiencies of the opposing army, showed them its weaknesses, and somewhat boastfully declared that if he were only at the head of a certain regiment which he had formerly commanded he would not fear to encounter the whole rebel force, and he was sure he would then give a good account of them. Just then the Rev. Mr. Erskine, who stood by the Colonel's side, whispered into his ear, "Say under God, Colonel." At once Gardiner turned, and the hero of a hundred fights replied, "Oh, yes, Mr. Erskine, I mean that, and with God as our General we must be conquerors." Christians should never forget that God is their General. It is He who is in command, and who brings the victory.

Vers. 3, 4. **Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!**—*The vanity of man; and Christianity its antidote*:—We must take care, in denouncing human depravity, and declaiming on human misery, not to decry human nature; for that would be a procedure of a plainly immoral and irreligious tendency, instead of being praiseworthy; and it would involve untruth. The temple is in ruins, and "the Great Inhabitant is gone." But still we meet, here with a broken shaft, and there with a mutilated wreath; although all only sufficient to awaken melancholy remembrances, and make us say, "Here God once dwelt." And yet "man is like to vanity"; and the moment we have read the text it finds an echo in our bosoms. I. **THE VANITY OF MAN.** There are two words in our Bibles with which we are familiar, Death and Vanity. They are both employed to express the desolate estate into which man's fall has plunged him. Death sometimes includes the sin of that estate as well as its penal consequences. So sometimes does vanity. It is sometimes used as but another name for sin (Ps. xii. 2; Job xv. 35; Rom. i. 21; Eph. iv. 17). But it appears to be the more appropriate function of the Bible-word to express the penal consequences of sin (Job xv. 31; Ps. lxxviii. 39; Rom. viii. 20). Sin has driven all the originally solid and desirable out of man. It has left him the lifeless, bloodless, unsubstantial ghost of what once he was. 1. The life of man is perishable and ephemeral. 2. It is very far from yielding him satisfaction while it lasts. Man cannot find what he was made to find. He is like a long-lost child, with faint and melancholy recollections lingering in him of a sunny land and a pleasant home. And, closely connected with this, man cannot make of life what he has shrewd suspicions it was given to him that he might make of it. It is soon to end; and yet he knows that he has not been turning it to the right account; and, what is worse, he feels that

even yet he cannot do so. Go then it must, and he can make nothing to his satisfaction out of it. II. CHRISTIANITY THE ANTIDOTE OF HUMAN VANITY. 1. It brings redemption by the Son of God. 2. It brings regeneration by the Spirit of God. 3. It gives faith in God. 4. It opens up the glorious spiritual world to view, and intercourse, and hope. (H. Angus.)

MAN:—I. AN INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM. 1. What is man in his constitution? (1) What is he corporeally? Medical science, from the beginning, has concerned itself with this question, and, as yet, has reached no satisfactory solution. (2) What is he mentally? Psychology has pondered on this question for ages, and has not, up to the present hour, reached a satisfactory explanation. (3) What is he morally? Ethical science has employed its most earnest efforts in order to find out whether man is a moral being or not, and, if he is, what are his distinguishing faculties, and what his ultimate destiny. 2. What is man in his relations? His relations to the material and the spiritual, the human and the Divine. 3. What is man in his character? Has he fallen from a higher type of character, or is he gradually rising out of a lower? Is his moral character a progressive evolution? Here is the problem, "What is man?" "Truly," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the whole creation is a mystery, and particularly that of man." "Man," says Carlyle, "stands in the centre of nature, his fraction of time encircled by eternity, his hand-breadth of space encircled by infinitude."

II. A RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT. 1. The exclamation assumes that the Almighty does take special notice of man. The shepherd is interested in his one lost sheep. The housewife in her one lost piece of silver. The father in his one lost son. 2. The exclamation breathes the spirit of amazement at this. It is so contrary to what might antecedently have been expected, so contrary to what a guilty conscience would have foreboded. (David Thomas, D.D.)

WORTHLESS MAN MUCH REGARDED BY THE MIGHTY GOD:—I. SCRIPTURAL SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION. 1. As a creature of God, man is—(1) A piece of modified dust, enlivened with the breath of God (Gen. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 47). (2) A potter's vessel, that is easily dashed and broken (Ps. ii. 9; Rom. ix. 21). (3) Grass (Isa. xl. 6-8). (4) The drop of a bucket, etc. (Isa. xl. 15). (5) Nothing, and less than nothing (Isa. xl. 17). 2. As a fallen creature, man is—(1) Diseased, overrun with a loathsome leprosy from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot: the disease of sin has invaded the very vitals, insomuch that the very mind and conscience is defiled and wasted, etc. (2) Ugly and loathsome (Job xv. 16). (3) Impotent and helpless. (4) Rebellious. (5) Condemned. (6) Noxious and hurtful. (7) Noisome. (8) Dead (Eph. ii. 1).

II. WHAT IS IMPORTED IN GOD'S REGARDING MAN, OR MAKING ACCOUNT OF HIM. 1. That he is yet not beyond God's notice and observation. 2. That the regard God shows unto man does not flow from anything in himself. 3. That it is the fruit of His own free grace and sovereign will and pleasure. 4. That God has no need of man. 5. That God's mercy and love unto man, and the son of man, is of a preventing nature: man is not seeking after God when He takes knowledge of him in a way of mercy. 6. That whatever man be, however despicable, low, and inconsiderable, yet God treats him as if he were some great and considerable person. Hence He is said to magnify him (Job vii. 17).

III. WHEREIN DOETH GOD DISCOVER HIS REGARD UNTO MAN? 1. Take a short view of the regard that God shows in common unto all men. (1) Observe what regard God showed unto man, that petty, poor creature, at his creation. (2) Consider the regard God shows unto man in the course of His common providence, and that notwithstanding his apostasy. (a) Although we be all transgressors from the very womb, yet He continues a succession of men upon the earth. (b) See the wonderful care that God has in and about the formation of man in the womb. (c) Whenever man is brought into the world, although he is the most helpless creature in himself, yet He has provided the best of help to cherish and preserve him. 2. Take a view of the good of His chosen. (1) Before time. (2) In time. (3) After time ends, in eternity (1 Cor. ii. 9).

IV. SHOW THAT THIS IS TRULY WONDERFUL AND SURPRISING. 1. It is surprising, if we consider God's infinite and amazing greatness and glory. 2. It is surprising, if we consider what man is, what a poor, inconsiderable, contemptible creature he is, both as a creature and as a sinner. 3. It is surprising and wonderful, because it cannot be conceived or expressed; it runs beyond all thought and all words.

V. APPLICATION. 1. See hence the folly of all such as are taken up in admiring any created excellency, either to be found in themselves, or others of the human race, without running up to the fountain head, an infinite God, from whom all being, beauty, glory, and excellency doth flow. 2. See hence the horrid ingratitude of

sinners in waging war against God, who is so good and so kind unto man. 3. See hence the way and method that God takes to "lead sinners to repentance": why, He just pursues them with His kindness, and draws them "with cords of a man, with bands of love; knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" 4. Is God so good and so kind to worm man? then see hence, what a reasonable command the first command of the law is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." 5. See hence the criminal nature of the sin of unbelief, which is a saying upon the matter, God is not to be trusted, notwithstanding all His kindnesses, pity, and love to man. 6. Is God so kind to man? worm, worthless man? Is the regard that He shows to us so surprising and wonderful? then let us discover a regard to Him, and to everything that belongs to Him. (1) In His works of nature. (2) In His works of providence. (3) In His Christ. (4) In His Scriptures. (5) By attending His courts. (*E. Erskine.*) *The Divine condescension*.—I. THE GREAT BEING WHO REGARDS—JEHOVAH. 1. Infinitely blessed in Himself. (1) Independent. (2) All-sufficient. 2. He has dominion over all. 3. He is well acquainted with all our conduct. 4. He hates sin with an infinite hatred. II. THE OBJECT REGARDED—MAN. 1. A most mean object. 2. A most frail being. 3. Singularly poor. (1) Spiritually destitute. (2) Spiritually deep in debt. (3) Unable to escape his creditor. 4. Spiritually loathsome. 5. Full of malignity. III. THE NATURE OF THE REGARD SHOWN BY GOD TO MAN. God hath shown his love to man—1. By assuming wonderfully gracious characters. David exclaimed, "Lord, what is man," etc., immediately after he had been surveying some of God's principal titles. "Blessed be the Lord my strength," etc. 2. By conceiving many kind thoughts about his welfare. 3. By uttering many gracious expressions to him and concerning him. 4. By acting a gracious part towards him. 5. By conferring favours upon him. 6. By what He has endured for him. (*E. Brown.*) *A fourfold wonder*.—Consider man—I. IN A STATE OF NATURE. "Of few days, and full of trouble." "As soon as we are born, we go astray, speaking lies." "Lord, what is man?" An immortal creature, and yet his immortality uncared for! A corrupt creature, and yet no holiness sought! A blind creature, and yet no sight implored! A redeemed creature, and yet that redemption slighted and forgotten! II. IN A STATE OF GRACE. "Old things have passed away." Old habits, old associations, old acquaintances, no longer please. "All things have become new." The man has new motives, new desires, new feelings, and he delights in the society and friendship of new companions. III. IN A STATE OF TORMENT. "Man dieth; man wasteth away; he giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" The wicked will rise "to shame and everlasting contempt." IV. IN A STATE OF GLORY. "Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies." He gives grace, and He gives glory, and no good thing will He withhold from you, if you are only His children, washed in His blood, sanctified by His Spirit, and robed in His righteousness. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

Ver. 4. *His days are as a shadow.*—*Human life a shadow*.—I. A SHADOW IS COMPOUNDED OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS; for when no object intercepts the light of the sun, or when the light of the sun is withdrawn, no shadow is produced. In like manner, the state of man in the present world is made up of joy and sorrow; while, as in the emblem, the latter greatly preponderates. II. A SHADOW SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING, WHEN IN REALITY IT IS NOTHING. If you grasp it, you prove its emptiness. The pleasures, riches, and honours of the present world seem important to the eye of the carnal mind when viewed at a little distance; they attract attention, excite desire, and are eagerly pursued. But when, the object being attained, they are closely examined, how empty and unsatisfactory do they prove! III. A SHADOW IS THE SUBJECT OF CONTINUAL CHANGES, TILL AT LENGTH IT FINALLY AND SUDDENLY CEASES. In the morning, when the sun first rises above the horizon, it is weak and extended to a great length. Towards noon it gains strength, and is contracted in its dimensions. From thence to sunset it gradually becomes less distinct, and at last suddenly and wholly disappears. Man, survey in this emblem thy life! How lively and affecting the description! (*Cf. Job xiv. 1, 2; James iv. 14.*) IV. A SHADOW CANNOT EXIST LONGER THAN THE SUN'S CONTINUANCE ABOVE THE HORIZON, AND IS EVERY MOMENT LIABLE TO ANNIHILATION BY THE INTERVENTION OF A CLOUD. In like manner, human life generally lasts but three-score years and ten, or four-score years; and may, by a sudden accident or the power of disease, be much curtailed. V. A SHADOW, WHEN GONE, LEAVES NO TRACK OF ITS EXISTENCE BEHIND. This also is the case with the riches, pleasures, and

honours of the world. This world is no further substantial, or of importance, than as it stands connected with the next. (*The Christian Guardian*.)

Ver. 5. Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.—*The kindling of the heart*:—It must be striking indeed to any one living in the neighbourhood of a chain of volcanoes to see those mountains which have long lain dormant suddenly tremble and throw up smoke. It must seem to them as though God laid His finger on the mountain peak, and called its hidden forces into activity, as the touch of a musician on the key of an instrument awakes a musical note. Some such scenes, transacted in the moral world, are quite as striking as those which occur in the material world. There are human natures which are cold and impassive, which become full of emotion and glow with heat at the touch of God. It was so at Pentecost. Before that day how faint-hearted, narrow-minded, short-visioned were the apostles. But how changed were they after the cloven tongues had rested on their heads. Fear was banished, their caution had disappeared, trampled down by their zeal, their understandings were illumined, their hearts burned with the fire of love, it was woe to them if they preached not the Gospel. "If He do but touch the mountains, they shall smoke." And now, what are we to learn from this? That there are times when God touches the heart, and the emotions are stirred. Perhaps the conscience is agitated by remorse for sin, perhaps with a sudden pang of sorrow for wasted opportunities, perhaps it quakes with fear of the judgments of God, perhaps there comes the flame of Divine love touching the heart, as a taper touches the wick of a candle, bidding it flame. And what then? If the feeling be allowed to be transient, if it be not followed up by an act of will, accepting the call, responding to grace, if it be followed by no resolutions, no struggle for amendment,—then it is the old story of Felix, and Agrippa, and Simon the Sorcerer over again. But, oh! if the touch of the finger of God calls up the long dormant will, if resolutions of amendment are formed, and a struggle be entered on which is to continue through life, then it is the old and beautiful story over again of Magdalen penitent and loving much, of Peter weeping and rising courageous to die for his Lord, of Saul the persecutor becoming Paul the preacher of righteousness, of John Boanerges transformed into the apostle of love. If ever your heart is stirred, at once turn the emotion to account, transform the feeling into practice. Then the feeling does not pass away for ever, it has left its trace, it has stirred your whole being, and has begun to transform your life. The whole mount of your heart will quake with the consciousness of sin, and your affections will smoke altogether as an offering of a sweet savour to God. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. It is He that giveth salvation unto kings.—*The care of Providence in defence of kings*:—God in the government of the world exercises a peculiar and extraordinary providence over the persons and lives of princes. I. UPON WHAT ACCOUNT ANY ACT OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE MAY BE SAID TO BE PECULIAR AND EXTRAORDINARY. 1. When a thing falls out beside the common and usual operation of its proper cause. 2. When a thing falls out beside or contrary to the design of expert, politic, and shrewd persons, contriving or acting in it. 3. When a thing comes to pass visibly and apparently beyond the power of the cause immediately employed in it. II. HOW AND BY WHAT MEANS GOD DOES AFTER SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY MANNER SAVE AND DELIVER PRINCES. 1. By endowing them with a more than ordinary sagacity and quickness of understanding above other men (1 Kings iv. 29; Prov. xx. 8; xxv. 5). 2. By giving them a singular courage and presence of mind in cases of difficulty and danger (1 Sam. x. 9; xi. 6). 3. By disposing of events and accidents in a strange concurrence for their advantage and preservation. 4. By wonderfully inclining the hearts and wills of men to a benign affection towards them (2 Sam. xix. 14). 5. By rescuing them from unseen and unknown mischiefs prepared against them. 6. By imprinting a certain awe and dread of their persons and authority upon the minds of their subjects (Dan. v. 12). 7. By disposing their hearts to such virtuous and pious courses as He has promised a blessing to; and by restraining them from those ways to which He has denounced a curse. And this is the greatest deliverance of all; as having a prospect upon the felicity of both worlds, and laying a foundation for all other deliverances. III. THE REASONS WHY PROVIDENCE IS SO MUCH CONCERNED IN THE SALVATION AND DELIVERANCE OF KINGS. 1. They are the greatest instruments in the hand of Providence to support government and civil society in the world. 2. They have the most

powerful influence upon the concerns of religion, and the preservation of the Church, of all other persons whatsoever. IV. SOME USEFUL DEDUCTIONS. 1. The duty and behaviour of princes towards God. It shows them from whom, in their distress, they are to expect, and to whom, in their glory, they are to ascribe, all their deliverances. 2. Does not God by such a protecting providence over kings point out to us the sacredness of their persons? and command a reverence where He Himself thinks fit to place an honour? Does not every extraordinary deliverance of a prince carry this inscription upon it in the brightest characters, "Touch not Mine anointed"? (*R. South, D.D.*)

Vers. 11-15. *Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children.*—*A wise, patriotic prayer*:—I. THE CULTIVATION OF MORAL WORTH AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE IS OF VAST IMPORTANCE TO A STATE. The moral character which the patriot here desiderates for the young people of his country is presented in two ways. 1. By a moral contrast (ver. 11). 2. By a metaphorical description (ver. 12). (1) Growth. (2) Strength. (3) Beauty. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MORAL WORTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE PHYSICAL PROSPERITY OF A COUNTRY. The patriot prays for the moral excellence of the young people, not merely for their own sake, but also for the sake of the prosperity of the state (vers. 13-15). 1. All the provisions necessary to the material happiness of mankind must come from the earth. All the food we require—vegetable and animal—and all the clothing we require, God has shut up in the earth, as in a chest, for our use. There in their rudimental elements are the corn and the cattle, the costumes to screen us from the scorching sun and protect us from the cold winds. 2. These provisions require for their development the suitable agency of man. It is for man to unlock the chest, to bring out the germs and to cultivate them into fruition. Even Paradise would not yield provisions without the tilling hand of Adam. 3. This suitable agency can only be guaranteed by the moral rectitude of the population. A high moral tone of character will stimulate the study of agricultural science, ensure industry, economy and temperance. Thus "godliness is profitable to all things." Thus, and thus only, can a state prosper (ver. 15). (*David Thomas, D.D.*) That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.—*Moral reform essential to national prosperity*:—I. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY? 1. Independence. 2. Competent affluence. 3. Sufficient and suitable means of employment for all classes. 4. Freedom. 5. Good laws, well administered. 6. Peace—internal and external. 7. A government and magistrates of a good and excellent kind. 8. A revenue competent to all the purposes of a wise and righteous government. II. THESE ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY AND HAPPINESS CANNOT BE OBTAINED OR PRESERVED EXCEPT BY THE INFLUENCE OF TRUE RELIGION. 1. The nature and tendency of what is opposed to religion. (1) Selfishness, which makes the heart hard. (2) Indolence and improvidence. (3) Intemperance. (4) Impurity. (5) Disregard to God. 2. True religion produces all those qualities which are the immediate spring and cause of prosperity and happiness. (1) A regard for God. (2) Thoughtfulness. (3) Truth. (4) A deep sense of the value of time, and the end of human existence. (5) Industry and diligence. 6. Attention to duty. 7. Temperance, chastity, etc. (*J. P. Smith, D.D.*) *Ideal youthhood*:—I. ITS ELEMENTS. 1. Strength. (1) Moral. (2) Intellectual. (3) Physical. 2. Beauty. Not veneered impotency, but polished power. 3. Religiousness. All must be inspired by the Divine. 4. Usefulness. No indolent living for oneself, but a self-sacrificing devotion to the good of others. II. ITS REALIZATION. Three things necessary. 1. Original capacity. (1) Religious instincts. (2) Moral capabilities. (3) Intellectual faculties. (4) Physical powers. 2. Appropriate culture. (1) Based on a radical moral change. (2) Suited to the varied constituents of our being. Our religious nature must be cultured, by forming us to habits of worship. Our moral nature must be cultured, by forming us to habits of truthfulness, purity, honesty, and love. Our intellectual nature must be cultured, by forming us to habits of study. The mind must be disciplined and stored with useful knowledge. Our physical nature must be cultured, by forming us to habits of health. Suitable food, pure air, due exercise, and avoidance of sensual indulgence. 3. Voluntary co-operation. (1) Realize the true object of life. Why are you here? Why are you to be cultured? (2) Make the most of your opportunities. Yours, as English-born in this century, are very great. See that they are eagerly seized and diligently used. (3) Be actuated by the highest motives. Not selfish, but benevolent and pious motives will lead you on to ideal

youthhood and ideal manhood. (*T. Baron.*) *The ideal young man and young woman*:—1. The young man is compared to a tree which is, of course, not inside the house, but out in the open; not sheltered within the walls, but exposed to all the vicissitudes of the atmosphere and to changes of climate. He has gone forth to battle with the forces of the world, and to do his work in it. Firmly rooted in the ground, he grows up (as the psalm says) "in his youth." He throws out his faculties and powers freely in every direction. The rough winds of life blow around him, but he wrestles with them, and heeds them not; indeed, the blast of difficulty only serves to fix him more deeply in the soil, and contributes to his courage and his strength. He grows upward: there is nothing interposing itself between him and heaven itself—no overhanging vice, no deadening sin or stifling worldliness, to stunt and dwarf his development. He expands because he reaches out towards the sky. What a graphic picture of the ideal Christian gentleman in the prime vigour of his youth! with nothing squalid, or mean, or miserable, or petty, or unclean, or false about him; but with all his thoughts pure, and all his aims noble, and all his tendencies in the right direction: his life an example and a blessing, a help and a strength to those who come in contact with him. 2. Now turn to the other side and observe the contrast. Here we have something in the house, and not outside of it. It is not a tree: it is a graceful column. It is not intended for rough contact with the crowd. It is rather the ornament and the blessing of the house itself. And it is sculptured into forms of exquisite beauty. You will observe that no clumsy workman has been engaged in producing it, but that, although it may be intended for an ordinary household, it is hewn and fashioned in such a way as to be fit for a palace. The daughter—that is, the young woman here depicted—is spoken of as a column. Not characterized, as some columns are, by sturdy, massive strength, but rather marked by gracefulness; rather a slender-shafted column than anything else, she is yet no mere piece of ornamentation, but does her part in the sustaining and upholding of the household. If a girl cannot go out into the world and labour, so as to be able to contribute by her earnings to the maintenance of the family (and few can do that), at least there are many conceivable ways in which she may contrive to lighten the burden laid upon the shoulders of her parents. Parents grow old; and what in their younger days was easily borne becomes (occasionally, at least) irksome, and sometimes almost intolerable, to their failing strength and their clouded faculties. Or sickness comes into the household, and calls for patient nursing. Or little brothers and sisters require management, and perhaps teaching. Or it may be a blight falls upon the family prosperity; and then there must be a curtailing of accustomed comforts, and a necessary taking up of somewhat uncongenial occupations. But the imagery points not only, I think, to the work done, but also to the manner in which it is done. A pillar may support a rock, or help to support it, and yet be a coarse and clumsy sort of affair after all. It may be rough, instead of being polished. But this pillar spoken of by the psalmist is polished; and not only polished, but adorned with lovely sculptures. And there it stands before us, in its quiet gracefulness and beauty, a most engaging and most attractive object. Now, what is meant by this? External accomplishment? Well, yes, perhaps—nay, probably yes—the grace of a self-possessed and ladylike manner, the charm of a cultivated taste, of a musical voice, of a pure style—all the advantages, in fact, of a well-used education. These are things by no means to be despised. And, indeed, it were much to be wished that the girls of our ordinary English families, when their course of instruction is over, would take up, if only for their own sakes, some definite study—some branch of science, or some field of literature, or some period of history, or some foreign language, or some department of music, or of painting—something which shall find them occupation, and furnish a sphere for the faculties which God has bestowed upon them, and which at the same time shall not interfere with their duties, but rather make them more fit for any higher work for God and their fellow-creatures in which they may be called upon to engage. However, the polish and the gracefulness of which I speak is rather that of inward life and character, than that of outward accomplishments. It is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. It is the tender consideration, the loving sympathy, the unselfish regard, the purity, and the gentleness, and the compassion which, if they are to be found anywhere in their highest perfection, are surely to be found in the women who are true followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*G. Cuthrop, M.A.*) *Plants grown up in their youth*:—The ancients, in their build-

ing arrangements, did just the opposite of what we do. We construct our houses with the garden in front or behind. They build them with the garden inside. And so when you entered the porch you found yourself in a court, with the rooms all round. In the houses of the wealthy this court was laid out with wonderful taste, adorned with shrubs and trees, with fountains and fishponds, and elegant statuary. In some instances it was paved with coloured marbles, shadowed by olive and acacia trees, and surrounded by a piazza, whose entablature rested on columns or pilasters (called by the Greeks *caryatides*), which were commonly carved after the figure of a woman dressed in long robes. Now, I think I catch the idea in my mind of the sacred poet. Two objects in that central court specially arrest his eye; the one being the young but sturdy trees that grow up so vigorous within the enclosure, and the other the polished pillars or pilasters that stand so gracefully around; and to his mind they are respectively the suggestive emblems of the sons and daughters of a pious and prosperous household. For young men David desired—I. A HEALTHFUL FRAME; a strong, robust, vigorous physique. It has been said that, as righteousness is the health of the soul, so health is the righteousness of the body. You who have a sound and well-disciplined body, with the appetite and elasticity that go along with it—even though you cannot boast of more than a mediocrity of talent, and are unpossessed of wit and imagination—will outstrip, in the race for real happiness and usefulness, those nervous and morbid creatures whose only compensation is the occasional gleam of a fitful and spasmodic genius. II. A SOLID CHARACTER. The figure in the text is tropical, and certainly the writer had in his mind's eye some such tall and stately species of growth as he refers to by name in another psalm, where he says, "The righteous shall flourish as a palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." "Character," says Foster, "should retain the upright vigour of manliness; nor let itself be bent and fixed in any specific form. It should be like an upright elastic tree, which, though it may accommodate itself a little to the wind, never loses its spring and self-dependent vigour." I have often seen mere youths whose dignity of bearing was like a coat of mail to them, and to others was a perpetual sermon. "Under whose preaching were you converted?" said one young man to another. "Under no one's preaching," was the reply, "but under my cousin's practising." Ah! a consistent life, whose manifest aim is not the pursuit of pleasure, but the performance of duty, is mightier in its testimony than all the eloquence of the pulpit. In like manner you may be lifted above the common level, notwithstanding all the natural difficulties which would keep you down; aye, these very difficulties may be ultimately the means of your elevation. III. A HIDDEN LIFE. Doubtless, what chiefly struck the eye of the psalmist as he looked on those young trees was their exuberant vitality. Whence the height of their stems, the extension of their branches, the greenness of their foliage, the fulness of their bloom? There was a life within, which, springing from the root, made itself felt to the remotest leaf and fibre. Under the warm and genial influence of a tropical climate, sheltered within the enclosure, yet open to the light and rain and dew, those trees were no doubt pictures of full luxuriant life. That life came from God. It is equally so in the spiritual domain. Each of you needs that which no human power can communicate, and without which the fairest religious profession is only a painted corpse. Personal and saving religion is no development from within, no product of moral evolution; it is something whose germ must be imparted to you by the Holy Spirit; and without which germ you are, in the sight of God, absolutely dead. (J. T. Davidson, D.D.) *The education of character*.—1. Let me speak, first, to parents and to teachers. What ideals have we as parents for our children; and what ideals have we as to the kind of education which will best secure these ideals? I think it is true that we as a nation have an unreasoning distrust of ideals. We know ourselves strictly practical, and we condemn ideals as visionary and futile. But is it visionary, is it useless to try to form some notion of the best and truest and completest life possible for our children, and the best means of attaining it? What would we wish their lives to be? How may they best be trained for such lives? Knowledge, we say, is power; and too often it seems to be that the acquisition of knowledge is the goal of education. Our ideas of education are shaped by the periodical visit of the examiner or the inspector. The temptation is to aim at immediate results and plant the kind of crop which will spring up quickly and be easily harvested, rather than at such patient development and training of powers as will produce solid and permanent results, though we may have to wait for the harvest. But there is a greater power than know-

ledge—it is character. What tells in the long run is character. True education will be such a training as will draw out, develop, strengthen the faculties which each child possesses to fit it for its duty in life. It will aim at awakening intelligence and stimulating the growth of character. It will take account of the mysterious complexity of our nature—body, mind, soul, spirit—with their mysterious correlation and interaction, so that a due balance may be preserved; the flesh help soul, and the soul help flesh. It will remember, too, that each human being is a distinct personality, and true education is the individual's development according to the truth of his own personality, or for the action which lies within range of his capacity. Such education of the character must be religious education—that is to say, it must be carried on in a religious atmosphere by teachers who regard it as a religious work and connect their teaching by their own examples. Religious education is not merely or mainly instruction in religious subjects, in Bible or Catechism for a certain time in the day, but education carried on in a religious spirit. "If I were to have to choose," said Bishop Creighton, "between two systems of education, in one of which purely secular teaching was to be given by a religious man, and in the other religious teaching by a secular man, I should have no hesitation in saying which system I would choose in the interest of religion as well as education. I would rather have the religious-minded leader though the subject he taught were secular, because I know that the devotion of his heart would penetrate whatever he did, and perchance the fire that was in him might fall on others with whom he came in contact, and kindle a corresponding flame in their hearts." Our ideal, then, will be an education which will develop the individual personality of each separate child for the action which lies within the range of its capacity, which will aim, above all, at the development of worthy character, and which will find its sanction and obligation for conduct in the relation of the child to its Father in heaven, who has taken it into covenant with Him.

2. I want to say a word, next, to those who, though not yet in a position of responsibility towards others, have left school and are emancipated from the discipline of education imposed upon them from outside. You are responsible for self-education. To each of us is entrusted the building up of our own character; to fulfil that duty we must not only guard against moral faults, we must improve every talent we possess, we must widen our interests, we must sharpen our faculties by careful effort. And why? For your own sake. Many a life has been wrecked for want of taking a chart and setting a course and steering steadily along it with steady purpose instead of passing hither and thither, the sport of every wind and circumstance, until it was driven upon some sandbank, where it stuck fast hopelessly or was dashed to pieces against the rocks, which if they had known they might have avoided.

3. I just want to say one word to those who are still under the discipline of school life. Boys and girls, use your opportunities. It matters quite as much how you learn as what you learn; perhaps more. By the way in which you do your lessons you are surely acquiring, mentally and morally, habits of attention, concentration, thoughtfulness, industry, trustworthiness principally, or habits of carelessness, desultoriness, slackness, indolence, indifference. There are plenty of lessons which will not be of any direct use to you in after life; there are none which will not have served some useful purpose in developing intelligence and building up character. (*Prof. Kirkpatrick.*) *Plants and corner stones.*—This is a weighty prayer expressed in a poetical way. Poetry, it is scarcely needful to say, is not inconsistent with the deepest earnestness and the greatest solidity of thought. Indeed, it may be said that the highest degree both of solidity and earnestness finds its fit utterance in terms of the imagination. You will observe that this verse depends upon the preceding one—"Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children, . . . that our sons may be as plants." It is implied that the separating of the strange and false is necessary to the true welfare of the others. Strange children are those of an alien spirit, who had a tendency and purpose entirely foreign to that of Israel. Their pleasure was in the unreal, the hollow, the false. Their life was not controlled by the truth of God, but swayed by caprice, passion, and false ideas. The young are peculiarly susceptible to such influences. They are sometimes absolute slaves of those of their own age who are more vigorous, confident, and aggressive than themselves. Hence the force of the prayer, "Rid me from strange children that our sons may be as plants." This connection also shows, if anything were needed to show it, that the psalmist has in view the qualities of the soul. I. BOTH FIGURES EXPRESS, IN DIFFERENT WAYS, THE NOTIONS OF FIXITY AND SUBSTANCE.

Both plant and column are fixed and steady. The plant is fixed by its roots into the earth: the column fixed into the building. Fixity is essential to both. Young men and young women, will you remember this: fixity of root, of foundation, is the first necessity? Be rooted. Strike into the great truths and remain there; else there is no reality, no substance. All men acknowledge the need of fixed principles and beliefs. You must have a fixed belief about the rising of the sun and its setting. There must be a fixed belief in the seasons, in the coming of winter and spring and summer and autumn. If men did not hold these beliefs fixed as the basis of their activity the human world would come to a stop. So life must be rooted in fixed belief in God, and the way of reconciliation and fellowship with Him. This belief alone gives meaning and purpose and substance to life. The more you are rooted and fixed in great truths the stronger and more substantial you will be. II. GROWTH AND PERMANENCE ARE BOTH SET FORTH IN THE TEXT. Growth belongs just as necessarily to the conception of a plant as permanence does to that of a column. I have been speaking of the necessity of fixity, of having the root fixed in great truths. Does this seem to any one inconsistent with growth? How can we be growing and changing if we are fixed? If we are indissolubly bound to anything how can we grow? I ask, how can the plant grow, immovably fixed to one spot? How does it grow but by being fixed? Growth of soul and spirit is the result of holding firmly to great central truths and drawing the very pith of them into the being. With the strength of these in him one lays hold of more. These great truths lead the soul to more. They cry for more; they guide and direct and clear the horizon, and give man a spirit, courage, and impulse for more. Growth and permanence must go together. III. IN THE PLANT AND THE COLUMN WE HAVE REPRESENTED INDIVIDUALISM, SEPARATENESS, INDEPENDENCE, AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMBINATION, UNITY, MUTUAL HELP, AND SUPPORT. The true conception of human life is the union of these two tendencies. He is the best and strongest man who is individual, self-reliant, independent, and yet has the woman's love for the general reason, generous trust, wide sympathies; and who trusts above all things the deep feelings which he has in common with all men. IV. THE TEXT SPEAKS OF TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF BEAUTY—THAT OF THE PLANT, THE BEAUTY OF NATURE; THAT OF THE SCULPTURED COLUMN, THE BEAUTY OF CULTURE. These are two sides of the same: the one is not to be attributed to man specially, and the other specially to woman. We are reminded that all beauty of soul must be the result both of nature and of cultivation. That the soul may be beautiful, it must be a living soul, living by contact with the infinite, in fellowship with God. This is truly the beauty of nature, the deepest nature. Young men and young women, let us think that we have a God who delights in our happiness, a loving God. And let this make us glad. Such a gladness has a powerful influence. The gladness of a devout heart has a healing, sweetening, purifying influence on the whole being. Remember also that you owe it to the world and to God to cultivate your mind and heart. This is your time to grow. Your first duty is to grow mentally, morally, spiritually yourselves. Your fresh enthusiasm is given you for the purpose of growth. Try both how devout you can be, and how well stored and educated your mind can be made, and you will be a mighty force in the world for good. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *Plants and stones* (To children):—This verse is very easy to understand, because it teaches us what boys and girls ought to be like. I. BOYS. God wishes to see them like "plants grown up in their youth." Like plants, not like weeds. Do you know the difference between plants and weeds? I will only name one or two. Weeds are not wanted; plants are prized. Some boys grow up like weeds. A whole wagonload of weeds is not worth anything. The best thing that can be done with the weeds is to burn them up out of the way. Now, there are some boys who grow up like thistles, or like nettles, or like docks; there is no demand for them. They are not wanted in offices, nor in shops, nor on ships, nor in factories, or warehouses, or schools, or colleges. They are not wanted in America, or Australia, or New Zealand, or, in fact, in any part of the world beside. But plants are valued in many ways. Some are prized for their beauty and fragrance, as the flowers; some are healing, medicinal plants; and some are valued, like the strawberry plants, for the good fruit they bear. Boys may, if they will, be valued in all these ways at once. Now, boys, what will you be? Plants or weeds? This is the time in which to make your choice. Like Samuel, know the Lord from your boyhood; for (Job xxviii. 28). The voice of Wisdom says to you (Prov. viii. 17). II. GIRLS. Let us now see what message the text has for them. It desires that they may be

"like corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." What does that mean? First, it teaches that girls should have in their characters great firmness and strength. Like a rock, or a massive corner stone, they must never be moved from the place God has appointed for them. There is a great deal of difference between a rock and a sponge or an india-rubber ball. One is solid, firm, and unyielding, the others are soft, pliable, and may be pressed into any shape whatever. Some girls are like sponges; they will be persuaded to do almost anything, without thinking whether it is right or wrong; while others, having chosen the right way, are like a splendid corner stone that has been placed in the wall of a building, there to abide as long as the edifice lasts. Nothing can move them from their foundation. But a corner stone also unites two sides of a building. It looks along both sides of a wall, and joins them both together. In this way sisters may be the bonds of a household. In many homes that are commonly very happy little differences do sometimes occur. Let it be your special work to soothe and heal them. It is almost impossible to say how great is the power of gentle sisterly love in any home. There is one thing more for you in the text, and that is the phrase, "polished after the similitude of a palace." This is a very beautiful figure. The daughters of the Church are not only to be firm and immovable in all that is good, and like bonds of union in their homes and everywhere else, but they are to have a finish, a smoothness, and perfection of character about them that will make them fit to be placed in the palace of the King. (*R. Brewin.*) *Plants and cornices*.—If we alter "corner stones" into "cornices" we get a clearer meaning; and as one of our most eminent scholars prefers this rendering, reminding us that "Syrian architecture still delights in ornamenting corners of rooms with variegated carved work," we may accept the charge without misgiving. (*A. H. Vine.*) *Soul culture*.—A piece of marble blasted from the quarry may stand as a symbol of strength, but when transformed by the skilful hand of the sculptor it changes into a thing of exquisite beauty. Education in its highest form blends strength with beauty. The higher life abounds in attractive graces. Soul culture develops and blooms into beauty. One of the poets of Israel, with the vision of palaces before him, offers a prayer that the daughters of Judah might be as corner stones, polished into brilliant beauty after the similitude of a palace. (*R. Venting.*) *That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.*—*The model young woman*.—The charming young woman is one of the most useful and beautiful objects of earth; God's improvement on man; His masterpiece; a being inspiring those who meet her with all good desires, and worthy of all reverential admiration when one beholds her adorned with the perfections that her Creator has ordained for her glory; Jehovah's choicest gift to Adam was such a maiden. 1. The charming young woman whom we all know was a girl as long as she could be, and when she passed to the stature of womanhood she put on strength, but not a bit of coarseness or mannishness. She became a womanly woman. Now she is proud of her sex and makes others so. She is sincere and frank. There is no mask on her face and no humbug in her make-up. She loves truth for its own sweet sake. She is full of conscious moral power, and never feels the need of having recourse to that common weapon of weaker feminines—falsehood. Out of such materials the brave Deborah, the virtuous Vashti, the consecrated Esther, and the patient Virgin Mary were composed. 2. The charming young woman is full of fine feelings. She loves and cultivates the beautiful, and her soul naturally clings to the elegant in nature, as it does also to the spiritual splendours of God. Her fine feelings recoil from unreined gush and lawless sentiment, but easily run into the ways of generous charity. She has tears for suffering and kindly ministries for those who need. Yet in peril or necessity there are principles to guard, or to nerve to heroic effort. The days she tenderly played mother to her dolls were true forerunners of the devoted services of her maturer years. She may be beautiful of features, but is generally not so. "Beauty is vain." Flattery or worshipping self before a mirrored shrine usually spoils our handsome girls. 3. The charming young woman does not rest her power of fascination upon her shapeliness nor her array of second-hand clothes borrowed from the ostrich and silk-worm. Her charm-power is from within. Her ideal is industrious. She abhors a sublimation of herself into a mere fitness to occupy a glass case, too fragile to move, too mightily fine for any vigorous use. She is a princely one, after the style of Rebecca the water-drawer; Rachel the shepherdess, and Tamar the maiden baker. These were all worthy daughters of kings. Our model is independent in the superior sense, not

in the "I don't care for any one" import of the term. She cares for everybody. She cares too much on the one hand to be a dead weight on any one, and on the other hand she cares too much for herself to be the slave of a capricious "They say." 4. Our charmer is pure in heart; the "racy" jest or double-meaning pun is quickly scouted out of her presence, even when she is among the intimates of her own sex. Her purity is her panoply; a glance of her sincere eye would be to the insinuating rake like a section of the day of judgment. She has principles, and lots of them. She knows why she has them, and keeps them for constant use and not for parlour dress-parade or donation to other people. She is pious. Religion and women were made for each other, and each needs the other. A young woman with no bent easily to accept the Saviour gives evidence of a radical defect in her nature. (A. S. Walsh, D.D.)

Ver. 14. **That there be no complaining in our streets.—English pauperism:—**English pauperism is a peculiar product of this island. You see nothing like it anywhere else. Those who have heard me speak on this topic know what an essential difference I draw between pauperism and poverty. Poverty is a relative term. Man may be poor, and yet may be healthy and very happy, and may not need your sympathy. But pauperism describes the conditions of those unhappy fellow-citizens of ours in such wretched circumstances that it is absolutely impossible for them to maintain themselves and their families in health and decency. Now, this kind of extreme poverty or pauperism is quite different from anything that you witness anywhere else. As a distinguished minister of my own church, Dr. Rigg, said a quarter of a century ago, in a book which he published on the subject of Education, English pauperism is "a national institution," "a legacy from mediæval times and dregs of an outworn feudalism." In other words, the peculiar pauperism which exists in this country arises from the fact that the people have been divorced from the soil. (H. P. Hughes, M.A.) **Remedy for pauperism:—**Many who have no sympathy with abstract committees would be delighted to help particular cases. If any such committee were able to put affluent men and women into direct relations with some starving families, it would be a great gain every way. This suggestion is not novel. It was made five years ago by a gentleman at the second conference we ever held. Suppose we could get every household represented here to look after one destitute household. Instead of giving their charity here and there, suppose I could introduce you to one family—husband, wife, and children—all in great need of work. You could in various ways assist with practical sympathy and advice as well as with money. I do not know how many families there are likely to be out of work. Suppose 20,000 or 30,000 are in this condition, and suppose I could get 20,000 or 30,000 men and women to undertake to be a real friend to one family each, it would not be a great strain upon their purse or time, and it would be an untold blessing. Oh, that we could do something to bring together into direct personal contact the unprivileged and the privileged! Their separation is the root of the want of social sympathy between them. But let me say that many of those who seem to be the most remote from the poor are deeply touched by their condition, and are extremely anxious to help them. And I think the way suggested by Mr. Arnold White is one of the most effectual. Further, it will be found that if we could only prevent the pauperism occasioned by intemperance, there would scarcely be any pauperism left. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 15. **Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.—A happy people:—**I. EXAMINE WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN THE RELATION REFERRED TO. This may refer—1. To God as the object of religious worship. 2. To Him as the author of every blessing. 3. To the covenant relation in which He condescends to stand to His people. This includes—(1) Divine acceptance. (2) Delightful intercourse. (3) Pleasing satisfaction. II. ILLUSTRATE AND CONFIRM THE DECLARATION ITSELF. Such persons are happy—1. Because all the Divine perfections are engaged in their behalf. (1) Mercy to pardon their sins, and deliver them from guilt and misery. (2) Wisdom to remove their ignorance, and guide them through the intricate mazes of this world. (3) Power to assist their weakness, and be their guard and defence. (4) Omnipresence to survey them in every possible condition. (5) Holiness to conquer all their depravity. (6) Riches to chase away their poverty. (7) Plenty to supply all their wants. Faithfulness to perform all that has been promised. 2. Because in Him they are assured of finding a refuge in every time of need. 3.

Because they are warranted to expect every needful supply. 4. Because in Him they have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. 5. Because to them all the promises of the Gospel are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. 6. Because they have a sure prospect of being with Him for ever. Learn—1. How mistaken the men of the world are with respect to the people of God. 2. How insignificant is the worldling's portion. 3. How dangerous is the condition of those who have not the Lord for their portion. (T. Lewis.) *National religion*:—There is in this psalm the outline-sketch of an ideal people. The tuneful seer pictures a nation whose every citizen is animated by the love of God, a community in which each separate soul is governed and guided by the wisdom which is from above. Redeemed by Divine grace, every man lives to the full the manifold life that is in him. There is no discord between a man's duties and his desires, no disproportion and no inequity between the functions of the flesh and those of the mind and spirit. Every man achieves and sustains a large and harmonious life. Recognizing the fatherhood of God, every man realizes and ministers to the brotherhood of man. Freedom is unrestrained by law because conditioned by love. Selfishness is banished under the gracious constraint of truth and charity. Righteousness is wedded to peace. The sunshine of plenty is unshuffled by shadows of want. Progress leaves in its train no accumulation of poverty. Law is no longer an imposed coercion but an indwelling and spontaneous rule. Culture is sweetened by piety. Power yields to the loving dominance of gentleness. Religion is crowned with humanity. And upon this happy nation bountiful Nature, as the minister of God, showers the blessings of abundance and content. This splendid ideal, lifted up by Hebrew bard and preacher, given them by inspiration of God, naturally found its clearest expression, its most attractive unfolding, in God's Messiah. It was the declared purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ to inaugurate upon earth this kingdom of heaven. With suggestive repetition He spoke of this kingdom, this new society or body politic. He ever looked beyond, while He looked redemptively at, the individuals who gathered around Him. He saw as from a mountain-top the distant beauty of a new heaven and a new earth, and He saw that the path to it lay through the slow achievement of individual conversion. But the end was clear to Him, and certain. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. And that is our dream because it is Christ's.

I. Here, then, we emerge into THE BROADER OUTLOOKS AND IDEALS OF A TRULY NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN RELIGION. It is a movement to win England for Christ through the regeneration of every Englishman by the Spirit. We may get, we ought to toil for, more Christian laws, fairer conditions and better prospects for the people. We may, through the social elevation of men, and through the cleansing of their environment, help to advance them to a higher stage of life. By the organization and impact of Christian opinion we may prevent national iniquity and promote public righteousness. All these instruments of battle and victory are within the Christian armoury. But only through new men can new nations emerge, and only through the patient evangelization of our people can our country become a truly Christian land.

II. Let me now remind you that WE ARE MOVED TO THIS HIGH EFFORT BY REVERENCE FOR CHRIST AND LOVING PASSION FOR MEN. The first of these motives has already been emphasized. It springs from the belief that everything was made for Christ as well as by Him; that the nations are His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. It proceeds upon a broad conception of Christ's work as the redemption to God of all life's departments and faculties, of all earth's dominions and resources. It is fired by the determination to lay at Christ's feet everything the world counts glorious, and to place on His head the many crowns. Nothing smaller can satisfy our gratitude or reverence. We cannot rest content till the world for which He died acclaims Him Saviour and King. And we are stirred to the same endeavour by our compassion for men, and by our belief that the Gospel holds the secret of all wealth and joy. It is new life men need, the new life of a pardoned and accepted and endowed soul. And because we possess the secret of it in the Gospel we cannot rest. Its possession is an impulse, its experience a contagion. Its incoming peace creates an outgoing sympathy. We can only keep it by giving it; the heart would break did the mouth not speak. Yes, the enthusiasm of humanity is the essential effect of Christ in the heart.

III. It is in no sense derogatory to the sublime spirituality of our theme to say that BY LOVE OF COUNTRY, NOT LESS THAN BY PROMPTINGS OF PIETY, ARE WE IMPELLED TO THIS BROAD MISSION. Our desire to see England, the land of our birth and love, foremost among the nations in the

cause of Christ and humanity, is a distinct and legitimate factor in our zeal. "Patriotism" is a noble word, and it stands for a grand quality. The England whose glory shines through many clouds, whose fair fame has won affection and scattered blessing the wide world over, is the England of the martyrs, the confessors, those speakers for God who made room for man, whose blood has been the seed of religion and liberty. It is the England of the missionary, the explorer, the emancipator, the philanthropist; the land of the open Book and the free charter, of the pious home and the sacred sanctuary, of the day of rest and the progressive faith; the land where heroes and saints have wrought to make life possible and to stir the grand enthusiasms of a broad humanity. That is our England. Round her our affections cling. For her our prayers arise. In her our faith and hope find anchorage. Love of such an England is love of all mankind through her. The patriotism which is loyal to such a land is the initial form of an enthusiasm for humanity. Hers is the opportunity, and hers the obligation, to lead the world to the knowledge of Christ; to teach mankind how to blend culture with piety, intelligence with faith, spiritual aspiration with practical service, and freedom of action with gracious constraint of obedience. Yes, that, and that supremely, is England's mission. IV. IS IT POSSIBLE OUR DREAM MAY BE REALIZED? I for one dare believe no less. But as to its probability, that depends. Others before us were called to do God's work, and they perished miserably because of failure. That fate may be ours. Should we grow into a nation of idlers, sensualists, atheists, our candlestick will surely be removed out of its place. It depends upon Christian men and Churches whether our sun is to sink in storm. If we would have England saved for her noble destiny, we must be more true in faith and practice. To that noble undertaking let me once more call you. Then shall the past of our country pale before its future. Our song shall be without discord, our glory shall be as the glory of the Lord, and in the gathering of the nations around the throne of the King our fatherland shall be foremost in service and reward. (C. A. Berry, D.D.) *The happiness of those whose God is the Lord*:—As a child in any of the families in our midst can only be happy by being docile and obedient and trustful to the wise and benevolent guidance of a godly father, or to the tender leading of a gentle and saintly mother, so, we all acknowledge at least, can we experience the highest good of the soul only by being reverent and truthful towards Him who is the Parent of us all—in whom we live and move and have our being. To be thus is to have Jehovah for our God; and only in this way shall we be happy. Now, if this is true, as unquestionably it is, of individuals, it follows that it must also be so of large collections of individuals or of nations; and this is the idea which the psalmist had principally in his mind when the words of the text were uttered. The true happiness—may I not go farther, and say the true prosperity?—of a nation will rise or fall, advance or recede, just as the love of God and the practice of justice and goodness and generosity and forbearance are or are not prevalent among the people, from the sovereign and the advisers of the crown downwards to the very humblest in the land. The true recognition of God or a conscientious regard for goodness and straightforward dealing, existing to any extent in a vast community, is a solid ground of hope in the midst of national distress or under the cloud of national calamity. If ten righteous men had been found in Sodom that city would have been saved from the destroying fire. Not only a ground of hope, therefore, but also a token of safety—of returning prosperity, of reappearing happiness. It was so as to the experience of God's ancient people, commemorated in the psalm from which our text is taken. The wrath of God had kindled against the apostate race; the proud tyrant of Babylon had been permitted to carry them away on account of their sins; but by and by this affliction became a purifying process. The love of God returned to their hearts, and the darkness began to brighten; and here there is anticipated in lofty strains a renewed golden age of power and plenty, of prosperity and happiness. The youth of the land are to be marked by native strength and vigour and freedom, whilst the maidens in their polished gracefulness and quiet beauty are to resemble the exquisitely sculptured forms which adorn the corners of some magnificent hall or chamber of a palace. Plenty both in the produce of the field and in flocks and herds is to be granted by a kindly-disposed Heaven; the very streets of their towns and villages are to re-echo to nothing but sounds of joy and thankfulness. Happiness is to prevail, but that simply because goodness is to be the national characteristic. Not one of us can fail to see most clearly his duty in this connection. We love our country, and we desire to see it

great and glorious and free and happy; but let us recollect that the only way in which this result can be obtained is by the individual members of the community devoting themselves to the honest service of goodness—in their homes, at their business, in the company into which they go, at their everyday work, always and everywhere. Thus only shall we be happy individually, and also as a people. (W. M. Arthur, M.A.)

PSALM CXLV.

VERBS. 1-21. I will extol Thee, my God, O King.—The Kingdom of God, and the glory of His providence:—I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD (vers. 1-13). 1. Absolutely incomparable. (1) Majesty incomprehensible. (2) Reign perpetual. (3) Power tremendous. 2. Supremely praiseworthy. (1) By all. (2) At all times. (3) For ever. II. THE GLORY OF HIS PROVIDENCE (vers. 14-21). His kindness to—1. Fallen man. 2. Universal life. The—(1) extent; (2) seasonableness; (3) readiness; (4) completeness of His providential care. Whatever the want—corporeal, intellectual, moral, social—He satisfies all. 3. His kindness to the genuinely pious. (1) Its spiritual activity. (2) Its transcendent privilege. (a) Nearness to God. (b) Satisfaction of desires. (c) Salvation from all evil. (3) Its worshipping spirit. (David Thomas, D.D.) *The happy duty of daily praise:—*If I were to put to you the question, "Do you pray?" the answer would be very quickly given by every Christian person, "Of course I do, and every day, and often in the day." But let me change the inquiry, and say, "Do you bless God every day?" I am not sure the answer would be quite so certain, so general, so prompt. Praise is certainly not so common in family prayer as other forms of worship. Be this our resolve: "I will extol Thee," etc. We ought to do this, for it is due to God, and praise is pre-eminently characteristic of the true child of God. It is singularly beneficial to ourselves; if we had more of it we should be greatly blest. Besides, unless we praise God here how are we preparing for our eternal home? Now to help in this joyful duty of praise let us turn to our text and see in it—I. THE RESOLVE OF PERSONAL LOYALTY. 1. He pays homage to God as his King. 2. He personally appropriates God to himself by faith. "My God." That word "my" is a drop of honey, nay, like Jonathan's word, it is full of honey. And—3. He is firmly resolved to praise God. My text has four "I wills" in it. And—4. He himself will do this. No matter what other people do. Let none of us lose our own personality in the multitude, saying, "Things will go on very well without me." Each one of us must praise God. 5. And he will be always doing this. In the second clause of our text we have—II. THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTELLIGENT APPRECIATION. "And I will bless," etc. 1. He presents the worship of inward administration. Therefore he blesses the Divine name. 2. And he meant that he wished well to the Lord. To bless a person means to do that person good. If we cannot give anything to God, we can desire that He may be known, loved and honoured by all men. It seems that David studied the character and doings of God, so that he found nothing in God which he could not praise. And he is very intense over this. "For ever and ever." The words run parallel with Addison's verse which tells that "Eternity's too short to utter all Thy praise." Somebody cavilled at that once, and said, "Eternity cannot be too short." But in poetry and in praise "the letter killeth." Language is poor when the soul is on fire. III. There is also THE PLEDGE OF DAILY REMEMBRANCE. "Every day will I," etc. For the greatness of gifts we have already received demands it. To-day it becomes us to sing of the mercies of yesterday. Each day has its mercy, and should render its praise. If we cannot praise God on any one day for what we have had that day let us praise Him for to-morrow. There is a seasonableness about the praising of God every day. For the praise of God is always in season. The last sentence tells—IV. THE HOPE OF ETERNAL ADORATION. David believed, therefore, that God was unchangeable, and in the immortality of the soul. And his resolve was that while here he would ever praise. But yonder we will praise him better. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *God's chosen people extolling their Sovereign King:—*I. THE SOVEREIGNTY HERE ASSERTED. 1. In the heart. 2. In the Church. 3. Over all things—in heaven, earth, hell. II. THE EXPERIENCE CLAIMED. "My God." He is my Father, and has made me an heir of His kingdom. III. THE

VOW RECORDED. "I will extol Thee." 1. With the praises of the lips. 2. With the vigour of the new and inner man. 3. With the valour of faith. (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*) *Christ the King of saints*:—Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, preaching on "Ecce Rex," tells the story of a soldier's death. He was wasted with disease and just about to pass into the unseen world and answer to the muster-roll above. Despite his weakness he sat himself upright in bed, lifted his hand to his forehead in a military salute, and said, "The King," and so died.

Ver. 2. Every day will I bless Thee.—*A goodly occupation*:—I. **THE DUTY IMPOSED.** 1. It is purely voluntary. Whatever we do must be done "not grudgingly, or of necessity." To do it against our will is to render mechanical service. In that there is no manhood. 2. It is personal. David appealed to others (ver. 21), for he would have others similarly engaged. But he did not wait for them. Commenced himself: led the way. So must we. 3. In harmony with his understanding, judgment, and feelings. Only so far as there is this agreement or harmony is there any hope of a successful performance of this duty. 4. But how can we bless the Lord? (1) By extolling Him. (2) Praising Him. (3) Loving Him. II. **THE TIME SET APART.** "Every day." 1. This possesses considerable advantage. Clocks that require "winding up" once a week, or once in eight or fifteen days, or longer period, are more likely to be neglected than watches and clocks which require daily attention. Then no need of reckoning up. Cannot well go wrong, for it is an "everyday" work. 2. This is comprehensive; for does not mean, as in case of watch or clock, a particular time, but all the time. In other words, that all our life should be devoted to this purpose. 3. Nor is this unreasonable; for only according to the measure whereby we have been blessed. 4. Therefore makes a business of it. Not occasional or spasmodic, but the regular, uninterrupted course. Conclusion—"Keep, therefore, and do" this, "for this is your wisdom and your understanding." (*J. H. Thompson.*) *Daily devotion*:—I. **AN OBLIGATION.** As such it calls forth—1. Reflection. Providence is a great panorama; the Bible is a vast picture-gallery; the human race is an endless orchestra; and the whole an exhibition of infinite wisdom, power, and love. The true observer is filled with calmness, reverence, worship, and his soul ascends Godward in the incense of universal adoration. 2. Thanksgiving. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the calmness of our forgiven heart we look up to the Giver of all our perfect gifts. Every day we bless Him for the Bible, for the Saviour, for the guidance of His Spirit, for the communion of saints, and for the hope of life eternal. II. **A FIT ACCOMPANIMENT TO DAILY DUTIES.** The late Princess Alice chose for her personal motto the lark. Her reason for it was that the lark soared high in the heavens to praise its Maker, and then descended to make its nest on the ground. It was a beautiful sentiment, and will apply to the godly: "Give us this day our daily bread"—that is the cry of devotion to be followed by work. Sir Thomas More stipulated when he took office under the government first to look to God and then to the king. III. **OUR STAY IN TRIAL.** IV. **A WITNESS FOR CHRIST.** Our places of worship are only open at stated times, and the Gospel preached at appointed hours, but he whose soul knows the blessedness of communion with God is a daily minister of religion. Fletcher of Madeley and his brother, when they were boys, went on Lake Geneva in a boat. After a while the mist swept down, and completely enveloped the lake. The boys soon lost their points, and kept on rowing about in the dark. At eight o'clock all the bells in the town began to peal in honour of a great event. The boys heard the bells, turned their boat towards the sound, and were soon safely landed. Let every Christian peal the bells of grace to direct the mariners who are in the darkness towards the haven of rest. (*D. Davies.*) *Praise uninterrupted*:—Suppose some one entering heaven were to say to the redeemed, "Suspend your songs for a moment! ye have been praising Christ, lo! these six thousand years: many of you have without cessation praised Him now these many centuries. Stop your song a moment; pause and give your songs to some one else for a moment." Oh! can you conceive the scorn with which the myriad eyes of the redeemed would smite the tempter. "Stop from praising Him! No, never. Time may stop, for it shall be no more: the world may stop, for its revolutions must cease; the universe may stop its cycles and the movings of its world; but for us to stop our songs—never! never!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 3. His greatness is unsearchable.—*The unsearchableness of God*:—God

transcends all thoughts; notwithstanding this, men should search after His greatness. I. Searching after His greatness is a **RIGHTeous** occupation. 1. It agrees with the profoundest instincts of the soul. 2. It is stimulated by the manifestations of nature. 3. It is encouraged by the declarations of the Bible. 4. It is aided by the revelations of Christ. II. Searching after His greatness is a **USEFUL** occupation. 1. There is no occupation so quickening to the soul. Feeling after God is an inspiration. 2. There is no occupation so humbling to the soul. The idea of the Infinite drives all vanities from the soul, and brings it down from the heights of pride into the deepest valley of humiliation. 3. There is no occupation so ennobling to the soul. The idea which brings us down into the valley of humiliation stimulates us to climb the heights of moral greatness. III. Searching after His greatness is an **ENDLESS** occupation. "Canst thou, by searching, find out God?" 1. All holy intelligences have ever been pursuing this work. 2. The endlessness of this pursuit agrees with—(1) The inexhaustible powers of our nature. (2) The strong instinct for mystery within us. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.—*The law of the generations*.—The Church that stood aloof from missions would now be as much condemned as formerly it would have been commended. And how much has been done in the varied mission fields. Now, all this you inherit. Next to the Gospel of salvation, no generation of men have ever had such a trust committed to them as is committed to you. May God help you to be faithful. For, besides being an inheritance of natural succession, it is also a moral entrustment. It constitutes part of your stewardship. How, then, will you treat this missionary inheritance? Two extremes are to be avoided: you may slight and disesteem it, or you may stereotype and superstitiously regard it; you may treat it as a puerility, or you may embalm it as a relic. You may become men of faith, and hope, and charity, or men of captiousness and self-conceit; you may have an intelligent reverence that will wisely build on the foundation that your fathers have laid, or you may have a foolish self-conceit that will be contented with nothing less than to dig it up and lay a foundation afresh for yourselves. There was wisdom in the world, let us believe it, before we were born; and we may not unbecomingly sit at our fathers' feet. Both these extremes you will avoid. As to your relationship to the future, it will be your duty—1. To qualify yourself for thus standing in the succession of the generations. But this you cannot do unless you yourselves be personally converted to God. None but the spiritual can possess the spiritual. Alas, here is a possibility of the succession failing. The pious and devoted sire may have in you a godless son. You cannot succeed him in the work he did for God. You care not for your own soul, how, then, can you care for the souls of others? 2. Form missionary and self-denying habits. But these can only be formed in early life. Those who have done this have been, and are, the most useful in the Church. 3. If you would reap the present rewards of spiritual service, begin your spiritual sowing whilst you are yet young. Life will be too short for both sowing and reaping if you do not. To induce you to give yourselves to this glorious service, remember how much depends upon it. You, humanly speaking, are indispensable for the transmission of truth to posterity. Think of your honoured fathers, how they loved this work. Think what an honoured name you may leave behind you, and the gratitude that will follow you. Think of the plain Divine command and the "blood that will be required at your hand," if you make not known the Gospel. Think of the moral grandeur and transcendence of your work. Think of the final issue and glory of it. By this motive Christ sustained His Spirit. Look on to that blessed time. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Duty of the present to the coming generation*.—I. **THE DUTY**. 1. To declare, or make known, the works of God to succeeding generations, and especially to that generation which immediately follows us. His works of—(1) Creation. (2) Providence. (3) Redemption. 2. For one generation to praise God's works to another. While they communicate a knowledge of His works they must speak highly of them. While they tell what He has done, they must add, He has done all things well. When they describe His works of creation, they must extol the wisdom, power and goodness which are displayed in them. While they communicate a knowledge of His works of providence, they must applaud them as infinitely wise, holy, just, and good. And while they exhibit the wonders of redemption, and God's works of grace to the following generation, they must accompany the exhibition with those glowing expressions of admiration, gratitude,

love and joy which this grand display of all God's perfections ought to call forth from those for whose benefit it was made, and whose everlasting happiness it is designed to promote. II. REASONS. 1. The natural relations which exist between the present and the next generation. 2. Each of the successive generations of mankind is the natural and rightful heir of the generation which preceded it. 3. For the religious knowledge and the means of acquiring it which we possess, we are indebted, under God, to preceding generations. 4. We transmit to our posterity a corrupt and depraved nature which, unless its influence is counteracted by religion, will render them miserable here and hereafter. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The praise of time*:—This is a glorious note in a noble strain, expressing a deep truth, a lofty thought. The psalmist looks down the whole stream of time. He beholds the world in all its various stages and conditions; pure in its first infancy, polluted in its fallen ruin; struggling through the gloom of ignorance and clouds of judgment; advancing in knowledge, in wealth, in power; reaching the zenith of maturity, and declining to the western horizon. Through all the entangled web of time he sees one continuous thread; he hears one note ever the same. The praise of God sounds forth unbroken and unchanged. Age answers age in unfolding His attributes. Life to life, land to land proclaim His majesty and power, His goodness and love. I. We may consider this as *THE DECREE OF GOD*. He who made the world has willed that it should praise Him. The Most High has imposed this task upon the ages. He who formed man from dust has decreed that by him His glory shall be shown. The works of God carry out His decree. The sun and moon proclaim His power. Day and night utter His wisdom. The seasons declare His bounty and His faithfulness. The fruits of the earth call forth thanksgiving. Even war, and famine, and pestilence work His will. And the history of man, even yet more strikingly, sets forth God's glory. This truth is ever written—"The Lord is King." He rules. "None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Look at Pharaoh. Hear him ask, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" He little thought how his own history should answer the question. Listen to Nebuchadnezzar,—“Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?” Yet his burning fiery furnace has borne witness for two thousand years,—“Trust ye in the Lord for ever.” The mysteries of affliction teach the same lesson. The erring has been thus brought back, or the faithful confirmed, or God's power displayed (John ix. 3). And the Church of Christ is a standing witness of the same great truth. II. We consider the text, also, as expressing *THE RESOLUTION AND WORK OF CHRIST'S CHURCH*. Praise is the rightful attitude of the redeemed (Ps. cvii. 2). It is the natural outpouring of the renewed heart. Mercy felt, love appreciated, salvation embraced and enjoyed is sure to beget true thanksgiving. So David wrote the matchless 103rd psalm. So Paul and Silas could not refrain from singing praise in Philippi's dungeon. Nay, we are told that God has chosen His people to praise Him (Isa. xlii. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 9). And even angels cannot sing the new song which belongs to the saved from earth alone (Rev. xiv. 3). And the people of God have ever claimed their holy privilege. They have sung of creation and of providence, and the wonders of redeeming love. God has never left Himself without this witness in the world. Conclusion—1. What are we doing to make our generation one of praise? We have received a pure faith; are we taking care to hand it down? 2. Do we possess in ourselves that salvation which alone enables us truly to praise? Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious? Can we thus say, "O taste and see"? 3. How glorious shall be the praise of heaven! Now one age to another, one land to another, praises God. What shall be the glory of the song when every age and every land shall sing "Salvation"; when those who sang creation (Job xxxviii. 7), and redemption (Luke ii. 13), and grace (Rom. viii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 15), shall all unite in praise; when teachers, taught; ministers, people; Jew, Gentile; bond, free; when prophets, apostles, martyrs, from Abel to the last saint of time, shall join in the song of Moses and the Lamb? (*W. S. Bruce, M.A.*)

Vers. 6, 7. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts: and I will declare Thy greatness.—How "the unspeakable" is spoken of:—Various are the ways in which men speak of the Lord. There is an ascending scale in the four sentences of our text. We hear—I. *THE AWESTRUCK TALK*. "Men shall . . . terrible acts." There have been times in human history when men have thus spoken. As often the flood, the destruction of Sodom, the judgments on Egypt,

on Canaan. So, too, in regard to Nineveh, Babylon. When such acts are abroad turn them into prayer that men may learn God's lesson from them. Such acts leave deep impress; the boldest blasphemers are silenced then. II. **THE BOLD DISCOURSE.** "And I will declare Thy greatness." After the many have spoken in awe I will deliver my soul with courage. It is the right time for this. I heard it said of a certain preacher by one who was no ill judge, though a simple countryman, "I have heard many preachers, but I never heard one that seemed to make God so great as that man does." That was high praise—too little deserved in our day. All divinity is now to be shaped according to man, and from man's point of view. Men are such wonderful beings in this nineteenth century that we are called upon to tone down the Gospel to "the spirit of the age"—that is, to the fashions and follies of human thought as they vary from day to day. This, by God's help, we will never do. But after the awestruck people talking of God's mighty acts, and then the child of God coming in with his personal testimony, we have—III. **THE GRATEFUL OUTPOURING OF THANKFUL SPIRITS.** "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness." The Hebrew word tells of a bubbling up, as of a full fountain, a springing well. Did you ever tell the story of your life to anybody to the full? Did you ever write it? I am sometimes not a little amused, certainly not surprised, when I get, as I did this week, a letter upon foolscap, twelve sheets, twenty-four pages, all filled up with the story of a man I never saw, who lives far away in the backwoods. Nothing will do but he must tell somebody or other what God has done for him, and he has selected me to hear it. But I like the instinct that makes a man feel, "I must tell what the Lord hath done for me." IV. **LISTEN TO THE SELECT SONG.** It is of "Thy righteousness." David says in Ps. li. that he will sing aloud of this. Is it not a strange choice? God's righteousness is a terror to many. But see how God's righteousness is preceded and succeeded by mention of His goodness. It is righteous mercy and merciful righteousness. What a horror it would be if we had an unrighteous God. But He is righteous in all that He reveals, commands, decrees, does; in all His judgments, but especially in Christ Jesus. To sing of God's righteousness is in our day one chief mark of real conversion. If we were more sanctified we should be less tempted to cavil at the righteousness of God. Here is a man who takes down his Bible, and he reads, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Can't bear it," says he. It is because you do not know the mind of God fully, or else, terrible as it is, you would say, "It must be right if God determines it." The modern men blot out from God's Word what they like, or they lay it aside altogether. But when the soul is brought to know God it does not question His Word or His doings any more. Men dream, and then assert their visions as truth. If there be a "larger hope," so be it, but let me not preach it as a doctrine. Let us each learn to say, "I will sing of Thy righteousness." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness.—The philosophy and propriety of abundant praise:—This is called David's psalm of praise; all through it he is inflamed by strong desire that God may be greatly magnified. I. **THE METHOD OF SECURING THE ABUNDANT UTTERANCE OF THE DIVINE PRAISE CONCERNING HIS GOODNESS.** Our text gives the mental philosophy of such praise, and shows the plan by which it may be secured. 1. By careful observation. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness." Now, in order to memory there must first be observation. If we want to remember His goodness we must let it strike us, we must notice it, consider it. Too many fail to notice that the goodness they receive is God's goodness. They put it down to other causes. If we are willing to see it we shall not lack for opportunities. It is everywhere. David notices especially its greatness. And this evident if we consider those who receive it. What have we done to deserve it? And then, the greatness of God the benefactor. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" And then the evil from which it rescues us; and the actual greatness of the benefits bestowed. He giveth like a King; nay, He giveth like a God. Observe the goodness of God carefully for your soul's good. 2. By diligent memory. Memory collects facts and afterwards recollects them. The matters before us are recorded by memory, but the tablet may be mislaid; the perfection of memory is to preserve the tablet in a well-known place, from which you can fetch it forth at the moment. How are we to strengthen our memory as to God's goodness? Be acquainted with the documents in which His goodness is recorded. Observe

the memorials, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Treasure up your own personal experience. I have heard that the science of mnemonics, or the strengthening of the memory, lies in the following of certain methods. According to some, you link one idea with another: you recollect a date by associating it with something that you can see. Practise this method in the present case. Associate it with the objects around you. Let your bed remind you of God's mercy in the night watches, and your table of His goodness in supplying your daily needs. All around us there are memoranda of God's love if we choose to read them. There is the old arm-chair where you wrestled with God in great trouble, and received a gracious answer: you cannot forget it; you do not pray as well anywhere else as there. That thumbed Bible—that particular one I mean, all marked and worn, out of which the promises have gleamed forth like the stars in the heavens. Oh for a clear remembrance of the goodness of God. Classification is another help. Also making notes of things. You know the day in which you lost that money, do you not? The Black Friday or Black Monday up in the City; you have indelible notes of such things in your memory. Have like ones of notable benefits that you have received. Then, besides observation and memory, let there be—3. Utterance. "They shall abundantly utter." The word contains the idea of boiling up or bubbling like a fountain. It signifies a holy fluency about the mercies of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are many of them idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work. The Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women; but it matters not how fluent they are if it be on the topic now before us. Open your mouths; let the praise pour forth. Be so occupied constantly. "Abundantly" means that. Just as the singers in the temple repeated over and over again, "His mercy endureth for ever." Your memory will lose strength unless you utter what you know. Then—4. Sing. "And shall sing of Thy righteousness." Parnassus is outdone by Calvary; the Castilian spring is dried and Jesu's wounded side has opened another fount of song. Lift up, then, your music till the golden harps shall find themselves outdone. II. THE MOTIVES FOR SUCH PRAISE. 1. We cannot help it. "If these should hold their peace," etc. "Oh," said one in his first love, "I must speak, or I shall burst." 2. Other voices are clamorous to drown all such praise. 3. It will do you such good. The past, the present, the future will all be lit up with delight if we are wont thus to praise God. We shall find nothing to grumble at or complain about, but everything to rejoice in. 4. And it does such good to other people. "While here our various wants we mourn, united groans ascend on high"—so says Dr. Watts, and I fear truly; but very few will be attracted by such utterances. Is it good reasoning if men say, "These people are so miserable that they must be on the way to heaven"? We may hope they are, for they evidently want some better place to live in; but then it may be questioned if such folks would not be wretched anywhere. We have glorious reasons for being happy; let us be so, and soon we shall hear persons asking, "What is this? Is this religion? I always thought religious people were mournful people." There is a blessed seductiveness in a holy happy life. And such happy utterance will help much to comfort others. Many are sorrowing from various causes: therefore be happier than ever you were. That venerable man of God, now in heaven, our dear old father Dransfield, when it was a very foggy morning in November, used always to come into the vestry before the sermon and say, "It is a dreary morning, dear pastor; we must rejoice in the Lord more than usual. I hope we shall have a very happy service to-day." He would shake hands with me and smile, till he seemed to carry us all into the middle of summer. Lastly, let us thus praise, because it is the way in which God is glorified. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The goodness of God*:—Have you not known and felt the presence of that Being, whose Infinitude is not only displayed in power and wisdom, but also in Love? Remember the sweet hours of childhood, when the clear, blue sky of day, and the dark blue sky of night opened upon you like the eyes of your preserving angel. Think how a thousand reflections of the Eternal goodness have played around you, from heart to heart, from eye to eye of mankind, as one light shines from sun to sun and from world to world throughout the universe. (Jean Paul Richter.) *Memory of God's goodness salutary*:—Augustine tells of one to whom God was so wonderfully kind, and the man was so wonderfully bad, that at last he grew astonished at God's goodness, and since the Lord continued to load him with benefits, he turned round and cried, "Most benignant God, I am ashamed of being Thine enemy any longer. I confess my sin and repent of it."

Ver. 8. Slow to anger, and of great mercy.—*Sin a provocation and a misery:*—**I. THE PROVOCATIVE POWER OF SIN.** God is susceptible of provocation. 1. He is not cold intellect. 2. He is not indifferent to moral conduct. 3. His nature revolts at sin. 4. However great His displeasure, He controls it. **II. THE MISERY-PRODUCING POWER OF SIN.** It has turned our Eden into a vale of tears. (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. The Lord is good to all.—*The goodness of God:*—Goodness is the same quality in all beings which have understanding, in God, in angels, and in men; it is, and it must be, the same in kind, differing only in degree. Now goodness in us is a disposition and an endeavour to promote the welfare and happiness of others; and from this notion of human goodness we may frame some conceptions of the Divine goodness, and say that goodness in God is a disposition to bestow at all times and in all places upon all His creatures all the good which, according to their several natures, they are capable of receiving, and which it is reasonable that He, as the wise Governor and Preserver of the whole, should bestow upon each individual. 1. That God is good appears from the necessary connection between goodness and other Divine perfections. God is supremely wise, and knoweth, beyond a possibility of mistaking, what is best and most beneficial for the whole; He is almighty, and able to execute His purposes; and possessing everything in which happiness consists, He can be under no temptation to hurt and to oppress others. 2. To suppose that God is not good is to suppose Him weaker and more imperfect and worse than the worst of His creatures. In men every sin is general, and in particular every sin against the rules of goodness may be ascribed to the temptation of present profit or pleasure, to a power which the mind hath of fixing its thoughts entirely upon the object which it desires, and of overlooking the ill consequences arising from it, and in some measure to error and mistake. But God, if He were an evil being, would be disposed to evil neither by mistake, nor temptation, nor passion, nor advantage, and would choose evil purely as evil. And upon this absurd supposition, instead of the Best and Greatest, He would be the lowest and the meanest of all beings; for nothing can be great that is not good. 3. That God is good appears also from the goodness which is seen in His creatures, in men. Goodness in this world is exercised in some degree by many, and is esteemed and commended by almost all. If this disposition be found in some measure in us, it must be most eminently in our Creator, from whom this and all other virtues must be derived. It is the observation of a great philosopher that the artist loves the work of his hands better than his work would love him if it were endued with sense and reason; and that the person who confers a great benefit upon another loves him whom he obliges better than the obliged person loves him. To which it may be added, that parents generally love their children more than they are beloved by them. And yet, in all these instances, gratitude, one would think, should make the love of the inferior to be the strongest; but experience shows that it hath not this effect. These observations may be reduced to this general truth, that love descends more than it ascends; and we may be permitted, I think, to apply this to God and to ourselves, and to say that our great and good Creator and Benefactor loves us far better than even the most dutiful of us love Him. 4. The goodness of God appears in its effects, in the blessings which we receive from Him. 5. Another proof of the goodness of God is to be taken from the testimony of Scripture. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Objections to the goodness of God:*—1. Objections are taken from the evil that is in the world, which may be comprised under these two sorts, the evil of sin, and the evil of pain. God is either the author of all these evils, or at least He permits them. How can this be reconciled with His goodness, and how could they enter into a world created and ruled by a beneficent Lord, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works? To this difficulty two general answers may be made, in which a humble and modest mind may acquiesce. (1) We are so incompetent judges of God's providence that we ought not to charge Him with want of goodness from those evils which we see and experience. (2) In all questions of this nature it is the part of every prudent inquirer to consider the difficulties on both sides, and to embrace the opinion which hath the fewest. By this way of judging the question before us is soon decided; for there are many unanswerable proofs of God's goodness, there are many absurdities which follow the denial of it; and the difficulties which attend it arise in all probability from our limited capacity and imperfect knowledge,

which cannot discover the whole plan and system of Divine providence. (3) From these general answers let us now descend to a consideration of particulars. It was an act worthy of our beneficent Author to create a variety of beings endued with reason and capable of immortal happiness. But a rational agent must be a free agent; for to reason and to act require and imply choice and liberty; and every created and free being must have a power of sinning, unless he had the perfections of his Creator; which is impossible. Thus the evil of sin entered into the world in such a manner that it cannot be charged upon God and prove any want of goodness in Him. If we consider the evil of pain as the consequence of sin, we must acknowledge that we are deservedly subject to it, and that beings who act perversely and unreasonably ought to suffer for it. The pain to which the good are liable, if it be to them an occasion of exercising many virtues, and of qualifying themselves for greater rewards in a better state, is profitable and desirable. The pain to which the bad are exposed, if it may, as it certainly may, be useful to them to reclaim them from sin, and to remind them to seek happiness where it is to be found, is also of great advantage; and, if it have not this effect upon them, it is a punishment which they deserve. 2. The doctrine of future punishments, as it is contained in the Gospel, hath often and often been made an objection to the Divine goodness, and to the truth of Christianity. Yet it seems not hard to weaken all its force by the following suppositions, which are founded both in natural and in revealed religion. (1) There are, as we have shown, many plain, direct, and undeniable proofs of God's goodness. (2) The punishment of sin is not to be accounted an act of arbitrary power, proceeding merely from Divine appointment; for in all government correction is absolutely necessary for the reformation of offenders, or for the good of the whole. (3) We are told that God hath committed all judgment to His Son, to Him who loved us, and died for us, and who cannot be supposed to join no clemency to justice. (4) We know also both from reason and revelation, that the recompenses and the punishments of the age to come shall be and must be infinitely various, and proportionable to the good and to the bad actions and qualities of men. (5) We are told likewise, that when judgment shall be pronounced every mouth shall be stopped, stopped not by outward violence, but by inward conviction. All nature shall assent to the equity of the sentence, and it shall be impossible to make any rational objection to it. (6) The doctrine of the future state of retribution is usually delivered in figurative expressions, which of course are somewhat obscure and ambiguous, and it is of the same nature as prophecy, which is never fully understood till the event explains it. So we must wait for the event before we can form a sure judgment concerning it; and in the meantime objections must be unreasonable, and may be rejected as such. (*Ibid.*) *The goodness of God:*—I. WHAT IS THE PROPER NOTION OF GOODNESS AS IT IS ATTRIBUTED TO GOD? 1. More general in opposition to all moral evil and imperfection, which we call sin and vice; and so the justice, and truth, and holiness of God are in this sense His goodness. But there is—2. Another notion of moral goodness which is more particular and restrained; and then it denotes a particular virtue in opposition to a particular vice; and this is the proper and usual acceptance of the word goodness; and the best description I can give of it is this, that it is a certain propension and disposition of mind whereby a person is inclined to desire and procure the happiness of others; and it is best understood by its contrary, which is an envious disposition, a contracted and narrow spirit, which would confine happiness to itself, and grudgeth that others should partake of it or share in it; or a malicious and mischievous temper which delights in the harms of others, and to procure trouble and mischief to them. II. THIS PERFECTION OF GOODNESS BELONGS TO GOD. 1. The acknowledgment of natural light. "The first act of worship is to believe the being of God; and the next to ascribe majesty or greatness to Him; and to ascribe goodness, without which there can be no greatness" (*Seneca*). 2. The testimony of Scripture and Divine revelation (*Ex. xxxiv. 5; Ps. lxxxvi. 5; cxix. 68; Luke xviii. 19*). 3. The perfection of the Divine nature. (1) Goodness is the chief of all perfections, and therefore it belongs to God. (2) There are some footsteps of it in the creatures, and therefore it is much more eminently in God. III. THE EFFECTS AND THE EXTENT OF IT. 1. The universal extent of God's goodness to all His creatures. (1) In giving being to so many creatures. (2) In making them all so very good; considering the variety, and order, and end of them. (3) In His continual preservation of them. (4) In providing so abundantly for the welfare and happiness of all of them, so far as they are capable and

sensible of it. 2. The goodness of God to men. (1) That He hath given us such noble and excellent beings, and placed us in so high a rank and order of His creatures. (2) That He hath made and ordained so many things chiefly for our use. (3) His tender love and peculiar care of us above the rest of the creatures, being ready to impart and dispense to us the good that is suitable to our capacity and condition, and concerned to exempt us from those manifold evils of want and pain to which we are obnoxious. (4) The provision He has made for our eternal happiness. (*J. Tillotson.*) *Man's care of God's goodness*.—"The Lord is loving to every man" (P. B. Version). Every man implicitly owns this when he says, "Life is sweet." How much of unconscious enjoyment flows through us from day to day of which we take no heed, until some disturbance takes place, some obstruction occurs in the channel of communication with the world without. The blessing of sight, the joy of looking out on the green pasture and the trees—we can only fully appreciate when these windows of sense are darkened. We see the blessing and the joy of hearing by contrast with the deprivation of the deaf, and of speech by contrast with those of the dumb. If it were not for suffering, awakening reflection, we should ignore this great sum of unconscious good which the "long blue hours serenely flowing" have brought us from day to day. And then this good of reflection itself—how great! To hold up the magic mirror of memory, to see our past therein, not as it was when present, mixed with much that was painful and repulsive, but beautified, idealized, glorified by that poet-soul which is within us all. If we could all paint, or versify, or compose in music, we should all leave works of art behind us, the material of which should be drawn from our own experience. We should leave behind us songs like this ancient Hebrew psalm. Your own personal impressions must always be worth more to you than those of any other thinker, however profound. What, then, are our impressions about the world, about the existing constitution of things? May we venture to speak for one another on such a point, and say that while with each of us there are "mixed" impressions, on the whole the impression of good preponderates? We are governed greatly by our temperament in these matters; our minds are of different tone; but upon each and all of us, may it not be said, the world and life have left impressions of something exceedingly beautiful, exceedingly precious, though profoundly mysterious? In passing through a gallery of paintings, and studying the style of the different masters, we gain much insight into the turn of feeling and of fancy of the particular painters. One man steepes his views in light; another throws the sombre hue of melancholy thought upon rock, and river, and waterfall, and mountain height. One will suggest the majesty of Nature and the littleness of man; another will use the grandest effects of Nature but as the background to human passion and action. Each seer makes something different of the world and of man; each artist adds something to the world as we see it, or takes away something that we had found there. And all these different representations, suggesting feelings so various in the mind of the observer, from sadness to gaiety and exhilaration, unite in one point: they are all representations of that which is beautiful. And with all our diversities of natural feeling and experience—if we should try to describe the print that life has made upon our minds—we should, whether in stumbling accents or in eloquent strains, be describing something that has been, in part painful, in part pleasurable, but in both pleasure and pain profoundly interesting, unspeakably beautiful and holy; something in part severe, in part humorous in its expression, but in this mixture of severity and of humour, truly loving and gentle in its purport. These passive impressions teach us more than we can learn from books. Whether we leave our mark upon the world or no, it is certain the world leaves its mark upon us. And is it not the fact that the longer we live the better worth reading the inscription becomes? Do not men become more tolerant as they grow older? Does not the fact of evil give way before the far greater fact of good as the explanation of life? If men ever try to build up systems of theology again, they must choose out new ground and build on fresh foundations; on the ground and foundation of our text, that the Lord is loving to every man, and that His tender mercies are over all His works. Not only our passive impressions and the general pictures which insensibly form in our minds as the result of experience of the world—but in our active life we have evidence that points the same way. This little world within—what an undiscovered country it is still to every one of us! We never know what we can do till we try, the proverb says. We never know what we are until we have wrought ourselves into deeds. And the very power seems to come by the

exertion. Cells full of energy seem to open in the mind at the touch of need, and not before. People are surprised at what they can do and bear upon an emergency. There is indeed a marvel in the life of mind, of soul. So long as we study this we shall be believers in miracles. All that is supposed to pass outside the mind that is marvellous can be but parables of the life of the soul itself. First and last, we must seek for God at that shrine; there the living oracles must be found; and it is the deepest superstition if we suppose that Scripture, however sacred, souls, other than our own, however inspired, can do aught for us except help us to bring to light and read a little more distinctly the inscription and record of God upon our own souls. The discovery of ourselves and of our vocation means some fresh discovery of the meaning of God to us. The return to Nature, the falling back on what is original in us, the exertion of ourselves according to the proper bent and direction of our faculties—all this, giving distinctness to the picture of ourselves, gives at the same time distinctness to the picture of the God who is good and loving to every man. Then we may extend these reasonings from ourselves to the rest of the creation. If I feel that God is good to me, I have a reason for believing that He is good to others like me. Some seem nearer to God and to know more of His secrets than I do. Others seem less favoured. Yet why should I doubt, concerning the most miserable and pitiable, that the tender mercies of the Eternal are over him, as over me? Thus may we reason from the particular to the general—from the truth learnt in our own hearts to the truth of the vast universe of which we form a part; and conversely. At times we may see more clearly the universal than the particular truth. We may see that the world is the expression of an infinite benevolence, we may need to see that our personal being is the expression of the same. Let us then remember that the great Power which throbs through the universe is the same Power which causes our heart to throb, our brain to think. So may we end in

" Feeling God loves us and that all that errs
Is a strange dream which death will dissipate,"

in endorsing from our own life-experience the words of the psalmist. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Universality of God's goodness*:—God's pity is not as some sweet cordial, poured in dainty drops from a golden phial. It is not like the musical water-drops of some slender rill, murmuring down the dark sides of Mount Sinai. It is wide as the whole scope of heaven. It is abundant as all the air. If one had art to gather up all the golden sunlight that to-day falls wide over all this continent, falling through every silent hour; and all that is dispersed over the whole ocean, flashing from every wave; and all that is poured refulgent over the northern wastes of ice, and along the whole continent of Europe, and the vast outlying Asia and torrid Africa—if one could in any wise gather up this immense and incalculable outflow and treasure that falls down through the bright hours, and runs in liquid ether about the mountains, and fills all the plains, and sends innumerable rays through every secret place, pouring over and filling every flower, shining down the sides of every blade of grass, resting in glorious humility upon the humblest things—on sticks, and stones, and pebbles—on the spider's web, the sparrow's nest, the threshold of the young foxes' hole, where they play and warm themselves—that rests on the prisoner's window, that strikes radiant beams through the slave's tear, that puts gold upon the widow's weeds, that plates and roofs the city with burnished gold, and goes on in its wild abundance up and down the earth, shining everywhere and always, since the day of primal creation, without faltering, without stint, without waste or diminution; as full, as fresh, as overflowing to-day as if it were the very first day of its outlay—if one might gather up this boundless, endless, infinite treasure to measure it, then might he tell the height, and depth, and unending glory of the pity of God! The light, and the sun, its source, are God's own figures of the immensity and copiousness of His mercy and compassion. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *His tender mercies are over all His works.*—*On the mercy of God*:—Mercy, as it is ascribed to God, may be considered and taken two ways. I. FOR THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF; which is nothing else but the simple undivided nature of God, as it does manifest and cast abroad itself in such and such acts of grace and favour to the creature. Which very same essence or nature, according to different respects, is called wisdom, justice, power, mercy, and the like. II. IT IS TAKEN FOR THE EFFECTS AND ACTIONS FLOWING FROM THAT PRINCIPLE BY

WHICH IT DOES SO MANIFEST AND EXERT ITSELF. Which also admit of a distinction into two sorts. 1. Such as are general, and of equal diffusion to all. 2. Such as are special, and peculiarly relate to the redemption and reparation of fallen man, whom God was pleased to choose and single out from the rest of His works as the proper object for this great attribute to do its utmost upon. Now it was the former sense that was intended by the psalmist in the text, as is evident from the universality of the words. It was such a mercy as spread itself over all His works; such a one as reached as wide as creation and providence. It was like the sun and the light, to shine upon all without exception. And therefore we are not at all concerned here to treat of the miracles of God's pardoning mercy, as they display themselves in the satisfaction and ransom paid down by Christ for sinners: for it would be a great deviation from the design of the words to confine the overflowing goodness of a Creator to the more limited dispensations of a Redeemer: and so to drown a universal in a particular. For the prosecution of the words there is no way that seems more easy and natural, and withal more full, for the setting forth of God's general mercy to the creature, than to take a survey of the several parts of the creation, and therein to show how it exerts and lays itself out upon each of them. . . . How many and vast endearments might we draw from God barely as a Creator! Suppose there had never been any news of a Redeemer to fallen Adam; no hope, no after-game for him as a sinner; yet let us peruse the obligations that lay upon him as a man. Was it not enough for him, who but yesterday was nothing, to be advanced into an existence, that is, into one perfection of the Deity? Was it not honour enough for clay to be breathed upon, and for God to print His image upon a piece of dirt? Certainly it would be looked upon as a high kindness for any prince to give his subject his picture; was it no act of love, therefore, in God to give us souls endued with such bright faculties, such lively images of Himself, which He might have thrust into the world with the short and brutish perceptions of a few silly senses; and like the beasts, have placed our intellects in our eyes or in our noses? Was it no favour to make that a sun which He might have made but a glow-worm? no privilege to man that he was made lord of all things below? that the world was not only his house, but his kingdom? that God should raise up one piece of earth to rule over all the rest? Surely all these were favours, and they were the early preventing favours of a Creator: for God then knew no other title, He bore no other relation to us; there was no price given to God that might induce Him to bid Adam rise out of the earth, a man rather than a spire of grass, a twig, a stone, or some such other contemptible superiority to nothing. No; He furnished him out into the world with all this retinue of perfections upon no other motive but because He had a mind to make him a glorious piece of work; a specimen of the arts of Omnipotence; to stand and glisten in the top and head of the creation. Wherefore all the hard thoughts men usually have of God ought by all means and arts of consideration to be suppressed: for the better effecting of which we may fix our meditation upon these two qualities that do always attend them: (1) Their unreasonableness. (2) Their danger. 1. And first for their unreasonableness. All such thoughts are not any true resemblances of our Creator, but merely our own creatures. All the sad appearances of rigour that we paint Him under are not from Himself, but from our misrepresentations: as the fogs and mists we sometimes see about the sun issue not from Him, but ascend from below, and owe their nearness to the sun only to the deception of the spectator. 2. The other argument against men's entertaining such thoughts of God is the consideration of their exceeding danger. Their malignity is equal to their absurdity: for whosoever strives to beget or foment in his heart such persuasions concerning God makes himself the devil's orator, and declaims his cause; whose proper characteristic badge it is to be the great accuser or calumniator. (*R. South, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee.—*Twofold worship*:—I. **GOD'S WORKS.** 1. They reveal Him—as the building the architect, or the book the author. 2. They obey Him—never transgress His orders, or neglect His behests. II. **GOD'S CHILDREN.** 1. They reveal Him more fully. There is more of God seen in the rays of reason, the sparks of fancy, the sensibility of conscience, the volitions of will, of one soul than in all the beauty of the landscape, or the brightness of the heavens. 2. They obey Him more loftily. (1) Intelligently. (2) Consciously. (3) Freely. (4) Happily.

(D. Thomas, D.D.) *Concerning saints*:—Do not throw yourselves back in your seats, and say, "This will be a sermon for saints, and therefore we need not attend." For the first clause of our text gives you a fair word and a kindly hint. "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord;" for if you are not Jehovah's saints you yet are His "works." Every created thing appears to praise God by its very existence. "The heavens declare the glory of God," etc. Arouse thee, then. Thou art a creature, if not a new creature, in Christ Jesus. Adore thy Benefactor. Yet the text is mainly for a special people; "Thy saints shall bless Thee." All throughout the Word of God there is kept up a very clear and sharp distinction between those that fear God and those that fear Him not. So note—I. GOD HAS A PEOPLE WHOM HE CALLS HIS SAINTS. Who are they? Are they all dead? It is supposed so, for it is the usage of the Popery around us to call men saints who have been long in their graves. Somebody wrote me the other day about his "sainted mother." What did he mean? Had the Pope canonized her? Or did she become a saint by dying? When Paul wrote to the Churches he called the members of them saints. They were living men and women of whom he thus spake. They were like ourselves, and often inferior to ourselves. I believe that the Church of God to-day, as a whole, is better than the Church of Corinth. What is it to be a saint? Some people do not want to know, for with them it is a term of contempt. They say, "Oh, he is one of your saints!" They lay emphasis on the word "saints"; as if it were something disgraceful or at least hypocritical. Whenever I have that said to me (and it has happened more than once), I take my hat off out of respect for the title. I had rather be a saint than a Knight of the Garter. I have sometimes heard of the "latter day saints." I do not know much about them, but I greatly prefer the "every day saints." Holiness must be a part of ourselves; it must be our nature to be saintly. Saints are not perfect people. Some will say of themselves that they are free from sin. But I have never met with such. A certain great painter had been accustomed to perform great feats with his brush; but one day, having finished a picture, he laid down his palette, and said to his wife, "My power to paint is gone!" "Oh," said she, "how is that?" "Well," he answered, "up to this day I have always been dissatisfied with my productions; but the last picture I have painted perfectly satisfied me, and therefore I am certain I shall never be able to paint anything worth looking at again." To be dissatisfied with oneself is to be capable of higher things, but to be satisfied is to have lost the very faculty of progress. We cannot, therefore, be satisfied with ourselves; still we know, also, that sin has not dominion over us, and in this we do and will rejoice. But saints are—1. Those whom God hath set apart for Himself. 2. Called effectually by His grace. And they are to be known—1. By their holy life. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." A man is described in Scripture, not by his infirmities, but by the general run and current of his life. We say of a river that it runs to the south, although there may be eddies along the banks which run in an opposite direction. Still, these are an inconsiderable matter. The main stream of the Thames, wind as it may, runs ever towards the sea. And the main stream and current of the saint's life is Godward. "But," says one, "holiness is imputed." It cannot be imputed. The righteousness of Christ is, but holiness is quite another term, and God's Word never speaks of the imputation of holiness. Where shall we find these saints? "Nowhere," says slander, but that is not true; there are many of them, the ornaments of our households, the pillars of our Churches, the delights of our communion and the glory of Christ. And they are God's saints; "Thy saints shall," etc. The devil has his saints, and Rome hers, and self-righteousness and ceremonialism theirs; but God has His own. II. THEY ARE PLACED IN THE FIRST RANK. All God's works shall praise Him, but His saints shall bless Him, because they are in a peculiar manner God's works. He has twice created them: they stand in a covenant relation with Him. None but Christ's own people can be said to be interested in the covenant of grace. "I pray for them," said our Lord; "I pray not for the world." God's tenderest consideration is given to them. He cares for all His works, but His children, what care He gives to them. No farmer has as much care for his barn-door chickens as he has for his own little chicks indoors. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so," etc. How God has loved us, and does so, even when we have forgotten Him. One said to me the other day, "What will become of Gordon?" I answered, "He is safe enough, I believe; for he has given himself into the hand of God, and He will take care of him." To this the questioner replied, somewhat flippantly, "It may

be so; but, you see, he is so dashing that he gives God a great deal to think of and to do." I did not like the expression, but still it is true of us all. The office of "Preserver of men" is no sinecure in the hands of God. And how God visits us. He visits the earth and waters it, but how He comes to His people. And at the end they shall be crowned with glory and honour. III. THEY RENDER A SPECIAL HOMAGE. God's works "praise," but His saints "bless" Him. Praise has not in it those elements of warmth which belong to blessing God. You can praise a man and yet have no kind regard for him. No doubt after Waterloo the French soldiers praised Wellington, but none of them blessed him. They would say, "He must be a marvellous warrior to have overcome Napoleon," but they could have no love for him. Praising God is good, but blessing him is better. The lily lifts itself upon its slender stem and displays its golden petals and its glittering ivory leaves; and so it praises God. And the sea, and the birds. But they cannot bless Him. Only His saints do that. Let us do so more and more. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 11. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom.—*Christian conversation*.—It is much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of Him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that, in many cases, it is a mass of froth and falsehood, and, in many more cases, it is altogether objectionable; if it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the Gospel, and does not minister grace unto the hearers. One of the great lacks of the Church nowadays is not so much Christian preaching as Christian talking,—not so much Christian prayer in the prayer-meeting as Christian conversation in the parlour. How little do we hear concerning Christ! I. A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION. 1. The glory of Christ's kingdom. (1) Make known His mighty acts. Tell it the wide world o'er that the Lord of hosts is the God of battles; He is the conqueror of men and of devils; He is Master in His own dominions. Tell ye the glory of His kingdom, and rehearse "His mighty acts." Christian, exhaust that theme if thou canst. (2) Then, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, talk of its glorious majesty (ver. 12). Tell of the crown of grace which He wears continually; tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs He has won over the foe; tell of the crown of love wherewith His Father crowned Him in the day of His espousals to His Church,—the crown which He has won by ten thousand hearts which He has broken, and untold myriads of spirits which He has bound up. (3) Talk of its duration, for much of the honour of the Kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted (ver. 13). 2. Christ's power. (1) Upholding (ver. 14). (2) Exalting (ver. 14). (3) Providing (ver. 15). II. THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER. 1. One cause is, that it is the kingdom of their own King. 2. The Christian must talk of the King's victories because all those victories were won for Him; he recollects that his Master never fought a battle for Himself,—never slew an enemy for Himself. He slew them all for His people. 3. The Christian must talk of it because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles. You know how old soldiers will "shoulder their crutch, and tell how fields were won." Recollect that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord; and that, in the last day, when He gives away the medals in heaven, you will have one; when He gives away the crowns, you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them; we can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them. It is to our own praise as well as to our Master's when we talk of His wondrous acts. 4. But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this, if he has Christ in his heart, the truth must come out; he cannot help it. III. WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND POWER? 1. The first effect would be that the world would believe us more. 2. If our conversations were more concerning Christ, we, as Christian men, should grow faster, and be more happy. In this way you would remove bickerings better than by all the sermons that could be preached, and be promoting a true evangelical alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form. 3. If we oftener talked of Christ like this, how useful we might be in the salvation of souls! Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be ever on your tongue; let Him live on your

lips. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Declaring God's doings*:—Of one of the statues in the Campanile, Florence, it is said that Donatello, when giving it the last stroke of his chisel, exclaimed in enthusiastic admiration, "Speak!" So Christ, when He calls men from their sins and recreated them in His own image, says, "Tell what things God hath done for you." *The glory of Christ's kingdom*:—I. IN ITS ORIGIN. It was the object of the divine and eternal purposes of the Father; an object to which all other purposes were subservient. It entered into the councils of the Eternal before the foundation of the world was laid. It was a grand design, intended to include the reign of God over the mind and heart of man; a purpose to establish a kingdom, the subjects of which should be raised to be partakers of the same nature as their Sovereign. II. IN THE MANNER AND SPIRIT OF ITS ADMINISTRATION (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-4; Isa. xi. 4, 5; Matt. xi. 28; Luke xvii. 21; Rom. xiv. 17; 2 Cor. iii. 3; John x. 4, 5; xvii. 24; xiv. 3). III. IN THE CHARACTER OF HIS SUBJECTS. 1. They are enlightened: they have just conceptions of things; they are delivered out of darkness, which envelops the rest of mankind, as the children of Israel had light in the land of Goshen when the habitations of the Egyptians were in darkness. 2. They are renewed: the Spirit of God changes their heart; they are made imperfectly, yet truly holy; they have a principle in them that aims at perfection; their characters are mixed, but the best part struggles against the worst, and will finally triumph. 3. They have in them a preparation for perfect blessedness. IV. IN THE PRIVILEGES ATTACHED TO IT. 1. Peace. 2. Dignity. 3. Immortality. (R. Hall, M.A.) *The glory of God's rule*:—I. IN THE UNIVERSALITY OF ITS EXTENT. His kingdom extends over all, over all matter, and over all mind. It includes the microscopic atom and the mightiest orb; the lowest fiend and the sublimest angel. II. IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ITS FOUNDATION. God has a right to rule the universe. 1. On the ground of proprietorship He owns all. 2. On the ground of capacity. No one else has the power. 3. On the ground of character. He is infinitely good. III. IN THE BENEVOLENCE OF ITS OPERATIONS. Unlike all human kings, He rules not for His own aggrandizement or interest, but simply for the good of His subjects. IV. IN THE INDESTRUCTIBLENESS OF ITS NATURE. Human kingdoms have in them the seeds of decay; they chase each other from the scene like the clouds before the wind. All of them are but as little bubbles on the stream, by a breath or a touch they are broken and lost. But His kingdom will endure for ever. (David Thomas, D.D.)

Vers. 13, 14. *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*.—*The greatness and condescension of God*:—What we admire in these verses is their combining the magnificence of unlimited power with the assiduity of unlimited tenderness. It is of great importance that men be taught to view in God this combination of properties. It is certain that the greatness of God is often turned into an argument by which men would bring doubt on the truths of Redemption and Providence. The unmeasured inferiority of man to his Maker is used in proof that so costly a work as that of Redemption can never have been executed on our behalf; and that so unwearied a watchfulness as that of Providence can never be engaged in our service. Whereas, no reason whatever can be derived from our confessed insignificance, against our being the objects whether of Redemption or of Providence—seeing it is equally characteristic of Deity to attend to the inconsiderable and to the great to extend His dominion throughout all generations, and to lift up those that be bowed down. No one can survey the works of Nature and not perceive that God has some regard for the children of men, however fallen and polluted they may be. And if God manifest a regard for us in temporal things, it must be far from incredible that He would do the same in spiritual. There can be nothing fairer than the expectation that He would provide for our well-being as moral and accountable creatures with a care at least equal to that exhibited towards us in our natural capacity. So that it is perfectly credible that God would do something on behalf of the fallen; and then the question is, whether anything less than redemption through Christ would be of worth and of efficacy? But it is in regard to the doctrine of a universal Providence that men are most ready to raise objections, from the greatness of God as contrasted with their own insignificance. They cannot believe that He who is so mighty as to rule the Heavenly Hosts can condescend to notice the wants of the meanest of His creatures; and thus they deny to Him the combination of properties asserted in our text, that, whilst possessed of unlimited empire, He sustains the feeble and raises the prostrate. What would be thought of that man's estimate of greatness who should

reckon it derogatory to the statesman that he thus combined attention to the inconsiderable with attention to the stupendous; and who should count it inconsistent with the loftiness of his station that, amid duties as arduous as faithfully discharged, he had an ear for the prattle of his children, and an eye for the interests of the friendless, and a heart for the sufferings of the destitute? Would there not be a feeling mounting almost to veneration towards the ruler who should prove himself equal to the superintending every concern of an empire, and who could yet give a personal attention to the wants of many of the poorest of its families; and who, whilst gathering within the compass of an ample intelligence every question of foreign and home policy, protecting the commerce, maintaining the honour, and fostering the institutions of the State, could minister tenderly at the bedside of sickness, and hearken patiently to the tale of calamity, and be as active for the widow and the orphan as though his whole business were to lighten the pressure of domestic affliction? And if we should rise in our admiration and applause of a statesman in proportion as he showed himself capable of attending to things comparatively petty and insignificant without neglecting the grand and momentous, certainly we are bound to apply the same principle to our Maker—to own it, that is, essential to His greatness that, whilst marshalling planets and ordering the motions of all worlds throughout the sweep of immensity, He should yet feed "the young ravens that call upon Him," and number the very hairs of our heads: essential, in short, that, whilst His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all generations, He should uphold all that fall, and raise up those that are bowed down. We would add to this, that objections against the doctrine of God's providence are virtually objections against the great truths of creation. Are we to suppose that this or that ephemeral thing, the tiny tenant of a leaf or a bubble, is too insignificant to be observed by God; and that it is absurd to think that the animated point, whose existence is a second, occupies any portion of those inspections which have to spread themselves over the revolutions of planets and the movements of angels? Then to what authorship are we to refer this ephemeral thing? What it was not unworthy of God to form, it cannot be unworthy of God to preserve. But up to this point we have been rather engaged with removing objections against the doctrine of God's providence than with examining that doctrine as it may be derived from our text. In regard to the doctrine itself, it is evident that nothing can happen in any spot of the universe which is not known to Him who is emphatically the Omniscient. But it is far more than the inspection of an ever vigilant observer which God throws over the concerns of creation. It is not merely that nothing can occur without the knowledge of our Maker; it is that nothing can occur but by either His appointment or permission. We say either His appointment or permission—for we know that, whilst He ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth, there is much which He allows to be done, but which cannot be referred directly to His authorship. It is in this sense that His providence has to do with what is evil, overruling it so that it becomes subservient to the march of His purposes. Oh! it were to take from God all that is most encouraging in His attributes and prerogatives if you could throw doubt on this doctrine of His universal providence. It is an august contemplation, that of the Almighty as the Architect of creation, filling the vast void with magnificent structures. We are presently confounded when bidden to meditate on the eternity of the Most High: for it is an overwhelming truth that He who gave beginning to all besides could have had no beginning Himself. And there are other characteristics and properties of Deity whose very mention excites awe, and on which the best eloquence is silence. But whilst the universal providence of God is to the full as incomprehensible as aught else which appertains to Divinity, there is nothing in it but what commends itself to the warmest feeling of our nature. And we seem to have drawn a picture which is calculated equally to raise astonishment and delight, to produce the deepest reverence and yet fullest confidence when we have represented God as superintending whatever occurs in His infinite domain—guiding the roll of every planet, and the rush of every cataract, and the gathering of every cloud, and the motion of every will—and when, in order that the delineation may have all that exquisiteness which is only to be obtained from those home touches which assure us that we have ourselves an interest in what is so splendid and surprising, we add that He is with the sick man on his pallet, and with the seaman in his danger, and with the widow in her agony. And what, after all, is this combination but that presented by our text? If I would exhibit God as so attending to what is mighty

as not to overlook what is meant, what better can I do than declare Him mustering around Him the vast army of suns and constellations, and all the while hearkening to every cry which goes up from an afflicted creation—and is not this the very picture sketched by the psalmist when, after the sublime ascription, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations," he adds the comforting words, "the Lord upholdeth all that fall, and lifteth up all those that be bowed down"? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christ's kingdom everlasting*:—Bishop Galloway, in his book on "Missions," gives this significant illustration: "In the published accounts of the burning of the famous mosque at Damascus a few years ago, there was a suggestive coincidence, if not a striking prophecy. It was built on the sacred spot where once stood the old Byzantine church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist. In building this Moslem temple one of the Roman arches was blended in the superstructure, on which was a Greek inscription from the Holy Scriptures. After the great fire the arch was found in place, bending over the ruins, bearing these words: 'Thy kingdom, O Christ, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages.'" (*The Advertiser.*)

Ver. 14. *The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*—*The God of the unsuccessful*:—The Bible, being a book for humanity, is a book for the weak, the fallible, and the disappointed. A large part of it is devoted to the erring and the unsuccessful. Take its biographies. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Job—every one of these biographies is the story of a faultful man. Then, so much of its counsel and warning is directed at servants of God and disciples of Christ. Not only guide-posts, but danger-signals, are set up all along the way of life. It was to His own disciples that Christ said, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." By far the larger part of its promises is to the sorrowful, and afflicted, and disappointed. When Christ invited the weary and heavy-laden to rest, He invited a restless and burdened world. When the Bible addresses the strong, it is to point them to the true source of their strength, to warn them against presuming on their own wisdom, and to commend the weak to their sympathy and helpfulness. The whole matter is summed up in the psalmist's statement of God's attitude toward His children at large. It is that of pity based on knowledge of their infirmity. I speak, as the psalmist does, of men and to men who recognize and honour the law of God, and are honestly striving to keep His laws. The words do not apply to the indolent who interpret the invitation to cast their care on God as a "permit" to cast off all care about their own souls and lives. They do not apply to those who are indifferent to God and who wilfully defy His law. The psalmist settles that in ver. 20. I am speaking, then, to you who honour God; who are making an honest fight for the truth and the right; who are trying to keep your lives pure and to make them useful. I know that you fall as I do, and are often bowed down. I know that you are not all successes, either from a worldly or a religious point of view. Now, first, in relation to your worldly affairs. You have stumbled and fallen in the path which you thought would lead you to success and victory. Well, look at the text. O merciful, wise, tender love, which, even while it denies what we long for, bends over us while we lie prone and weeping over our disappointment, and sets us on our feet again and bids us follow God and not the devices and desires of our own hearts. He may thus set us on our feet that we may walk another way from that on which we were going. The fall may be a blessing in disguise, a monition to abandon that way. Many a man has found that to give up the thing he desired and take something less and lower was not a sorrow after all. Or, suppose God means to admonish you by your fall to go more slowly after your desire. "He that believeth shall not make haste." God will not let us pursue one remote end to the neglect of all that lies by the wayside. Success in life is not the gaining of that one end at the end. It is the right adjustment to all that lies in the track of each day. So God lets you walk, upholds you, teaches you to walk. He is doing you a greater service by upholding you, so that you can move on and win the strength, and discipline, and experience which come through walking circumspectly, than if He had let you go straight to the thing you coveted and sit down and enjoy that. Disappointment need not mean wreck. It will not if God is in it. Sometimes it seems as if God's policy toward a man is to keep him down, and yet keep him walking and working. That develops the highest type of moral heroism. It is a higher and greater thing for an unsuccessful and

disappointed man to keep rising from his failures and to struggle on his way leaning on God's hand to the very end, than for him to succeed before the world. God has a testimony to bear to the world through His sons and daughters no less than to them; and He bears that testimony most emphatically in showing the world that His hand can keep a man a man, with an honest soul and a persistent purpose in him, amid all his falls and disappointments. And as to the matter of Christian experience and the falls and stumblings which are along that line—I know that the ideal which at once beckons and reproaches us is that of a steady growth in faith, and love, and goodness, and Christian power. It is the true ideal too. Let us never lower it: never cease striving for it. Let us never admit to ourselves that yielding to temptation is anything less than sin: that sin is other than vile. Tried by the high ideal of the Gospel you are not a religious success, only trying hard to be. That is the saving clause. God is on the side of the unsuccessful but honestly-striving. You find in yourself a constant tendency to stumble. If Satan desires to sift you as wheat, Christ prays for you. He is bent, not on raising up you and your sin together, but on raising you out of your sin and making you a man in Christ Jesus in spite of your temptation and weakness. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.) *Recuperative grace*.—An Eastern parable represents a man as falling down by the way, and getting so broken up by his fall that he lay there eleven years. One day an old friend came along and began to commiserate and encourage him, and forthwith he poured out the story of his sorrows, and began to tell the other what a dreadful thing it was to fall down. "Ah, yes," said the friend, "but I know something much worse than falling down." "Why," said he, "what can be worse?" And the other answered, "Not getting up again." Thank God for recuperative grace! When we were boys, at our wrestling matches we were not considered down until we said "Down," and some of us refused to stay down long enough to count. Beloved, don't make the mistake of not getting up again. Be brave in spite even of yourself and your own failures and weaknesses. Remember that "the Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up those that be bowed down."

Vers. 15-17. *The eyes of all wait upon Thee.*—*The Divine dealings and attributes*.—We lose a great deal by taking verses by themselves, considering them as detached and isolated passages in place of noticing how closely they may be connected with the context. For instance, if we take as our text the last of these three verses, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works," no doubt we should find abundant material of important discourse, for when the psalmist throws in the word "*all His ways, all His works*," there is a largeness of assertion, in reference to the Divine dealings, which displays strong faith and close examination. But when you read the two preceding verses, "The eyes of all wait upon Thee," etc., you naturally ask, how came the psalmist to pass so directly from contemplating the goodness of God, as displayed in the arrangements of providence, to the expressing in such unqualified terms his conviction as to the righteousness of all God's ways, and the holiness of all God's works? What connection is there? How does the one thought or belief originate in the other? The word "*righteousness*," as used of God, most frequently denotes that perfection whereby God is most just and holy in Himself, and observes the strictest rules of equity in every proceeding of His creatures; and when the psalmist asserts God to be "*righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works*," he evidently means that every dispensation is marked both by justice and goodness, that, however unable we may be to discern or apprehend the reasons for each separate dealing, we are bound to infer, from the very nature of God, that there must be reasons worthy alike of infinite wisdom and infinite lovingkindness. Now the psalmist must be considered as using the language of faith when he speaks of God as "*righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works*"; for every one who observes and studies the actings and dealings of God, whether with our race generally or with individuals in particular, must know that there is much which cannot now be explained, whose fitness is matter of faith, but certainly not of demonstration, the Divine judgments being, as they are elsewhere described by David, "a great deep." In the course of His providence God frequently acts upon grounds, and orders things in methods, which we have no ability to discover and to trace; and we can exclaim with St. Paul, "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." But whilst we allow that the language is the language of faith, let us consider a little more closely whether

there is any reason for surprise that God's dealings should be inscrutable, and utterly past our comprehension. You are to remember that even amongst men the dealings of the wise are often founded on maxims which are not understood or appreciated by the great mass of their fellows, so that conduct appears unaccountable which nevertheless proceeds from the very highest sagacity. Is it, then, to be wondered at if God, whose wisdom is as far above the wisest upon earth as the heaven is above this lower creation, should be incomprehensible in His actions, often doing very differently from what ourselves would have done, and proceeding in a way which appears to us the least likely to produce the desired result? Besides, what place, comparatively, would there be for faith if there were no depths in the Divine judgments, if every reason were so plain, every design so palpable that no one could do otherwise than acquiesce in the fitness and goodness of all God's appointments. In any case of affliction, when trouble is now laid upon a man, the difficult, but, at the same time, profitable, duty is that of submitting meekly to the chastisement in the assurance that God doeth all things well, though to our apprehensions His proceedings may be dark. Let God remove the darkness of His proceedings, and let everything be as luminous to us as it is to Himself, and this duty, instead of being difficult, would cease to demand any effort; we should then walk by sight, and not by faith, and there would be nothing in bearing sorrow patiently when we saw the precise end which it was accomplishing, or the precise benefit which it was securing. There is something very beautiful in the imagery of the psalmist, "Thy righteousness is like great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep." The "judgments are a great deep," the immense ocean, unfathomable by any human line; but the "righteousness is like the great mountains," giants of the earth, whose foundations are washed by unfathomable waters, whilst their summits lose themselves in the clouds. The mountains are to be considered as rising out of the waters and girding them around on every side. We know, from the parts of the mountains which are visible, that there are lower parts concealed from us by the waters, and are confident that the hidden parts meet the base around which the waters lie. And thus we should learn, from the righteousness which is conspicuous when we look towards the heavens, that there is a righteousness all around those lower obscurities which we are unable to penetrate, that the foundations which are beneath the waves are of the same material as the summits which are above, and which often glow with sunlight, though they may be sometimes shrouded in mist. God's judgments are likened to the sea, whose depths we have no power of exploring; but out of this sea, at the same time encompassing and containing it, rise towering mountains, and these are the righteousness of God—that righteousness within which all His dealings rest, which may be said to hold them in their embrace, as the roots of the everlasting hills the multitudes of the waters, and which again, like the mountains, may be so discerned above the billows as to leave no doubt of its existing beneath. And as the hills which encircle a deep lake not only form by their foundations and sides the reservoir into which it is gathered, but make a mirror of their surface in which they glass their tops; so not only does the righteousness of God enclose and hold His judgments, but often so images itself that an attentive eye may catch the reflection. What, then, have we to do, when we launch out into the deep, but to remember the mountains which soar on every side, over whose massive, but far spreading, roots we may be sure that we are voyaging even when no line could take the soundings of the mighty abyss? We should never feel lost, as it were, in the judgments, if we kept in mind the righteousness of God; we should never be so far from land as to feel adrift on a boundless waste if faith were in exercise—faith in the perfections and attributes of our Maker—for there would be always some peak of the everlasting hills discernible by faith, some eminence coming out from the vast gatherings of cloud, serving as a beacon in the midst of the tempest. We can, however, imagine a man to have prepared himself, according to our foregoing directions, for surveying what is inexplicable in God's dealings by fortifying his belief in God's attributes. Still, when his eyes are on the great deep, it will be hard to keep faith in full exercise: he will be apt to forget, as he gazes on the dark, unfathomable expanse, the principles of which he thought himself so certain, and he will feel, "Oh for some distinct, some visible evidence of that goodness of God which seems so opposed by all this darkness, and all this confusion!" And you shall have it, the psalmist seems to exclaim; I will summon men of every country and every age, from the north and the south, from the east and the west; send hither the young and the

old, I will summon every beast of the field, I will summon every fowl of the air; let the sea give up its multitude, let every leaf, every flower, every water-drop, pour forth its insect population—who feeds the innumerable throng? who erects their storehouses? who gives the supply for all these tenants of earth, sea, air? How comes it to pass that, morning after morning, the sun awakens huge cities to life, and causes the silent forest to echo with the warblings of birds, and calls into activity thousands of creatures on every mountain and every valley, and yet out of all this interminable throng thus revived every dawn there is not the solitary being for whom there is no provision in the granaries of nature? "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Every planet, as it marches on, is moved by God; every star, as it revolves, is turned by God; every flower, as it opens, is unfolded by God; every blade of grass, as it springs, is reared by God—"He preserveth man and beast." Aye, and if in place of suffering thought to wander across the spreadings of the universe, and nowhere can it reach the spot in which God is not busied, and nowhere find a creature of which He is not the life—if in place of this you carry it down to the inhabitants of this lower creation, what a picture is spread before it by the simple fact that in every department of animated nature the Almighty is momentarily engaged in ministering to the myriads whom He has called into existence—that from the king upon his throne to the beggar in his hovel, from the grey-haired veteran to the infant at the breast, from the lordly lion to the most insignificant reptile, from the vast leviathan to the tiny animalcule which we know only by the microscope, there is not to be found a solitary instance of a being neglected or overlooked by God, not a single case of life sustained independently of God, or that could last one second if God withheld His inspiration. And with this picture to turn to, after gazing till the vision has ached on the great deep of God's judgments, ought you not to be always able to refresh yourselves in the midst of dark and intricate dispensations, and to get quit of the doubts and suspicions which may be raised by the apparent want of a strict moral government? Indeed, my brethren, there is not a morsel of food which we eat, there is not a bird which cheers us by its wild music, there is not an insect which we see sporting in the sun which ought not to reprove us if we mistrust God because His ways are unsearchable. Can it be that God is unmindful of the world, or that He is not studying what is for the good of His creatures, when He shows Himself attentive to the wants and comforts of the very meanest living thing, and whilst He regulates the course of the stars, and marshals the ranks of the cherubim and the seraphim, He bends down from His glorious throne and applies a guardianship as close to the ephemeral insect that floats by in the breeze, as though it were the only animate production, or the only one that required His providential care? (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *Harvest thanksgiving*:—The earnest Christian cannot look abroad upon the face of Nature with a careless eye or an unmoved heart. By him God is seen in everything, and what others ascribe coldly to the operations of Nature he traces directly to the finger of God. The most insignificant flower is eloquent to him of his Creator's goodness; the meanest insect that crawls beneath his feet speaks to him of God; and as he stands upon some mountain height and surveys the outstretched landscape, as he gazes upon the gorgeous panorama of wooded forest and sparkling stream, well-cultivated plains and waving cornfields, his heart glows within him with a sense of devout admiration, and he readily responds to the psalmist's language. **I. OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.** In our calm moments we all acknowledge that without God's help we are helpless; without His blessing we cannot prosper. But such is the monotony of human life, such the regularity of events, and, I must add, such the subtle pride of the human heart, that this truth often becomes obscured and lost sight of. We need some sudden shock, some reversal of our present state to convince us of our own personal nothingness and our entire dependence upon God. The man endowed with a strong and healthy constitution is scarcely alive to the value of health. If he thinks about it at all, he traces it to his own early rising and freedom from anxiety, his moderation in all things, his temperance and active exercise. But let the smallest portion of his bodily organism be deranged—let some secret fever-germ enter the stream of life and poison the man's blood—let him be cast upon a bed of sickness, so that the slightest effort becomes intolerable, and the commonest functions of the body are attended with pain, and he at once becomes sensible of his dependence upon a Higher Power. He learns now what he might otherwise never have learned, that his own health is not absolutely in his own hands, but

that it is "in God he lives and moves and has his being." Thus he rises from the bed of sickness a wiser and better man; he has more sympathy in his heart for others, and more gratitude towards the Great Giver and Disposer of all things. A similar danger attends those that are engaged in the cultivation of the land, the danger, I mean, of forgetting God. The honest farmer who rises with the lark and takes a praiseworthy pride in his earthly calling is, we will assume, on the whole successful. He is kind to his labourers, and these cheerfully perform the tasks assigned to them. The seasons come round, and each brings with it its own duties. The land is tilled, the seed sown, and at the appointed time the labours of the husbandman are crowned with an abundant harvest. On the other hand, his neighbour—a farmer like himself—is thoughtless and thriftless. He desires to get on, but lacks common judgment and common energy. His plans do not succeed. His cattle die. His land is impoverished for want of proper cultivation. His harvests are poor, and there is a look about the whole place that tells of coming poverty and ruin. And then how great the danger to the successful farmer; the danger of tracing success in his case to his own energy and enterprise, his own skill and industry, and overlooking altogether the hand of God. It is true that honest industry is generally in this world, and through God's own appointment, rewarded with success. It is true that God has promised that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest . . . shall not cease," but we are surely abusing that promise, and as surely taking too high a view of our own powers if we fail to realize our dependence upon God, and to acknowledge His goodness in giving us the appointed weeks of the harvest. II. THE DUTY OF ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. If it be wrong on the part of a son to despise or dispute his father's claims upon his regard and affection; if it be contemptible pride on the part of a pensioner to be ashamed to speak of his benefactor or to recognize his obligations, then it is a sin of no ordinary character to forget Him upon whose daily bounty we live, and to whom we owe the varied blessings we enjoy. Hence, my brethren, to the Christian mind there is something peculiarly pleasing in our gathering together in the house of God this day. Whatever our occupation may be, we are all (indirectly at any rate) dependent upon the labours of the husbandman. We are all interested in a good harvest. A bad harvest means scarcity of bread, and scarcity of bread means suffering to many hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures; and on the other hand it is not easy to exaggerate the tendency of an abundant harvest to spread throughout the country a general spirit of peace and contentment. Again, our meeting together on this occasion may be regarded as an emphatic protest against the scepticism of the day. Men of science are pushing their researches into the varied realms of Nature. Phenomena hitherto considered inexplicable are referred to general laws, and second causes are thus usurping the place of the first great cause. Thus the Creator is, as it were, thrust out of His own creation, and it is sometimes argued as though God had originally called this world into being, and then left it to itself—to be guided and controlled by those eternal laws that were at its creation impressed upon it. Now, against this cold and heartless philosophy our meeting together this day is an emphatic protest. We thus acknowledge our belief in the universal presence and agency of a Personal God. (C. B. Brigstocke, M.A.) *God's grace and bounty meted out*:—William Huntingdon told the story about a farmer who, when one of his daughters was married, gave her a thousand pounds as a wedding present. There was another daughter, and her father did not give her a thousand pounds when she was married, but he gave her something as a wedding present, and then he kept on pretty nearly every day in the week sending her what he called "the hand-basket portion with father's love." And so in the long run she received a good deal more than her sister did. I do like when I get a mercy to have it come to me with my heavenly Father's love, just my daily portion as I need it; not given all in a lump so that I might go away with it into a far country, as we are sure to do if we have all our mercy at once, but given day by day, as the manna fell, with our heavenly Father's love every time a fresh token of infinite grace and infinite love. (O. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 16. *Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*—The Creator ministering to the wants of His creation:—How does the Almighty provide for His creatures? I. PERSONALLY. "Thou." The pseudo-sage ascribes the fruits of the earth to the elements and laws of Nature. But the Bible, which is true science, ascribes them to God. God has not left Nature, He

is in it, the great Spirit in all the wheels of its machinery. There is a Personal God in personal action, in all Nature. II. **EASILY.** He has only to open His hand. There is no labour, no effort; simply "Thou openest Thine hand." How easily God rolls ponderous globes and massive systems through immensity! To communicate good to His creatures is easy work to Him. 1. It is agreeable to His heart. He has not to struggle as we often do against inner propensities and habit in order to show kindness. It is a gratification to His benevolence. 2. It is nothing to His power. It costs Him no effort; the whole universe arose at first by His word. III. **ABUNDANTLY.** "And satisfiest the desire of every living thing"—from the minutest to the largest, from the microscopic insect to the mighty archangel. (*Homilist.*) *Thanksgiving for harvest*:—I. **THE ONE GREAT BENEFACITOR.** He is named by David (ver. 1) as his God and King; and such is Jehovah unto all His saints. Their Proprietor and Preserver, their Ruler and Portion in a gracious and peculiar sense. But in the text God is adored as good to all, the one great Benefactor of every living thing. We do not forget that the support which God vouchsafes unto all, and the supplies which He grants to every living thing are not direct and immediate. These, in many instances, reach the creatures through the intervention of numerous channels, various agencies and instrumentalities. God does not now, as of old, rain bread upon the earth—and neither while preserving man or beast in His precious grace is the hand of the Lord seen, or His voice heard, or His glory visible. Still, He Himself is the one great benefactor of all flesh, of every living thing. In Him our breath is, and His are all our ways. II. **THE MULTITUDE AND VARIETY OF THE DEPENDANTS.** "Every living thing." Yes, the king in his palace, and the spider which shares the chamber with the monarch; the old man, staff in hand from very age, and the infant smiling on its mother's lap; the mariner in his ship in the midst of the sea, and the ploughman with his oxen in the peaceful valley; the senators in their council-hall, and the birds singing in the branches of the forest; the rich man feasting in his mansion, and the sheep which stray on its lawns; the cattle upon a thousand hills; the poor blind man begging his bread from door to door, the faithful dog which guides his sightless steps,—toward all these, and multitudes greater far, and in varieties more perplexing still, does our God open His hand and satisfy the desire! III. **THE FREENESS AND LIBERALITY OF THE GIFTS.** "Thou openest Thine hand." No doubt in the course of Providence there are seasons of famine or of scarcity. We are to have the poor always with us, and we discover constant instances of poverty or destitution. There have been years that the locust did eat, and the canker worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm—God's great army which He sends against us. Even mid the joy of this plentiful harvest we have to lament blight and failure in a portion of the produce of the earth. These, however, are exceptional seasons, and, as judgment is God's strange works, as these occur they are to be regarded as reproofs for sin, meant to instruct the earth in righteousness, and that man having "cleanness of teeth" appointed him may be taught his weakness, and turn unto the Lord. IV. **THE SATISFACTION WHICH THE GIFTS AFFORD.** "Thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Is it any comfort, is it any relief to us to obscure the perfections of the one great Benefactor, and to conceal His administration in all the earth, to say that the satisfying of the desire of every living thing is the effect of natural laws, the order of the earth; and that while it remaineth "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease"? Thus may speak philosophy falsely so called, and with such crude and false reasoning many may be content. Natural laws, and the order of the earth, forsooth! Who ordained these laws, and who keeps them in operation? Who appointed that order, and preserves it from derangement or disturbance? Revelation teaches us to ascribe all this to God. Reason is fully satisfied only when admitting His dominion in the universe. (*John Smart, D.D.*) *The Satisfier of all desires* (with ver. 19):—You observe the recurrence, in these two verses, of the one emphatic word "desire." Its repetition evidently shows that the psalmist wishes to run a parallel between God's dealings in two regions. The same beneficence works in both. Here is the true extension of natural law to the spiritual world. I. **TWO KINDS OF PENSIONERS.** 1. "Every living thing." Life makes a claim on God, and whatever desires arise in the living creature by reason of its life, God would be untrue to Himself, a cruel Parent, an unnatural Father if He did not satisfy them. "He is a faithful Creator;" and wherever there is a creature that He has made to need anything, He has hereby said, "As I live, that creature shall have

what it wants." 2. Then take the other class, "them that fear Him"; or, as they are described in the context—by contrast with "the wicked who are destroyed"—"the righteous." That is to say, whilst, because we are living things, like the bee and the worm, we have a claim on God precisely parallel with theirs for what we may need by reason of His gift, which we never asked for—His gift of life—we shall have a similar but higher claim on Him if we are "they that fear Him"—with that loving reverence which has no torment in it—and that love Him with that reverential affection which has no presumption in it, and whose love and fear coalesce in making them long to be righteous, like the object of their love, to be holy like the object of their fear. It comes to this—wherever you find in people a confidence which grows with their love of God, be sure that there is, somewhere or other in the universe of things, that which answers it.

II. TWO SETS OF NEEDS. The first of them is very easily disposed of. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat." That is all. Feed the beast, and give it the other things necessary for its physical existence, and there is no more to be done. But there is more wanted for the desires of the men that love and fear God. These are glanced at in the context, "He also will hear their cry, and will save them"; "The Lord preserveth all them that love Him." That is to say, there are deeper needs in our hearts and lives than any that are known amongst the lower creatures. Evils, dangers, inward and outward; sorrows, disappointments, losses of all sorts shadow our lives in a fashion which the happy, careless life of field and forest knows nothing about. What is the object of desire to a man that loves God? God. What is the object of desire to a man that fears Him? God. What is the object of desire to a righteous man? Righteousness. And these are the desires which God is sure to fulfil to us. Therefore, there is only one religion in which it is safe and wise to cherish longings, and it is the religion of the spiritual life where God imparts Himself. Everywhere else there will be disappointments—thank Him for them. Nowhere else is it absolutely true that that He will "fulfil the desires of them that fear Him." But in this region it is. Whatever any of us want to have of God we are sure to get. We open our mouths and He fills them. In the Christian life desire is the measure of possession, and to long is to have. And there is nowhere else where it is absolutely, unconditionally, and universally true that to wish is to possess, and to ask is to have.

III. TWO FORMS OF APPEAL. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee." That is beautiful! The dumb look of the unconscious creature, like that of a dog looking up in its master's face for a crust, makes appeal to God, and He answers that. But a dumb, unconscious look is not for us. "He also will hear their cry." Put your wish into words if you want it answered; not for His information, but for your strengthening.

IV. THE TWO PROCESSES OF SATISFYING. "Thou openest Thine hand." That is enough. But God cannot satisfy our deepest desire by any such short and easy method. There is a great deal more to be done by Him before the aspirations of love, and fear, and longing for righteousness can be fulfilled. He has to breathe Himself into us. God's best gifts cannot be separated from Himself. They are Himself, and in order to "satisfy the desires of them that fear Him" there is no way possible, even to Him, but the impartation of Himself to the waiting heart. He has to discipline us for His highest gifts, in order that we may receive them. And sometimes He has to do that, as I have no doubt He has done it with many of us, by withholding or withdrawing the satisfaction of some of our lower desires, and so emptying our hearts and turning the current of our wishes from earth to heaven. Not only has He to give us Himself, and to discipline us in order to receive Him, but He has put all His gifts which meet our deepest desires into a great storehouse. He does not open His hand and give us peace and righteousness, and growing knowledge of Himself, and closer union, and the other blessings of the Christian life, but He gives us Jesus Christ. We are to find all these blessings in Him, and it depends upon us whether we find them or not, and how much of them we find. Expand your desires to the width of Christ's great mercies; for the measure of our wishes is the limit of our possession. He has laid up the supply of all our need in the storehouse, which is Christ; and He has given us the key. Let us see to it that we enter in. "Ye have not because ye ask not." "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Satisfieth*:—It is God's own word. It is not in the world's vocabulary, much less in the devil's. This, too, is love's word. Love is never satisfied until there is a perfect satisfaction. So, then, here is the salvation of our wishes. Nurse your aspirations, encourage your desires. They

cannot be too great since God waits to satisfy them. Wishing is not an idle folly when we bring our wishes to God. Then our desires do become pure prophecies; the whispers of God's love to the soul. Be not afraid of your desires; let the soul be thrilled with the thought of heroism, adventure, nobility, grand deeds grandly done. Take these to God, for He hath need of them, and He knows how to turn these wishes to account. This is the very meaning of our salvation, to turn the idle poetry of our wishes into solid fact that blesses men. It is to inspire the very loftiest longing and to fulfil that which He inspires that Jesus Christ has lived and died and risen in His resurrection power. Do you but give yourself right up to God, and no dream of good is there, no blessed vision of service but shall come to pass. He satisfieth the desire,—the desire of every living thing. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *All needs freely supplied*:—A man who engaged a passage on a coasting steamer was in straitened circumstances, and had but a small sum left when his ticket was paid for. Part of this he invested in bread and cheese, thinking the cabin fare too expensive for his limited means. After a while his bread tasted flat and stale, and his cheese became hard and mouldy. To aggravate matters, he was obliged, three times a day, to inhale the odours from the cook's galley, and the delicious aromas drove him almost frantic. Finally, when within a day's sail from the port of destination, he grew desperate. Seeing the steward bearing a huge platter with a turkey, he waylaid him at the entrance of the dining-saloon, and said: "See here, I haven't much money, but I have stood this thing as long as I can. How much will a dinner like that cost?" "Cost!" exclaimed the steward; "why, man, it don't cost you anything, it's all paid for in your passage." Our God has made abundant provision for our welfare on the journey heavenward. We do not need to live on dry bread and mouldy cheese. He sets a rich table for all who trust Him. Christ's command is: Eat and be filled.

Ver. 17. The Lord is righteous in all His ways.—*The Divine ways*:—I. God has many ways of DEALING WITH HIS UNIVERSE. God's ways are His methods of action. 1. He has settled methods of action in relation to His inanimate universe. He has a way of managing the seas, and the stars, and all the blind forces of Nature. 2. He has settled methods of action in relation to His sentient universe. The smallest insect and the hugest mammoth He manages by their instincts. 3. He has settled methods of action in relation to His moral universe. (1) With the unfallen. The myriads who retain their pristine virtues. (2) With the fallen. These include the impenitent and the repentant. He has methods of dealing with them, they are settled and unalterable. II. In all God's ways He is ABSOLUTELY RIGHTEOUS. 1. This is a matter of necessity. He could not but be righteous: whatever He does must be right because He does it, for there is nothing higher than Himself, nothing outside of Himself. He is absolutely irresponsible. What the infinitely wise, holy, and loving does, must be "righteous." 2. This is a matter for rejoicing. How blessed the thought that He, with whom we have to do, on whom we are absolutely dependent, to whom we are amenable for all our conduct, and who will settle our destiny at last, will never do us wrong, will always act righteously. Moral—Trust in Him. (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 18–21. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him.—*God and His people*:—I. THE PERSONS WHO ARE FAVOURED WITH THE DIVINE PRESENCE. 1. They call upon God. 2. They call upon Him in truth. 3. They desire Him. 4. They fear Him. 5. They cry unto Him. 6. They love Him. 7. They praise Him. II. THE FAVOURS WHICH THE LORD MANIFESTS TO HIS PEOPLE. 1. He is near them. 2. He will grant their desires. 3. He will save them. 4. He will preserve them. 5. They shall be with Him for ever. III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED. "He will destroy"—1. Their expectation (Prov. x. 28, 29). 2. Their souls and bodies in hell (Matt. x. 28). IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. See what great encouragement there is for prayer. 2. What incitements to filial confidence in God. 3. What reasons for gratitude and praise. 4. And what terror to the unbelieving. (*T. B. Baker.*)

Ver. 20. All them that love Him.—*Love to God*:—I. ON WHAT ACCOUNT GOD IS TO BE LOVED, AND IS LOVED BY HIS SAINTS. 1. For Himself (Ps. viii. 1). 2. As their chief, yea, only good (Ps. lxxiii. 25). 3. For the blessings of His goodness communicated to them (Ps. vi. 9). 4. For the various relations in which they stand toward Him (Ps. xviii. 1). 5. For His great love to them (1 John iv. 19). II. HOW, AND IN WHAT WAY AND MANNER, LOVE TO GOD MANIFESTS ITSELF. 1. In a

desire to be like Him (Eph. v. 1). 2. In making His glory the supreme end of all their actions (1 Cor. x. 31). 3. In desiring of, and delighting in, communion with God (1 John i. 3). 4. In a carefulness not to offend Him by sinning against Him (Ps. xcvi. 10). 5. In parting with, and bearing, all, for His sake. 6. In a regard to His house, worship, and ordinances (Ps. lxxxiv. 1). 7. By a value for His Word, His Gospel, and the truths of it. 8. In love and affection to the people of God. III. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE LOVE OF GOD. 1. It is universal; a love of all that is in God and belongs unto Him; of all His attributes and perfections, not of His goodness, grace, and mercy, and of Him for them only: but of His holiness, justice, and truth; and of all His commandments, which are to be respected (Eph. vi. 23, 24). 2. It is superlative; exceeds all other love, or love to all other persons and things. 3. It is hearty and sincere; a love without dissimulation; not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 4. Should be constant; such is the love of God to His people, He rests in His love towards them. 5. It may be increased; the apostle prays for an increase of it, and he thanks God for it that it did abound (1 Thess. iii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 3). IV. THE HAPPINESS OF SUCH THAT LOVE THE LORD. 1. They are loved by Him (Ps. lxxiii. 3). 2. They are known of God (1 Cor. viii. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19). 3. They are preserved by Him (Ps. cxlv. 20; xxxi. 23). 4. They have many instances of mercy, kindness, and respect shown them (Ex. xx. 6). Hence David prays (Ps. cxix. 123; Prov. viii. 21). 5. All things that occur unto them in the present life are for their good (Rom. viii. 28). 6. Great things are laid up and reserved for them that love Him. (*T. Hannam.*)

PSALM CXLVI.

VERS. 1-10. **Praise ye the Lord.**—*Hallelujah*.—I. THE GRANDEST RESOLUTION (vers. 1, 2). 1. The author's belief in the existence of his soul. When this conviction comes, the whole universe is transfigured, and God is brought down from the region of debate and speculation into the realm of consciousness as the Reality of realities. 2. His belief in the duty of his soul to worship. This is to have the whole soul transported with the sense of His immeasurable love and the transcendent loveliness of His character,—to have the soul following Him as the planets follow the sun, drawing from Him harmony of movement, radiance, and life. The words imply—3. His conviction that he must rouse himself to the work. "O my soul." No soul can worship unless it rouses. Man has the power of self-motion and self-resolve. We cannot be carried up the lofty heights of true devotion; we must climb the rugged slopes ourselves. Ten thousand voices from above are constantly saying to us, "Come up hither." II. THE UNRELIABILITY OF MANKIND (vers. 3, 4). 1. Men's bodies are dying. 2. Men's purposes are perishing. The great shores of destiny are crowded with the wrecks of purposes that have been broken, unfulfilled hopes, unrealized plans, etc. Wherefore, then, "put trust in princes" or in mankind? Sooner a house built on the sand, and in defiance of the laws of gravitation, to shelter you from the tempest, or the most fragile canoe to bear you in safety over the Atlantic billows. III. THE HAPPIEST CONDITION (vers. 5-9). 1. The "God of Jacob" is—(1) All powerful. (2) Absolutely truthful. (3) Infinitely merciful. 2. Here, then, is an Object on which to rely, "Trust in Him who liveth for ever." IV. THE WRONGDOER'S DESTINY (ver. 9). "The way of the wicked He turneth aside." 1. From what? From all that can render their existence worth having,—from pure friendship, from peace of conscience, from pure loves, from bright and unquenchable hopes. "He turns them aside." 2. How? Not by His will, not by the force of circumstances, not by the influence He exerts, no; but by their own free agency they turn themselves "upside down," they go of their own accord on the broad way that leads to destruction. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) "*Hallelujah*":—I am sorry to see that great word, *Hallelujah*, *Hallelu-Jah*, praise to Jah, Jehovah, become so hackneyed as it is, by talk about "*Hallelujah* lasses," and *Hallelujah*—I know not what. The Jews will not even pronounce the word *Jah*, or write it; it seems a great pity that it should be thus draggled in the dirt by Gentiles. "Praise ye the Lord." Whenever you make use of the word *Hallelujah*, let it be with the due reverence which should be given to that blessed name, for remember, "the Lord will not

hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *His last song*:—A touching story is told of an old Methodist, a singer of no mean order, who was afflicted with a cancer on his tongue. He went to a hospital for an operation, and there this pathetic incident occurred. Holding up his hand, he said, "Wait a bit, doctor; I have something to say to you." The operator waited, and the patient continued, "When this is over, doctor, shall I ever sing again?" The doctor could not speak; there was a big lump in his own throat. He simply shook his head, while the tears streamed down the poor fellow's face, and he trembled convulsively. The sick man then appealed to the doctor to lift him up, with which request the physician complied. He said, "I have had many a good time singing God's praises, and you tell me, doctor, I can never sing any more after this. I have one song to sing, which will be the last. It will be a song of gratitude and praise to God as well." Then, from the operator's table, the poor man sang one of Dr. Watts' hymns, so familiar to many:—

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath."

(Sunday Circle.)

Vers. 3, 4. Put not your trust in princes.—Dependence on man forbidden:—
I. MANKIND ARE NATURALLY DISPOSED TO DO THIS. The young depend upon the old, and the old upon the young. The poor depend upon the rich, and the rich upon the poor. The servant depends upon his master, and the master upon the servant. The subject depends upon the ruler, and the ruler upon the subject. The child depends upon its parents, and the parent on the child. Is it strange, therefore, that such creatures as we are, in our present state, should depend too much upon each other? We early form this habit, which is constantly strengthening through all the changes and periods of life, and which God originally intended we should form and cultivate. But He never meant that our dependence upon each other should be a just ground of our renouncing our supreme dependence upon Himself. **II. GOD HAS FORBIDDEN THEM TO DO THIS.** 1. He has required them to place their own supreme dependence upon Himself. 2. He has forbidden them to trust in themselves. **III. WHY HE HAS FORBIDDEN IT.** 1. Because mankind are so very unfit objects upon which to place supreme dependence. (1) Mortal. (2) Frail. (3) Fickle. (4) Absolutely dependent on God. 2. To preserve them from the numerous dangers and disappointments to which such undue confidence exposes them. 3. Because it tends to alienate them from Himself, and fix them down in ease and security, upon a false and fallible foundation. 4. To prevent their ruining themselves for ever. (N. Emmons, D.D.) *The forbidding of carnal confidence:—*1. What a man doth most trust in, that he esteemeth most of, and praiseth in his heart most; therefore doth the psalmist set us upon God, as on the right object of trust, and diverteth us from the wrong, that he may teach us to make God the only object of praise. 2. Because the main object of our carnal confidence naturally is man in power, who seemeth able to do for us, able to promote us to dignity and riches, and to keep us up in some state in the world; therefore must we throw down this idol in particular, that we may place our confidence in God the better. 3. To cut off carnal confidence in man, that neither mean men may trust in great men, nor great men may trust in the multitude of mean men, we must remember that no man is naturally better than his progenitors, but such as his fathers were, such is he—that is, a sinful, weak, and unconstant creature. 4. The reason why we should not put trust in man is because he can neither help himself nor the man that trusteth in him when there is most need. 5. He that cannot deliver himself from death is not to be trusted in, because it is uncertain how soon death shall seize upon him. 6. Whatsoever the good will, or purpose, or promise of any man can give assurance of, all doth vanish when the man dieth. (D. Dickson.) *Man too frail for our support:—*We may lean on the creature without falling for a time, even as one doth against a crazy fence; but eventually the prop giveth way, and injury if not death ensues. God alone is safely to be trusted. (Anon.)

Ver. 4, 5. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth.—The philosophy of death:—The text refers to—I. **THE DESTINY OF ALL.** 1. A special day—the day of death. 2. A striking view of death. 3. Man's last earthly home. 4. The cessation of mental activity. **II. THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES AND HAPPINESS OF A CERTAIN DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER.** 1. Sustained by the God of Jacob. 2. Ex-

pecting all good in and from God. 3. The blessedness of this character. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The mortality of human thought*.—I. ALL HYPOTHETICAL THOUGHTS ARE MORTAL. They are like the leaves of the forest, whilst some of them begin to wither and fall ere autumnal winds have touched them, they all fall dead at last. The heaps of dead leaves which the gardener every day in autumn sweeps up from the well-wooded swards under his care are emblems of these hypothetical thoughts. Do I undervalue such thoughts? No! Each of these rotting leaves had its charm and has its use. At first it quivered with life and sparkled in the sun; and its decay, no doubt, plays a useful part in the economy of nature. Hypothetical thoughts! Do not despise them. Who can tell the quickening impulses, the beneficent sciences and arts that have come out of them, and will come again? Albeit they must all perish as they touch reality. As the grandest billow, when it breaks on the rocky shore, falls to pieces, so the most majestic hypotheses of men are wrecked as the mind touches the stern realities of eternity. II. ALL SENSUOUS THOUGHTS ARE MORTAL. In the Scriptures we read of the "fleshy mind," "fleshy wisdom," and of those who "judge after the flesh." How much of human thought is started, shaped, and swayed by the senses! Their springs of movement are in the senses. Their horizon is bounded by the sensuous. Now, such thoughts are mortal. They must perish. They are dying by millions every moment, and they must all die at death. "In that very day his thoughts perish." III. ALL MERCENARY THOUGHTS ARE MORTAL. I mean those thoughts that are taken up with the question, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Thoughts that are concerned entirely with man's material interest in this world, and are limited entirely to time. The worldly schemes and plans of men are all perishing and perishable. Were all the wrecked purposes of all the business men in London for one day fully registered, we could almost say the world itself would not contain the books. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Lost thoughts*.—At death a man sees all those thoughts which were not spent upon God to be fruitless. A Scythian captain having, for a draught of water, yielded up a city, cried out, "What have I lost? What have I betrayed?" So will it be with that man when he comes to die who hath spent all his meditations upon the world; he will say, "What have I lost? What have I betrayed? I have lost heaven, I have betrayed my soul." Should not the consideration of this fix our minds upon the thoughts of God and glory? All other meditations are fruitless; like a piece of ground which hath much cost laid out upon it, but it yields no crop. (*I. Watson.*)

Ver. 5. **Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help.**—*The God of Jacob*.—Few of God's names are more suggestive than the one in the verse before us—the God of Jacob. It is very instructive, for example, and very comforting too, to find that God is willing to have His name so closely associated with that of a human being. The vastness of the material universe, with all its myriad hosts of suns and stars, sometimes staggers our faith, and makes us wonder if human life can really be the object of the Almighty care and love. To all such questionings we find an answer in this beautiful name. The God of unfathomable space and immeasurable time is not unmindful of the life of man. The Lord of all those starry hosts—He also is the God of Jacob. And then this name shows, still further, that God cares not only for human beings, but for individual souls. The God of Jacob must be—I. ONE WHO LOVES GREAT SINNERS AND PARDONS GREAT TRANSGRESSIONS. Sometimes a man feels as if he were too far gone in trespasses and sins to lift up his head in the presence of God, too full of utter selfishness and worldliness to dream of ever becoming a child of God at all. To such a man I would say, Just look at Jacob. If God became that man's God, surely He may become your God also. And sometimes one who has begun the Christian life, but has been overtaken in a fault, or in some other way has been backsliding in the path on which he started, loses heart and cries, It's useless for me to try to begin afresh; my nature is so weak, and the world around me is so strong. Again I would say, Look at Jacob! Bethel was Jacob's trysting-place with God; but long after Bethel was past Jacob sinned, and sinned again. And yet God did not forsake him or cast him away, but kept His hand upon him and carried him through, until, at last, He set his feet upon a rock and established his goings. II. ONE WHO HEARS A SINNER'S PRAYER. It is these prayers of Jacob which form the great redeeming feature of his character, and which, eventually, work out the man's salvation. With all his earthliness and selfishness he was a man who

believed in God, and who believed also in prayer. The fact that he had a very sinful heart is no proof that his prayers were hypocritical. It teaches us, rather, that we must not wait until we are saints before we begin to pray, for it is only by praying that we shall ever rise to any kind of sainthood. III. ONE WHO PURIFIES HIS SONS BY PAINFUL TRIAL. Jacob has been called "a Janus, with two faces, one turned upwards to heaven, the other downwards to hell." But Jacob was more than a Janus, for Janus only had two faces, while Jacob had two hearts. His two names point to his two natures—Jacob and Israel, the natural man and the spiritual man, the supplanter of his brother and the prince of God. Now, here was the problem of Jacob's life: How is the natural man to be spiritualized; how is the sinner to become a saint; how is the Jacob nature to be cast out, and the Israel nature to prevail? And this was the answer which God gave on every page of Jacob's history, It can only be done by sore and bitter trial. As a refiner of silver or gold deals with the impure but precious metal, so did God deal with this wayward child of His love. He sent him sorrow upon sorrow, until all the earthiness and dross was purged out of his heart, and Jacob became, not only in name, but in very nature, Israel, the Prince of God. (*J. C. Lambert, B.D.*) **Happiness.**—I. HAPPINESS IN A WORLDLY SENSE IS AN IMPOSSIBLE ATTAINMENT. This is proved—1. By the wants, calamities, passions, and weaknesses of human nature. Each of these would prevent the attainment of happiness. 2. By the changing, transitory nature of the world and its contents. That pleasure which can be dashed away in a moment cannot be happiness. 3. By the fact that all here are under the dominion of sin. Sin blights all things, sin embitters all things, sin brings a curse on all things. II. HAPPINESS IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE IS A POSSIBLE AND A BLESSED REALITY. The reasons for this, given in our text, are twofold—assistance in the present and hope in the future. 1. Assistance in the present. The God of Jacob is his help. Notice that a man may have difficulties and yet be happy. God is his help. Oh, what a help! His power, greatness, goodness, all exercised on the Christian's behalf. 2. Hope for the future—"Whose hope is in the Lord." Hope, even in the present, can give happiness. But this hope will one day be realized and its fruition will be perfect joy. It is in the Lord our God that perfect happiness is only to be found. May we seek Him for our help and make Him our hope. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. Which keepeth truth for ever.—Truth as an attribute of God.—He "keepeth truth for ever"—I. IN NATURE (Ps. xix.; Job xxxvii.). II. IN THE REGION OF MORAL BEING AND LIFE. He keepeth the truth of them for ever. In all ages, in all worlds, these impalpable things, truth, honour, purity, righteousness, charity, are one and are the same. He who has learnt to love them here has eternal kindred; he who has knit his soul to them here has eternal communion; he who has dared to die for them here has eternal renown. The Greek sage was right. The sisters of the unseen realities, which have the rule of us here, await us behind the veil. In vain shall we betray them here, if they affront us there with their retributions, and exact their penalties through eternity. If truth, honour, duty, be transitory and mundane things, the temptation is terrible to shirk them. They cost much, and to him who holds them in slight honour they bring slight rewards. But if "He keepeth their truth for ever"; if He who is eternal lives by them, works by them, and will so live and work for ever, it lends an awful force to the man who is ready on earth to live for them and die for them; and it blasts with an awful eternal desolation the life which dishonours them and treads them in the dust. III. IN THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION. 1. The truth of reconciliation. He declares that He is absolutely reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. That truth He keepeth for ever. Meet Him in Christ. Your sin has for ever vanished from before His face. Your soul is for ever under the heaven of His smiles (Col. i. 19; Rom. v. 1-11; Eph. i. 3-12; Gal. iii. 21; iv. 7). That truth He keepeth for ever. 2. The truth of regeneration (Gal. iv. 4, 5). If your life is built on this rock, God's calling of you as a son in Christ, if your hope is rested in this sovereign purpose of the Lord God Almighty, to present you complete in Christ in the day of the manifestation of the Son of God, then there is nothing in the universe which is stronger; nothing on earth, heaven or hell, nothing out of yourself can tear you away. And this is the end which God is pursuing through the whole of your discipline (Heb. xii. 1-12). He keeps the truth of this purpose for ever. To bring out the filial character, to enable you to comprehend His paternal character, is the great end of all you are called to endure. 3. The truth

of His covenant engagement concerning man and the universe with His Son. We have His purpose and His love to trust to; but both grounds of assurance assume their strongest form and convey the surest hope when we contemplate the covenant which was established with the God-man when He finished the work which the Father had given Him to do. We are ever haunted in our endeavours to realize God's faithfulness by the thought of our own unfaithfulness, our utter unworthiness of such fidelity, such love. That we may have strong assurance God established His covenant with us as a covenant with the God-man, the well-beloved Son. Not what we are before the Father but what He is, our advocate, representative, and living head, is then the question. The building up of the spiritual universe under Him as its head, the redemption of the creature, all created things from the bondage of corruption, the realization of the ideal beauty, purity, and splendour, which has haunted like a dim dream in all ages the imagination of mankind, the completion of the New Jerusalem, the filling up of the muster-roll of its citizens, the gathering of the crowned victors of the spiritual battle around the throne of the Captain, to shine and reign with Him in the palaces of eternity, —these are assured to Christ by the terms of the everlasting covenant. And these the God "who keepeth truth for ever" will evermore secure. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Vers. 7-9. The Lord looseth the prisoners.—*The Lord's famous titles:*—There are five famous titles of God here. I. EMANCIPATOR. He looseth those in mental, moral, and spiritual bondage. II. ILLUMINATOR. The Lord has opened the eyes of many a man who could not see himself, and so proved how blind he was; and could not see the Lord, and so showed still more how blind he was. The Lord has given the inner sight to many a man who was without spiritual understanding, to whom the Gospel seemed a great mystery, of which he could make neither head nor tail. III. COMFORTER. He "raiseth them that are bowed down" with—1. Bereavement. 2. The burdens of life. 3. Inward distress. 4. A sense of sin. IV. REWARDER. He "loveth the righteous"—with a love of complacency, communion, favour, and honour. V. PRESERVER. 1. He "preserveth the strangers." Father is dead, mother is dead, friends are all gone, and even in the very village where you were born you are a stranger; come along, your God is not dead, your Saviour liveth: "The Lord preserveth the strangers." 2. "He relieveth the fatherless and widow." If you turn to the first books of the Bible, you will see there God's great care of the fatherless and the widow. Who had the tithes? Well, the Levites; but also the poor, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow (Deut. xiv. 28; xxvi. 12). Now, then, you who feel like widows, you who have lost your joy and earthly comfort, you who feel like the fatherless, and cry, "No man careth for my soul," oh, may the sweet Spirit of the Lord entice you to come to Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus—the Liberator:*—Liberty—a free country! Those are words dear to us all. We love and honour the memory of those who in the old days fought for England's freedom. We read with pride of the Swiss hero who flung himself upon the Austrian spears and made a way for liberty. But what shall we say of Jesus, who gives us the truest liberty, whose service is perfect freedom, who looses men out of prison? There are few words which have been more misused than that word liberty. Well might the French woman, victim of the Revolution, point to the Statue of Freedom, as she came to die upon the scaffold, and say, "O Liberty, how many crimes have been committed in thy name!" "Truly," says one of our great preachers, "there are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought." "The Lord looseth men out of prison." He looseth out of the hard prison of the ancient law, and setteth our feet in the large room of grace, and bringeth us into a wealthy place. He looseth out of the prison of sin and death, the prison of the curse. He who went down into Hades, and preached to the spirits of the fathers in prison, hath broken for us the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron in sunder. Are there none of us who are prisoners—captives and slaves to our own bad passions, our own undisciplined will, evil habits of our own making? If so, and if we have the will to be free, Jesus, the Liberator, will loose us, even though we be in the innermost prison of sin, and our feet made fast in the stocks of evil habits. But we shall never be free till we know that we are in prison, till we feel the chain. The young man following his own lusts and pleasures, walking in his own way, talks to us of his freedom; he knows not that he is a prisoner, and so he will not cry to the Lord to set him free. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. He relieveth the fatherless.—The fatherless relieved:—The Lord "relieveth the fatherless"—I. BY EXCITING THE COMPASSION OF OTHERS IN THEIR BEHALF. The feeling of sympathy is one of the noblest affections of our rational nature. To be without compassion for the miserable and the helpless is a strong indication of deep moral depravity. That all are not thus depraved must be owing to the distinguishing goodness and grace of God. 1. Even among those who are still in an unregenerate state we find many who are easily affected with the calamities of others, and who listen with eagerness, as well as with deep concern, to the tale of woe. 2. When Christians behold others around them in poverty and affliction they ascribe it to undeserved mercy that they themselves are not in similar, or even in worse, circumstances. This thought moves their compassion. II. BY EXCITING THE LIBERALITY OF OTHERS TOWARDS THEIR SUPPORT. 1. Even those who are strangers to the power of His grace are often led by a natural principle of benevolence, or perhaps of self-gratification, to abound in alms-deeds. But more especially the Lord endows many of His own servants with a kind and liberal spirit. Being conscious that they have nothing but what they have received, they consider themselves as stewards, who are bound to be faithful. They endeavour, therefore, to honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first-fruits of their increase. III. BY STIRRING UP OTHERS TO ACTIVE EXERTIONS IN THEIR BEHALF. IV. BY RENDERING THE EXERTIONS OF OTHERS, AND ESPECIALLY OF HIS OWN SERVANTS, EFFECTUAL FOR THIS END. V. MORE ESPECIALLY BY BRINGING THEM TO AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH HIMSELF, AND SOMETIMES BY PLACING THEM IN STATIONS OF USEFULNESS, AND EVEN OF EMINENCE IN THE WORLD. (*D. Dickson.*)

Ver. 10. The Lord shall reign for ever.—The eternal reign of Zion's King:—I. THE KING TO BE PROCLAIMED—Jehovah, the Triune God. 1. The Three Persons of the Deity are included and pointed out as the joint-covenanters for Zion's salvation. 2. He is the avenger of Zion, and the judge of their cause. 3. He is endeared to Zion by His affinity. 4. The union is eternal. I want a Christianity that not only brings me to heaven at last, but that brings heaven down to my soul now, that I may gain the foretaste of eternal bliss even in a world of sorrows. Blessed be God, I know something about it. II. THE INTERESTS OF HIS KINGDOM. 1. The safety of all His subjects, because they are His own peculiar care. 2. The undivided allegiance of His subjects. 3. The statutes and laws of His kingdom are inimitable and immutable. III. ITS NEVER-ENDING DURATION. The King eternal, immortal, hath spoiled death, and taken away his sting; and He has removed its terrors, and for ever put away the second death, so that none of His subjects can by any possibility enter upon it; for on such the second death hath no power. They are blessed and holy, having been made partakers of the first resurrection from the death of sin to a life of righteousness. And because our King is immortal, and dieth no more, and lives for ever—cannot grow old—without beginning of days, or end of years, so are all His subjects; for I hear Him thus proclaim for their encouragement, "Because I live, ye shall live also." IV. HALLELUJAH. Oh for more exalted strains! Oh for stronger language! Oh for a fuller vocabulary, and boundless ideas to be thrown forth as with a cataract, and without reserve, to glorify, and honour, and exalt the precious name of Jesus; for all the voices in heaven are thus employed. And how should this encourage the subjects of His grace on earth! (*J. Irons.*)

PSALM CXLVII.

VERS. 1-11. Praise ye the Lord.—Genuine worship:—I. THE TRANSCENDENT EXCELLENCE of true worship (ver. 1). 1. It is good. (1) It accords with the constitution of the human soul. (2) It accords with the Divine command. (3) It agrees with the genius of the universe. 2. It is pleasant. It is the grand end of our being, the paradise of our nature; worship is not a means to an end, it is the grandest end, there is nothing higher, it is heaven. 3. It is "comely." Is it not a fitting and a beautiful thing that the greatest Being in the universe should be the most earnestly thanked, that the best Being should be the most profoundly revered, that the kindest Being should be the most enthusiastically

adored? II. THE SUPREME OBJECT of true worship. 1. What He is in Himself. "Great." 2. In relation to His creatures. (1) To the human family. (a) Building up useful institutions (ver. 2). Schools for the ignorant, hospitals for the diseased, asylums for the poor, etc. (b) Uniting scattered peoples (ver. 2). By the promotion of one language, by the extension of free trade, by the abolition of political and religious difficulties, and by the advancement of one creed—Christ, and one code—His example. (c) Healing broken hearts (ver. 3). (d) Rectifying human conditions (ver. 6). (e) Disregarding martial force (ver. 10). (f) Interested in saintly men (ver. 11). (2) In relation to inanimate nature. He is at work—(a) In the stellar universe (ver. 4). (b) In the atmosphere (ver. 8). (3) In relation to mundane life (vers. 8, 9). (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Master motives to praise*:—The psalms of David, like Christian experience, begin with the blessing of the separated life, and they end with a torrent of praise. The final four psalms each commence and finish with Hallelujah! We may all share in Christ's coronation; none are too weak to bring their praises, none so mighty but He is mightier. The motives I would urge upon you are very simple. I. BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD IS. 1. His character is seen in His works. His understanding is infinite, there is no limit to His power. He is in all things that He has created. The same power made a world and moulds a raindrop. The same wisdom names the stars and knows each blade of grass on the mountain-side. If our spirit be not warped we shall never lack cause for praise. A friend of mine tells me that the way to be always thankful for the weather is to keep a garden; if it is fine you can enjoy the flowers; if it is wet you can stay indoors and say how good the rain is for the garden. If our soul be like a watered garden and we recognize that the Lord cares for us, trial and sunshine will alike bring praise, and we shall ever be able to say, as an old man I know always begins his public prayers, "Lord, we thank Thee for our being and for our well-being." 2. The motive of all His works God finds in Himself. Learn more of Him. Live more with Him and you will praise Him more, until perhaps you will find language, even the language of the Psalms, too unworthy of what He has taught you of Himself, and you will sometimes just be silent and adore. II. BECAUSE OF WHAT PRAISE IS. 1. It is good. (1) If we praise God as we ought we shall be kept from praising ourselves. Surely that is good. I have heard that most self-made men are very apt to praise their maker; indeed we are all liable to sing the praises of self. The sure way of escaping this danger is to fill your heart and mouth with praise to God. (2) Praise leads us to value truly what we receive. The goodness becomes great when the memory of it is abundantly uttered. Praise is the plural of pray. 2. It is pleasant. A Puritan writer says there are some things good and not pleasant, and there are some things pleasant and not good, but there is one thing both good and pleasant, and that is for brethren to dwell together in unity. To which I would only add they should unite in praise. Praise is the instinct of the regenerate soul. What is natural is always pleasant. If your joys abound, praise God. It will shed a glow on the mountain, put a bloom on the grape, add moss to your rose. If sorrow is your portion, praise; however ill your lot you can find something to evoke thanksgiving. 3. It is comely. What can we do but praise? Gifts are bountifully given to us, and we have nothing to offer in return but thanks. We can only give Christ our sins and our praises, if He take the one shall we withhold the other? Nay, let Him have all. We shall see that praise on our part is comely if we lay hold of the marvellous truth that by and by God will praise us (1 Cor. iv. 5). (*T. Fullerton.*) *Praise*:—I. WHAT IS PRAISING? As applied to men, it has a limited use, differing in degree, rather than in kind, from that which is employed in devotion. It is the expression of pleasure, of approval, of gratification in an action, in a course of action, or in the contemplation of one's disposition. All men are limited by manifold imperfections, and therefore it is that praise, as applied to men, must always be partial, and must be but occasional. Applied to God, praise is the experience and the utterance of the soul's admiration and joy in view of the Divine character, or its exhibitions in His moral government, in His providence, and in His grace. Praise always implies admiration and joy, and a disposition to make them known. What dispositions are implied, then, in the act of praising God? It implies, first, a knowledge of Divine manifestations. That is, praise is not merely the utterance of a feeling of pleasure or of gladness that wells up in the heart. Praise is something that is excited in our mind by the knowledge, or the supposed knowledge, of God. The act of praising implies, also, a moral taste that feels and enjoys the noble attributes of God, and the develop-

ment of them. That is, it implies a moral sensibility to Divine elements. It implies, likewise, gratitude, love, joy in the Lord. It is not an act of mere reason, nor of mere will, although both reason and will may be implicated in it. It is an overflow of feeling. It may take place consciously. It may take place with preparation through thought and instruction. But the highest forms of praise are spontaneous, irresistible, full of interjections. Such is the praise of the heavenly host. It is that utterance of the soul in its rarer moments, when before it passes, in sublime order, the Divine character, the Divine nature, the Divine government, and the soul is kindled with the prospect, and it gives forth, in language, or with feeling manifested, its own gladness and admiration. The Christian exercise of praising implies a degree of continuity. It is a disposition. It springs from a soul that is always seeing, more or less, the admirableness of God's nature and government, in grace and in providence. Moreover, the act of praising implies faith. That is, those who come to God with praise, as with prayer, must believe that He is. It is impossible to kindle the soul and to pour it forth toward a shadow; toward any being that stands in doubt in our convictions. Besides, the act of praising implies enthusiasm, soul-glow. But it is lyrical. It may dwell in the thoughts, but it is very apt to overflow the rim of thought, and to spill out in words and expressions. II. IN WHAT IS IT TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM PRAYER? Why sometimes it is prayer. Prayer is the generic of which praise is only a specific element. Every address made consciously to God, whether of supplication, of confession, of simple communion, or of ecstatic praise, is prayer. Prayer, comprehensively, is the soul's communion with God. Praising, then, as one of the elements of prayer, and as distinguished from the other forms of prayer, is not supplication: it is asking nothing. It is not confession: it is not pouring out what we are. It is the soul's expression of admiration in view of the Divine excellence. It is gladness expressed; it is gratitude expressed; it is joy expressed—and all with reference to the manifestations of God Himself. (*Henry Ward Beecher.*) *A praiseful spirit*:—It is related that Beethoven had his piano carried to the middle of a beautiful field, and there, sunbeams and cloud shadows playing together on the grass, and birds performing their impromptu oratorios, he composed some of his great pieces. We are to come beneath the broad canopy of God's love, and, encompassed by innumerable mercies, we are to make music—the music of thankfulness for tokens of Divine goodness abounding in our lives.

Vers. 2-5. **The Lord doth build up Jerusalem.**—*The greatness and gentleness of God*:—The text reveals the constructive side of the Divine government. I. AS SHOWN IN THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH. 1. "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem," etc. That He should do so shows—(1) That the Church is self-demolished. (2) That it is self-helpless. (3) That God is the Gatherer, the Redeemer, and the Builder of the Church. 2. It is not God's purpose to destroy. It is His very nature to preserve, extend, complete, and glorify. He does destroy, but never willingly. His arm does not become terrible until His heart has been grieved, until His patience has been exhausted, and until the vital interests of the universe have been put in peril. II. AS SEEN IN THE GENTLE CARE OF HUMAN HEARTS. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Still, you see how constructive and preservative is God. His work is edification, not destruction. Who cares for broken-hearted men? Who has patience with the weak and faint? The greater the nature, the greater the compassion. 1. The personality of God's knowledge. He knows every bruised reed. Hearts suffer in secret; there is nothing hidden from God! 2. The infinite adaptations of Divine grace. Every heart, whatever its grief, may be healed. There is "a sovereign balm for every wound." 3. The perfectness of Divine healing. Other healers say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Others "heal the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly." We are not healed until God heals us. God offers to heal us; our disease and our sorrow are challenges to prove His grace. What of the responsibility of refusal? III. AS SEEN IN THE ORDER, THE REGULARITY, AND THE STABILITY OF CREATION. 1. Creation is a volume open to all eyes. Read it, and see the might and gentleness, the wisdom and patience of God. Jesus Christ taught us to reason from the natural to the spiritual: "Consider the lilies," etc.; "Behold the fowls of the air," etc. (1) God takes care of the great universe, may I not trust Him with my life? (2) Where God's will is unquestioned, the result is light, beauty, music: why should I oppose myself to its gracious dominion? 2. Let the Church be of good courage. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall

appear in His glory." "The gates of hell shall not prevail." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.**—*Good cheer for outcasts*:—Does not this show us the great gentleness and infinite mercy of God? And as we know most of God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, should it not charm us to remember that when He came on earth He did not visit kings and princes, but He came unto the humble and simple folk. I think you may judge of a man's character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it he is ambitious and self-seeking; but when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom he must do everything, you know that he is not seeking himself, but that pure benevolence sways his heart (*Matt. xi. 29*). I also see here an illustration of His love to men, as men. If you seek only after rich men the suspicion arises, and it is more than a suspicion that you rather seek their wealth than them. If you aim only at the benefit of wise men, it is probably true that it is their wisdom which attracts you, and not their manhood: but the Lord Jesus Christ did not love men because of any advantageous circumstances, or any commendable incidents of their condition: His love was to manhood. Another thing is also clear. If Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel, it proves His power over the hearts of men. **I. TO WHOM MAY THIS TEXT APPLY?** 1. The very poorest and most despised among men. The Lord Jesus Christ looks with love on those whom others look down upon with scorn. 2. Those who have made themselves outcasts by their wickedness, and are deservedly cast out of society. 3. Those who judge themselves to be outcasts, though as to outward actions they certainly do not deserve the character. Now, listen, thou who hast condemned thyself. The Lord absolves thee. Thou who hast shut thyself out as an outcast, thou shalt be gathered; for whereas they call thee an outcast, whom no man seeketh after, thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord's delight is in thee. Only believe thou in Jesus Christ, and cast thyself upon Him. 4. Backsliders. 5. Depressed Christians. 6. Those who suffer for righteousness' sake, till they are regarded as the offscouring of all things. Blessed are those who are outcasts for Christ! Rich are those who are so honoured as to be permitted to become poor for Him! Happy they who have had this grace given them to be permitted to lay life itself down for Jesus Christ's sake! **II. IN WHAT SENSE THE LORD JESUS GATHERS TOGETHER THESE OUTCASTS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES.** 1. He gathers them to hear the Gospel. 2. He gathers them to Himself—to blessedness and peace through reconciliation with the Father. 3. He gathers them into the Divine family—makes them children of God—heirs with Himself. 4. In due time He gathers them into His visible Church, and He gathers them into His work. 5. He gathers them into heaven. **III. LESSONS.** 1. Encouragement to those who are unworthy, or who think themselves so, to go to Jesus Christ to-night. 2. If Jesus Christ received some of us when we felt ourselves to be outcasts, how we ought to love Him! 3. Let us always feel that if the Lord Jesus Christ took us up when we were not worth having, we will never be ashamed to try and pick up others who are in a like condition. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 3, 4. He healeth the broken in heart.—*God's relation to sorrowing souls and to starry systems*.—**I. HIS RELATION TO SORROWING SOULS.** "He healeth the broken in heart." There are broken hearts and wounded souls in this world. The whole human creation is groaning. God works here to heal and restore. Christianity is the restorative element He applies—the Balm of Gilead—the tree whose fruit is for the healing of the nations. **II. HIS RELATION TO STARRY SYSTEMS.** "He telleth the number of the stars." 1. Those who deny God's active relation to both souls and stars. These comprehend those who deny the existence of God altogether, and those who admit His existence, but deny His superintendence in the universe; the latter regard all the phenomena and changes of nature as taking place not by the agency of God, but by the principles or laws which He impressed upon it at first. The universe is to them like a plant: all the vital forces of action are in itself, and it will go on until they exhaust and die. 2. Those who admit God's active relation to stars, but deny it to souls. They say that it is derogatory to Infinite Majesty to suppose His taking any notice of broken hearts. He has to do with the great, but not with the little. There are two or three thoughts which make this objection appear very childish. (1) One is that man's great and small are but notions. When I say that a thing is great, all I mean is that it is great to me. To God there is nothing great nor small (2) Another

is that what we consider small are influential parts of the whole. Science proves that the motion of an atom must propagate an influence to remotest orbs; that all created being is but one great chain, of which the corpuscle is a link, which, if touched, will send its vibration to the ultimate points. In the moral system facts show that the solitary thought of an obscure man can shake empires, produce revolutions, and reform society. (3) Another thought is that—even on the assumption of our conception of magnitudes being correct—we have as much evidence to believe that God is as truly at work in the small as the great. (4) Human souls, though in suffering, are greater than the stars in all their splendour. (5) There is higher evidence to believe that God restores souls than that He takes care of stars. The highest proof is consciousness. I infer, from my understanding, that God governs the heavenly bodies, but I feel that “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” This thought gives to its objection a contemptible insignificance. 3. Those who profess faith in God’s active relation to both, but who are destitute of the suitable spiritual feeling. Antecedently, we should infer that, wherever there could be found a thinking moral nature like man’s fully believing in this twofold relation of God—His connection with the heavenly bodies, and with all pertaining to the history of itself—there would be developed in that nature, as the necessary consequence of that faith, life, humility, and devotion. It is said that “an undevout astronomer is mad”; but an undevout believer in God’s connection with the universe and man is impossible. Wherever, then, we find apathetic, proud, undevout men professing this belief, we find hypocrites. 4. To what class, in relation to this subject, dost thou belong? Thou wouldst probably revolt at the idea of belonging to either of the former two; but the latter, for many reasons, is worse than either: it is to play the hypocrite, and disgrace religion. Get, then, the true faith in the subject—the faith that will produce this true quickening, humbling, devotionalizing effect—and thou shalt catch the true meaning of life. (*Homilist.*) *Healing for the wounded*:—I. A GREAT ILL—a broken heart. The heart broken not by distress or disappointment, but on account of sin, is the heart which God peculiarly delights to heal. All other sufferings may find a fearful centre in one breast, and yet the subject of them may be unpardoned and unsaved; but if the heart be broken by the Holy Ghost for sin, salvation will be its ultimate issue, and heaven its result. A broken heart implies—1. A very deep and poignant sorrow on account of sin. 2. Utter inability to get rid of it. II. A GREAT MERCY. “He healeth the broken in heart.” 1. He alone does it. 2. He alone can do it. 3. He alone may do it. 4. He will do it. Did Saul of Tarsus rejoice after three days of blindness? Yes, and you shall be delivered also. Oh, it is a theme for eternal gratitude, that the same God who in His loftiness and omnipotence stooped down in olden times to soothe, cherish, relieve, and bless the mourner, is even now taking His journeys of mercy among the penitent sons of men. Oh, I beseech Him to come where thou art sitting, and put His hand inside thy soul, and, if He finds there a broken heart, to bind it up. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ’s hospital*:—I. THE PATIENTS AND THEIR SICKNESS. 1. Those whose hearts are broken through sorrow. The text does not say “the spiritually broken in heart,” therefore I will not insert an adverb where there is none in the passage. Come hither, ye that are burdened, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; come hither, all ye that sorrow, be your sorrow what it may; come hither, all ye whose hearts are broken, be the heart-break what it may, for He healeth the broken in heart. 2. Those whose hearts are broken for sin. 3. Hearts that are broken from sin. When you and sin have quarrelled, never let the quarrel be made up again. II. THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS MEDICINE. 1. Jesus was anointed of God for this work. 2. Jesus was sent of God on purpose to do this work. 3. He was educated for this work. He had a broken heart Himself. 4. He is experienced in this work. 5. His medicine is His own flesh and blood. There is no cure like it. III. THE TESTIMONIAL TO THE GREAT PHYSICIAN which is emblazoned in the text. I understand it to mean this. 1. He does it effectually. 2. He does it constantly. 3. He does it invariably. 4. He glories in doing it. IV. WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO. 1. Resort to Him. 2. Trust Him. 3. Praise Him. (*Ibid.*) *Power and tenderness*:—A great deal of what we call the scepticism of the present day is merely the protest of the human mind for unity. The spiritual world has so often been described as being so utterly unlike this, its laws have been so persistently spoken of as contradictory to the laws of this; warring continually against it, that you could almost think sometimes that if these two worlds are governed at all they must be governed

by two different, contradictory, and even antagonistic deities. Man does not like this. It perplexes him. His allegiance becomes divided. He does not like to feel that he belongs to one world, and that he lives with one set of facts, "whilst he is working and thinking and studying, and that he is in another world and with another set of facts when he worships and prays. Now, these words start from the fullest recognition of both. The reality of both is implied. I. THE SAME GOD HOLDS SWAY IN BOTH WORLDS. "He healeth the broken in heart. He telleth the number of the stars." The revelation of God is twofold. There is the revelation that He gives in the spirits of men—the revelation that comes to us of God's handling of the souls of men; and there is the revelation which God gives in this material creation outside. Now, let me ask you, shall we not understand God better by keeping the two together? Is it not a loss to separate them? Let me say that the best commentary upon the Bible is science, and the best commentary upon science is the Bible. There are scientific questions being discussed in England at this present moment that never will be settled until people approach them from the spiritual standpoint. And, let me add, our religious conceptions would be strengthened, would rest upon a firmer foundation, and would be healthier and sweeter, if we always remembered the things that have come to us through the physiologist, through the biologist, through the geologist, and through all the men of science. The complete, true understanding of God comes through remembering that He who telleth the stars is also the same who healeth the broken in heart. II. THERE ARE CERTAIN GREAT PRINCIPLES THAT PREVAIL IN BOTH WORLDS. Oh, there is a difference! There is plenty of difference. Why, I have only to read my text again. Broken hearts belong only to one sphere. The shadow of a great disaster is upon our souls. There is nothing like it elsewhere. "The sunshine has a heart of care," said the great English novelist who tried to write poetry and failed; but the care was in her own heart. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now," said the Apostle Paul. The song of creation is set in the minor key. There is a little bit of something there besides poetry. Suffering is everywhere. Ask the doctor, and he will tell you that pathology is as broad as physiology. One is the shadow of the other. But let us steady our hearts. The same hand that keeps and helps and soothes the poor, bewildered, sorrowing creature, is the Hand that keeps the stars. If we could impress upon ourselves that the soul is as much under law as the body, that the well-being of the soul is determined by conditions as fixed and inexorable as the conditions that determine the well-being of the body, we could command spiritual influences with the same absolute certainty that we could command physical influences. "There is a law of gravitation," you say; "there is a law of the combination of chemical elements." Do not talk nonsense in a church. There is a law of pardon, there is a law of prayer, there is a law of spiritual health and sanctification. In an instant this morning you can, if you like, bring yourself into the current of help which will carry you up to the feet of God. Oh, if we but believed that all spiritual felicity is as much within our reach as the nearest law of nature! "Wilt thou be made whole?" I saw a young boy, the other day, making experiments with an electric battery. The place was full of electricity; but the connection was not established. Just one thing, and the current was complete. "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Yes." Then the current is complete. Cast yourself on the promises of God like a strong man casting himself into the tide. As truly as God leads the stars, can He, will He, heal the broken-hearted. (J. Morluais Jones.)

Ver. 4. He telleth the number of the stars.—*The stars and the Cross*:—As the best known constellation in our northern hemisphere is *Ursa Major* (sometimes called "the Plough"), so the best known, probably, in the southern hemisphere is *Cruz Australis*, or "the Southern Cross." Each side of our globe has, therefore, its own most conspicuous sign, or group of shining stars. But it is the privilege of those who reside at or near the Equator to command a view of both of these beautiful constellations. Standing within the vicinity of the Line, and looking up, the eye can sweep a wide celestial dome, which includes the Northern Plough on the one side, and the Southern Cross upon the other. Now, it is of extreme importance that intelligent Christians should be able to behold at the same time the two hemispheres of nature and of grace. In the same field of vision we should embrace the Plough and the Cross, and intelligently identify the God of nature with the God of grace. The psalmist David always did so, and notably does so

in the passage before us. What particularly strikes me here is the marvellous combination of Divine act. I find three statements, each of which commands our admiring thought, but the union of which—for they are closely bracketed together—is positively startling. Slightly varying the order, for the sake of convenience, I would take the whole as a descending climax, a *diminuendo* bar, of which the three steps are these: 1. God in the heavens: "He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names." 2. God in the Church: "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." 3. God in the home of the afflicted: "He healeth the broken in heart; He bindeth up their wounds." I. GOD IN THE HEAVENS. Do we not well from time to time to turn away from the distractions of this lower world, from the petty interests of this mere grain of sand on which we dwell, and, lifting up our eyes in intelligent contemplation to the glorious canopy overhead, to muse on the magnificent empire of Him "who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth on the waves of the sea; who maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; who doeth great things past finding out: yea, and wonders without number"? Oh! it will deepen our sense of the condescending love of God shown towards His Church and towards His afflicted people, when we behold His stately and majestic march over the fields of immensity, and see His own hand kindling and trimming every one of those innumerable lamps of heaven! II. GOD IN THE CHURCH. There is, as we all know, a literal sense in which the scattered tribes of Abraham's family shall yet be gathered in. "He that scattered Israel shall gather him as a shepherd doth his flock." Not more certain is the fact of his dispersion than is the decree of his restoration. A day is coming when Jacob's captivity shall be turned. But the words have also a wider meaning. Blessed be God, He hath devised means whereby His banished of all nations may be brought back; and He is daily, by those means and in all lands where the Gospel is proclaimed, gathering in the outcasts to His fold; and let me say that never have we better evidence that God is in any particular locality building up His Jerusalem than when the outcasts are being gathered in. The surest token of a prosperous Church is zealous and unwearied effort on the part of its members to win the lost and the lapsed around it to Christ. Oh! let us be stirred by the view of the Divine condescension, by the thought that He who sitteth on the circle of the universe, whose arm swings the solar system round yonder star Alcyone, and who holds in His hand the reins of all those stellar steeds that bound around the circuit of immensity, stoops down to this little planet on which we dwell, not only to build up upon it a Church of ransomed men, but even to go out after those who have been poor outcasts from His fold. III. GOD IN THE CHAMBER OF THE STRICKEN HEART. Oh! is it not a marvellous conception: away from the Bible, man never entertained the shadow of such a thought: the Mighty and Eternal One, from whose hand worlds upon worlds are sent forth like sparks from the blacksmith's anvil, or like chaff from the summer threshing-floor, bending to the humblest ministry of mercy, and putting liniments round the wounded heart! Ah! it is only the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that can make the text intelligible. Only in New Testament light can we interpret this mystery; but the person and the mission of the Divine Redeemer make all plain. His mediatorial arms stretch "from the highest throne in heaven to the place of deepest woe." In Him the majesty of Divine Omnipotence comes down to the door of human poverty and sorrow. (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*) "He telleth the number of the stars":—Sir Robert Ball says, "The number of the stars visible in England without a telescope may be estimated at about three thousand. Argelander has given to the world a well-known catalogue of the stars in the northern hemisphere, accompanied by a series of charts on which these stars are depicted. All the stars of the first nine magnitudes are included, as well as a very large number of stars lying between the ninth and the tenth magnitude. The total number of these stars is three hundred and twenty-four thousand one hundred and eighty-eight, and yet they are all within reach of a telescope of three inches in aperture. It almost invites us to the belief that the universe which we behold bears but a very small ratio to the far larger part which is invisible in the sombre shades of night." Sir Robert Ball himself estimates the number of the stars at no less than one hundred millions, and an even higher estimate still is given by some astronomers. (*R. Brewin.*) *The geometry of God*:—It was truly said by the famous astronomer Kepler that "God is the great arithmetician." He counts everything that He has made. He makes all things in fixed numbers.

He forms the flowers according to certain numerical relations, so fixed and precise that the Linnæan system of classification was based upon them. The roses have five divisions, the lilies three, the seaweeds, lichens and mushrooms two or four, and every other part of their structure is arranged in fives or threes or twos, or by multiplying these figures. Even the little fringe around the mouth of the seed-vessel of a moss growing on the wayside wall, which you can hardly see with your naked eye, if you magnify it with a lens you will find it arranged in exact numbers—four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two—a series in which every number is the double of the preceding one. The leaves of plants are all arranged around the stem on the same principle, and a fir-cone is one of the most beautiful illustrations of it. Crystals are constructed with mathematical regularity. You cannot unite the chemical elements of Nature to form a compound body by chance or in any proportion you please. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Geometry of God*:—God counts the number of the stars, and He arranges them in the heavens not by chance, but according to a fixed system. In the Solar system, for example, the intervals between the orbits of the planets go on doubling as we recede from the sun. Thus Venus is twice as far from Mercury as Mercury is from the sun; the earth is twice as far from Venus as Venus is from Mercury; Mars is twice as far from the earth as the earth is from Venus, and so on. In this way the planets are arranged in the sky around the sun in the same numerical order as the leaves are arranged around the stem of a plant or the scales around a pine-cone, or the teeth around the edge of the seed-vessel of a microscopic moss. And that extraordinary law, the most universal of all laws, which everything throughout the universe obeys—the law of gravitation—is also expressed by a numerical formula: the force of an object thrown into the air decreases just in proportion as the distance is increased; it decreases according to the square of the number expressing the distance; so that at twice the distance the force of gravitation is not twice less, but four times less; at thrice the distance nine times, and so on. (*Ibid.*) *Human mind fails to grasp the number of stars*:—In one of the most recent standard works upon astronomy it is stated that in Great Britain the number of stars visible to the naked eye does not exceed three thousand. So accurate are the charts of the heavens that are now prepared that every individual star is there; the disappearance of one or the arrival of another would be at once discovered and recorded. Three thousand probably strikes you as being a small figure; but stay a moment. If you make use of a common binocular field-glass you will at once discern ten times as many as with the unaided eye, and if, laying aside the field-glass, you look through a good ordinary telescope, the tens will immediately become hundreds; while if you should have the rare privilege of beholding the celestial dome through one of the great astronomical instruments, the hundreds will become thousands, and you will be fairly bewildered at the sight. Our great telescopes can show at least fifty millions of stars; nor is this all, for, through the recent wonderful development of celestial photography, millions more are discovered registering their existence upon the sensitive plate. (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds.—*The sky*:—It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. There is not a moment of any day of our lives when Nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty that it is quite certain that it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest, or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that men should live always in the midst of them; he injures them by his presence; he ceases to feel them if he be always with them. But the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not too bright nor good for human nature's daily food; it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart; for soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful; never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost Divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential. And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations; we look upon it all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the

Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accidents, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. If, in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another it has been warm. Who among the whole chattering crowd can tell me of the forms and precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that gilded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed unregretted or unseen; or, if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross or what is extraordinary; and yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty; the deep and the calm and the perpetual; that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood; things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally; which are never wanting and never repeated; which are to be found always, yet each found but once. It is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. (*John Ruskin.*) **Who maketh grass to grow.**—*The grass*.—Every spring there is repeated before our eyes a phenomenon which in the beginning was a miracle. Let us, in imagination, view the scene where, on the first sand beach that was heaved up from the water-covered globe, the grass came forth to prepare the way for the subsequent spread of life. To one whose world showed nothing but sand and water, what a miracle the first appearance of sprouting grass! Here is something wonderfully new, moving of itself amid motionless particles, and by some hidden power of its own thrusting them aside and mysteriously increasing in body and bulk, while they remain as they were. Such a thing of life entering such a world without life is plainly supernatural to that world. Mark here that all the subsequent stages of advancing life have likewise been successively supernatural, each to its predecessor. As the grass is supernatural to the sand, so is the ox to the grass, so is the man to the ox, so also is the spiritual Christ to the natural man. Here is a lesson in the grass for those who fancy that science has eliminated the supernatural, and put miracles out of the audience-room of reason. There was, once at least, an indisputable miracle. It was when life first broke the dead uniformity of an inanimate world. Life is the thing most unaccountable in origin, but most manifest in fact, most common in form, most mysterious in power, the thing most natural, but also most supernatural, being the producer of nature, not its product. Life, says the scientist, can come only from life. The world which has it not can have it only from beyond the world. Thus the living grass was the primeval witness to the living God. "Through every star, through every grass-blade," said Carlyle, "the glory of a present God still beams." And so this ancient psalm of praise to the Author of the humblest of living things reads to us its primitive lesson of God as the all-originating Life of all that lives, whom to know is life eternal, whom to forsake is death indeed. Let us, then, further contemplate that primeval sea-beach, where life has begun its everlasting process. We there see the grass first by its strong roots fortifying the shore, as one may observe to-day where the beach-grass aids to build the dunes; then by its annual decay forming a soil in which nobler forms of life may root. "Time and I," said a statesman, "are enough." So might the feeble but persevering power of the grass say. As the land slowly rose above the sea, the grass went on with its spreading preparations for the further advance of life, making the soil for edible grains and fruits to grow from, till at length the animal tribes came forth and found their sustenance secure. Thus is the grass a parable of the way of God, which we have ever to imitate. Every good thing we bring to pass has first to wait for the period of grass to do its work, slowly preparing the conditions of a permanent advance. Wearisome sometimes is this humble method of patience, the creeping which precedes running, gaining each day an atom of goodwill, a grain of influence, a

trifle of experience and education. To our impatience at such slow gain the grass roads its lesson, "Despise not the day of small things." The small thing is the beginning of the large thing. The grains and fruits will grow when the grass has made the soil for them. In the grass is the first glimpse of the coming cedars. The great reform which frees a race of slaves must wait till the beginnings of humane sentiment have risen in a humble band of protestants against legalized iniquity, the agitators whom society trod under foot like the grass, but who kept on growing and making soil for the edict of emancipation. Such is the quiet work that no record is made of till its results appear in the better life of succeeding times. The Christian family is doing it; the school, the Church is doing it; the germinating power of ideas is doing it in little circles of reformers everywhere, ridiculed, perhaps, because at present so powerless, but educating the fundamental sentiment from which better and stronger institutions are to spring. (*J. M. Whiton, Ph.D.*) *Grass*.—Consider what we owe merely to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft and countless and peaceful spears! The field! Follow but just for a little time the thoughts of all that we ought to recognize in those words. All spring and summer is in them, the walks by the silent, scented paths, the rests in noon-day heat, the joy of herds and flocks, the power of all shepherd life and meditation, the sunlight upon the world, falling in emerald streaks and falling in soft blue shadows where else it would have struck upon the dark mould or scorching dust, pastures beside the pacing brooks, soft banks and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea, crisp lawns all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of varied sunshine, dented by happy feet, and softening in their fall the sound of loving voices, all these are summed up in those simple words—the fields—and these are not all. We may not measure to the full the depth of this heavenly gift in our own land; though still as we think of it longer, the infinite of that meadow sweetness—Shakespeare's peculiar joy—would open on us more and more, yet we have it but in part. Go out in the spring-time among the meadows that slope from the shores of the Swiss lakes to the roots of their lower mountains, there, mingled with their taller gentians and the white narcissus, the grass grows deep and free; and as you follow the winding mountain paths beneath arching boughs all veiled and dim with blossom—paths that for ever droop and rise over the green banks and mounds, sweeping down in scented undulation steep to the blue water, studded here and there with new-mown heaps, filling all the air with fainter sweetness; look up towards the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines, and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words, "He maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains." (*John Ruskin.*)

Ver. 9. To the young ravens which cry.—*The ravens' cry*.—"Naturalists tell us," says Caryl, "that when the raven hath fed his young in the nest till they are well fledged and able to fly abroad, then he thrusts them out of the nest, and will not let them abide there, but puts them to get their own living. Now, when these young ones are upon their first flight from their nest, and are little acquainted with means how to help themselves with food, then the Lord provides food for them. It is said by credible authorities, that the raven is marvellously strict and severe in this; for as soon as his young ones are able to provide for themselves, he will not fetch any more food for them; yea, some affirm the old ones will not suffer them to stay in the same country where they were bred; and, if so, then they must needs wander. We say proverbially, 'Need makes the old wife trot'; we may say, and 'the young ones too.' It hath been, and possibly is, the practice of some parents towards their children, who, as soon as they can shift for themselves, and are fit in any competency to get their bread, they turn them out of doors, as the raven doth his young ones out of the nest. Now, saith the Lord in the text, when the young ones of the raven are at this pinch, that they are turned off, and wander for lack of meat, who then provides for them? Do not I, the Lord? Do not I, who provide for the old raven, provide for his young ones, both while they abide in the nest and when they wander for lack of meat?" **I. GOD HEARS THE YOUNG RAVENS; WILL HE NOT HEAR YOU?** 1. I argue that He will, first, when I remember that it is only a raven that cries, and that you, in some senses, are much better than a raven. The raven is but a poor, unclean bird, whose instant death would make no sort of grievous gap in creation. If

thousands of ravens had their necks wrung to-morrow, I do not know that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the universe about them; it would simply be a number of poor birds dead, and that would be all. But you are an immortal soul, formed in God's own image. True, the raven is not sinful, as you are. But what does this prove? Why, that you are a creature capable of sinning, and, consequently, that you are an intelligent spirit living in a sense in which a raven does not live. You are a creature moving in the spirit-world; you belong to the world of souls, in which the raven has no portion. Doth God care for flesh, and blood, and bones, and black feathers, and will He not care for your reason, your will, your judgment, your conscience, your immortal soul? Oh, if you will but think of it, you must see that it is not possible for a raven's cry to gain an audience of the ear of Divine benevolence, and yet for your prayer to be despised and disregarded by the Most High. 2. There is a great deal of difference between your cry and the cry of a raven. When the young ravens cry, I suppose they scarcely know what they want. They have a natural instinct which makes them cry for food, but their cry does not in itself express their want. They have no articulate speech. But you do know what you want. Few as your words are, your heart knows its own bitterness and dire distress. Moreover, you have a multitude of arguments ready to hand, and you have an understanding with which to set them in array and marshal them to besiege the throne of grace. 3. Remember, that the matter of your prayer is more congenial to the ear of God than the raven's cry for meat. All that the young ravens cry for is food; give them a little carrion and they have done. Your cry must be much more pleasing to God's ear, for you entreat for forgiveness through the blood of His dear Son. It is a nobler occupation for the Most High to be bestowing spiritual than natural gifts. 4. The ravens are nowhere commanded to cry. When they cry their petition is unwarranted by any specific exhortation from the Divine mouth, while you have a warrant derived from Divine exhortations to approach the throne of God in prayer. 5. The cry of a young raven is nothing but the natural cry of a creature, but your cry, if it be sincere, is the result of a work of grace in your heart. When the raven cries to heaven it is nothing but the raven's own self that cries; but when you cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner,"—it is God the Holy Spirit crying in you. 6. When the young ravens cry they cry alone, but when you pray you have a mightier one than you praying with you. Hear that sinner crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Hark! Do you hear that other cry which goes up with his? No, you do not hear it, because your ears are dull and heavy, but God hears it. There is another voice, far louder and sweeter than the first, and far more prevalent, mounting up at the same moment and pleading, "Father, forgive them through My precious blood." II. IF YOU HAVE CRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY, STILL CRY ON. "Go again seven times," aye, and seventy times seven. Remember that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is your only hope; cling to it, then, as a drowning man clings to the only rope within reach. If you perish praying for mercy through the precious blood, you will be the first that ever perished so. Cry on; just cry on; but, oh! believe, too; for believing brings the morning star and the day-dawn. But stay a while, I have something else to say. Is it possible that you may have already obtained the very blessing you are crying after? "Oh," say you, "I would not ask for a thing which I had already got; if I knew I had it, I would leave off crying, and begin praising and blessing God." Now, I do not know whether all of you seekers are in so safe a state, but I am persuaded that there are some seeking souls who have received the mercy for which they are asking. The Lord instead of saying to them to-night, "Seek ye My face," is saying, "Why criest thou unto Me? I have heard thee in an acceptable hour, and in an acceptable time have I succoured thee; I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities; I have saved thee; thou art Mine; I have cleansed thee from all thy sins; go thy way and rejoice." In such a case believing praise is more suitable than agonizing prayer. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 11. **The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.**—*Fearing and hoping*:—Great kings are wont to have their favourite objects, in which they delight with a peculiar pleasure. Many monarchs have gloried in "the strength of a horse." Their squadrons of cavalry have been their confidence. Others have taken more delight in "the legs of a man." The thews and sinews of their soldiery have been their boast. You must have noticed

in the Assyrian sculptures the importance that was attached by the workmen and by the monarch also to "the legs of a man." They represent the warriors as brawny and strong, swift in running, and firm in holding their place in the day of battle. But our God takes no delight in cavalry or infantry, no armies of horse or foot soldiers give him any gladness; the Lord takes pleasure in very different persons from those. His delight, His joy, His solace,—if we may use such a word,—are found in other company than that which is martial, He turns His eyes quite another way. I. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOUR AS HERE DISTINGUISHED. They are distinguished—1. From physical strength. 2. From mental vigour. 3. From self-reliance. 4. From any mere capacity for service which exists in any of us, whoever we may be. II. THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOUR AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. 1. These are things which relate to God. God's favour is displayed to those who fear Him, and who hope in His mercy. Thou art truly what thou art towards God; and God regards thee according to what thou art in reference to Himself. 2. This description of character applies to true servants of God in their earliest and weakest form. 3. It comprises the noblest form of religion in the very highest degree of it. Let us grow as we may, we shall always fear God. Perfect love casteth out the fear that hath torment, but not that filial fear which is here meant, that child-like reverence and holy awe of the Most High; that shall grow and shall deepen, world without end. And as to hope, why, we had hope when we began our spiritual life; but we have hope still, and that hope will continue with us,—I will not say in heaven, though I think it will, for there is something to hope for in the disembodied state, we shall hope for the day of resurrection; and there will be something to hope for even in the resurrection, for, throughout the ages we shall have a good hope that still we shall be "for ever with the Lord." 4. The persons favoured of God are represented as a sort of sacred blending of different characters. These two things, fear of God and hope in His mercy, go well together, and what God hath joined, let no man put asunder. III. THE BLESSINGS IMPLIED IN THIS DIVINE FAVOUR. If you fear the Lord, and hope in His mercy, God takes as much delight in you as you do in your dear child; and far more, because God's is an infinite mind, and from it there comes infinite delight, so that He views you with infinite complacency. Can you believe it? You do not view yourself so; I hope that you do not, but God sees you in Christ. He sees that in you that is yet to be in you. He sees in you that which will make you to grow into a heavenly being, and therefore He takes delight in you. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Man's pleasure and God's pleasure* (with Ps. ciii. 2):—Man's pleasure in God's works, God's pleasure in man's renewed spirit—these are the two themes suggested by these words. 1. That men have an instinctive pleasure in looking on the beauties spread before their eyes in the visible world is sometimes disputed, and yet this enjoyment shows itself in very unlikely places, and among classes that have had no special training. The poor, ragged, ill washed child of a London court finds a pleasure it takes no pains to conceal in flowers (when it sees them), in the bright, fresh, green leaves of the early spring, in the meadow dappled with daisies, and in the field ablaze with buttercups. The rudest and most untrained minds are not insensible to the beauties of a summer's sunset, to the flashing mirror of the sea, or to the hoary grandeur of mountains. The same feeling exists, in a greater or less degree, among uncivilized peoples; and some of them have expressed their motions in rude poetic outbursts, as striking as they are spontaneous. It does, however, greatly add to the devout man's delight in all visible things to think of them as the visible words and thoughts of God. In this view of things the Hebrew bards far surpass the sweet singers of all time. To the devout Hebrew God was in all things, and all things spoke of Him. This was their great charm to him, that they helped him to see something of the Lord his God. And to any man who so looks on the visible creation there will never be wanting ladders by which he may climb up to higher and purer thoughts of Him who made all things. That the study of God's works deepens our pleasure in them is the testimony of every student. The more these works are "sought out," so much the more will our delight in them increase. The objects themselves, animate and inanimate, are so manifold that their wonders seem to open before us as we advance. In all we may see God's "excellence in working." That it is possible to educate the eye in looking upon these various works of God, and so of intensifying the delight in them, is obvious. If we never look upon the objects of interest and beauty around us save in a dreamy way, or with a half-shut eye, we miss much of the pleasure which comes from minute,

careful, and accurate observation. It surely ought not to be thought a waste of time to consider attentively that which God has thought no waste of His almighty energies to create; and the power of seeing, which alone comes of careful seeing, will bring before us new pleasures with every new revelation. Our very love of our Father who made them all should surely stir us to look at the things around us, and to look with open and patient eyes, until our sight becomes trained by looking, and no touch of the Divine Artist escapes our eager and loving eye. 2. But when I speak of man's pleasure in God's works, I do not forget that God Himself has pleasure in them. The song of the redeemed in heaven proclaims this joy (Rev. iv. 11). The song of creation tells us also that as each part of the work appeared before the eye of the Divine Worker, He pronounced it "very good." But God's greatest pleasure is in man's renewed spirit. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in those that hope in His mercy." The pleasure which men feel in beautiful flowers, in spreading landscapes, in hoary hills, in flashing lakes, and in the great expanse of the outstretched sky or open sea, has no regenerative power. It is felt by men who say that they have no rest in God. They are not insensible to the glories spread before them; they say that they are insensible to that which gives God the greatest pleasure—the renewed heart. Their delight is with the glory which fades before their eyes; God's with that which endureth for ever. To the great Former of all things, beautiful as the earth is, and sky, and sea, one unselfish deed, one sincere and devout prayer, one soul pouring out its holy trust into His ear, gives Him a higher and deeper joy. Nay, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Two elements in man's changed nature are spoken of by the psalmist as producing God's pleasure. One is fear, the other is hope. But fear and hope are not opposed to each other. They are one; they spring from the same root; they yield the same flower; they are, in other words, but two sides of the same truth. There is no true fear of God unless you hope in His mercy; there is no true hope in His mercy unless you fear God. The fear and the hope alike give pleasure to Him. (*J. G. Goadby.*) *God takes pleasure in them that fear and hope in Him*:—I. A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. He takes pleasure in their persons (Dan. viii. 23; Eph. i. 6). 2. He takes pleasure in their graces, and those heavenly qualifications which are in them. (1) As they are His children, regenerated and born again to Himself (Heb. xii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 4). (2) As they are His workmanship, created by Him in Christ Jesus to good works (Eph. ii. 10). 3. He takes pleasure in their prayers (Job xlii. 8; Acts x. 9; Prov. xv. 9). 4. He takes pleasure in their services. II. UPON WHAT ACCOUNT ESPECIALLY GOD DOES INDEED DELIGHT IN THEM. 1. Their fear of Him. Fear is the aweband of the soul, which restrains it, and keeps it in good order, and preserves it from miscarriage. It is the spur of the soul, which quickens it, and excites it, and provokes it to the doing of good: so much fear of God, so much innocency and uprightness. 2. The second is the grace of hope, or faith, of those that hope in His mercy. As the Lord takes pleasure in the former, so in this likewise. He delights in His servants more especially, as they give greater testimonies of their faith and dependence upon Him. The more that any cleave unto Him, the more doth He take care of them, and pleasure in them (Ps. xxxiii. 18). (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Hope and fear balanced*:—A holy fear of God must be a check upon our hope, to keep that from swelling into presumption; and a pious hope in God must be a check upon our fear, to keep that from sinking into despondency. I. AS TO THE CONCERNS OF OUR SOULS, AND OUR SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL STATE. 1. We must keep up both a holy dread of God and a humble delight in Him; both a reverence of His majesty, with a fear of incurring His displeasure, and at the same time a joy in His love and grace, and an entire complacency in His beauty and bounty, and that benignity of His which is better than life. 2. We must keep up both a trembling for sin, and a triumphing in Christ, as the propitiation for sin. 3. We must keep up both a jealousy of ourselves, and of our own sincerity; and a grateful thankful sense of God's grace in us, and the workings of that grace. 4. We must keep up both a constant caution over our goings, and a constant confidence in the grace of God. 5. We must keep up both a holy fear lest we come short, and a good hope that through grace we shall persevere. II. AS TO OUR OUTWARD CONCERNS, RELATING TO THE BODY, AND THE LIFE THAT NOW IS. 1. When the world smiles upon us, and our affairs in it prosper, yet then we must keep up a holy fear, and not be too confident in our pleasing prospects; not flatter ourselves with hopes of the great advancement and long continuance of our peace and prosperity;

but balance the hopes which sense suggests with the fears which reason and religion will suggest. 2. When the world frowns upon us, and we are crossed, and disappointed, and perplexed in our affairs, then we must keep up a good hope, and not be inordinately cast down, no, not in our melancholy prospects, about our health, our safety, our name, our relations, and our effects in the world. (1) Hope in God's power: be fully assured of this, that how imminent soever the danger is, He can prevent it; how great soever the straits are, He can extricate us out of them, can find out a way for us in an untracked wilderness, and open springs of water to us in a dry and barren land: for with Him nothing is impossible, nor is His arm ever shortened, nor His wisdom nonplussed. (2) Hope in His providence; and believe not only that He can do anything, but that He does do everything, and whatever the event is, God does therein perform the thing that is appointed for us, and takes cognizance of us and our affairs, how mean and despicable soever we are. (3) Hope in His pity and tender compassions; which, in the day of your grief and fear, you are to look upon yourselves as the proper objects of. (4) Hope in His promise; that word of His upon which He hath caused us to hope, and which we have all the reason in the world to build upon, for not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. Though he has not promised to deliver us from that particular evil we have a dread of, or to give us that particular comfort and success we are desirous of, yet He has promised that nothing shall harm them who are followers of Him; nay, that all things shall "work together for good," etc. III. AS TO THE PUBLIC CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD, AND OUR OWN LAND AND NATION. 1. We have always reason to keep up a holy fear as to public affairs, and to be apprehensive of trouble before us, even when things look most promising. (1) We are a provoking people. Atheism, vice, etc. (2) We are a divided people; and what can be expected, but that a kingdom divided against itself should be brought to desolation? (3) God has told us that in the world we shall have tribulation; all the disciples of Christ must count upon it, and not flatter ourselves with hopes of an uninterrupted tranquillity anywhere on this side heaven. 2. There are three things which may encourage our hope, and keep the balance even against all our fears, as to the concerns both of the Protestant Churches abroad and our own nation. (1) The word which God has spoken to us; which (whatever other props our hopes may be supported with) is the great foundation on which they must be built, and then they are fixed. (2) The work which God has begun among us. (3) The wonders which He has wrought for us. (*Matthew Henry.*)

Ver. 12. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem.—Crowning Christ in city life:—Some time ago, in one of the reviews, a writer gave a picture of the London of the future, when all sanitary and political improvements shall have been perfected. No dust in the streets, no smoke in the air, no noise, no fog, spaces everywhere for flowers and sunlight, the sky above always pure, the Thames running below a tide of silver; but think of the city of the future in whose life, laws, institutions, trade, politics, pleasure, the righteousness of Christ shall find full and final manifestation. Where is the poet, the painter, who shall paint for us that golden city, so holy and clean? It is painted for us in the Book of Revelation, in the "Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," etc. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Vers. 13–20. He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.—Piety exulting in Divine goodness:—I. IN THE GENERAL PROSPERITY OF SOCIETY. He recognizes the good hand of God—I. In the rebuilding of the city (ver. 13). 2. In the restoration of peace and prosperity (ver. 14). II. IN THE BENEFICENT MUTATIONS OF THE WEATHER (vers. 16–18). Men are in the habit of complaining of the weather as too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, too stormy or too calm, but in these very changes there is mercy. They are required in order to make the earth fertile and fruitful, and to stimulate humanity to a thousand industries. Whilst men of science ascribe meteorological changes to what they call laws, and the multitudes are ever grumbling with the weather, true philosophy ascribes all not only to the agency of God, but to the benevolence of that agency. III. IN THE MORAL REVELATIONS TO MANKIND (ver. 19). 1. God's word not only acts on material nature, originates, fashions, sustains and controls it, but on human souls. In the one case it conveys His resistless energy, in the other His moral reason and influence. 2. He reveals His moral laws to men—(1) By the retribution of history, (2) By

the intuitions of conscience, (3) By His written Word, and (4) By His blessed Son. To some His moral revelations are fuller than to others. (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **He maketh peace in thy borders.**—*Peace at home and prosperity abroad: a Missionary Sermon.*—The prosperity of the Church is described in this psalm. I. WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME? To begin with the most important—the true piety of all her members. If we could to-morrow bring into the Church a sufficient number of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, our subscriptions, our places of worship and our missionaries, it would be a curse and not a blessing. Next, the soundness of that Gospel which we proclaim and preach. When I have read the conflict between the mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice, Mr. Whitefield, and that other mighty man, equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same truths, and that the vitality of godliness was not at issue in the controversy. But there are vital truths, and for these we must contend even to the death. The spirit of union. We must needs have divers communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless we are really and vitally one. I am sure the more we come to know each other, the better we love one another. Constant activity. The Church gets dull, listless and heavy at times. Abundant prayer. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY HOME CHURCH AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ABROAD. It is clear enough. The whole missionary enterprise will fall to pieces, bit by bit, if we be not in spiritual health. There is a well of water springing up, and the people of the district flock to it. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail; by some means or another the water is gone to another place, and the spring is no more there. Soon would it come to pass that where multitudes of men and women were wont to drink with joy and gladness there is not a single person to be seen. So with our missionary success should the Church at home degenerate. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to Christ's Kingdom in other lands. III. Then if all this be true, then let us remember that it must also have a connection with OUR OWN PERSONAL STANDING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. If one member be unhealthy in the body, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole. If every man mended one all would be mended. Responsibility to God for the souls of men is cast on each one of us. When you stand by the grave of some neighbour, can you look down into the grave and say, "I did all that was in the power of mortal man for that soul's salvation"? No, you cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, when we hear of the death of friends, can say, "If that man perish, I did not leave a stone unturned." Who has done all he might? (*O. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Divine efficiency illustrated in the blessing of peace.*—I. THE PEACE OF NATIONS. 1. A blessing. 2. A promised blessing. 3. A blessing for the improvement of which nations are accountable. 4. A blessing in which the Church hath interest (*Jer. xix. 7; James iv. 1*). II. THE EFFICIENCY OF THE LORD OUR GOD IN THE PEACE OF NATIONS. 1. The peace of nations is within His all-comprehending purpose. The time in which the peace is concluded, the articles, the nations comprehended in it, and, in a word, every circumstance is according to the pleasure and purpose of the will of God, who hath foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass. 2. The Lord disposes the events of war in such a manner as to open the way to a peace. Victories and conquests on the one side, and losses and defeats on the other, are balanced by His wisdom and justice, and overruled for hastening and facilitating accommodations between the belligerent and contending powers. 3. Inclinations to peace, formed by His invisible and unperceived efficiency in the minds of princes and cabinet ministers, are called into exercise and motion by the operations of His providence. 4. Negotiations for peace are begun, and carried on, and concluded under His eye. 5. The conditions of peace are settled by His efficiency. 6. The success of negotiations for peace is of the Lord. III. PRAISE THE LORD'S EFFICIENCY IN THE PEACE OF NATIONS. 1. Believe His efficiency. 2. Confess it. 3. Rejoice in it. (*A. Shanks.*) *Filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*—*The blessing of plenty.*—I. THE GOOD MENTIONED. "The finest of the wheat" is—1. A blessing (*Zech. ix. 17*). 2. A promised blessing (*Joel ii. 23, 24*). 3. A blessing which, without impeaching the goodness and faithfulness of the promiser, may be denied, confiscated, and cursed. 4. A blessing for which they who receive it are accountable. The Lord is our judge as well as our benefactor. 5. A blessing in which the Church hath interest. In the members of this holy society there is

a bodily and a spiritual part. The Lord is the former and nourisher of them both. II. THE EFFICIENCY OF THE LORD OUR GOD IN FILLING US WITH THE FINEST OF THE WHEAT. 1. The discretion which prepareth the land for sowing the wheat is inspired and taught by the Lord. 2. The dying of the wheat under the clod. 3. The revival of the wheat. 4. The springing and growth of the wheat. 5. Wheat-harvest is of the Lord. He appointeth the weeks, and by His power in the atmosphere disposeth winds and clouds and rain to keep it back, or bring it forward, to make it prosperous or calamitous, according to His counsel and pleasure. III. CONCLUSION. Use the finest of the wheat, and all the goods of the season—1. Thankfully. 2. Wisely and discreetly. 3. Charitably. 4. Temperately. 5. Believingly. (*A. Shanks.*)

Ver. 15. **His Word runneth very swiftly.**—*The swiftly-running Word*:—A word is the expression of the mind, the manifestation of the man. "Speak," said the old philosopher, "that I may see thee." More of a man is seen in his words than in anything else belonging to him. You may look into his face and be mistaken; you may visit his house and not discern him; you may scan his business and misunderstand him; but if you hear his daily conversation you shall soon know him. And this is so with the Lord our God. If you wish to know God you must know His Word. That Word takes several forms. At first it came forth as a fiat: "Let it be," and it was. Then as a command, giving statutes to men. Then as teaching, promise, threatening. But chief of all is the Word, of whom it is said, "In the beginning was the Word." Now, by that Word God most of all speaks out His heart. But to all forms of God's Word the truth of the text applies. I. THE LESSONS IT TEACHES. 1. That the Divine Word still works. All things continue by virtue of it. Else had they long since ceased to be. 2. And with the same degree of force His Word "runneth," that is to say, it keeps its ancient pace. 3. But silently. 4. Effectually. Nought can set it aside. 5. And all this in the realm of grace as well as nature. II. SOME PARTICULAR INSTANCES OF IT. Creation; providence; mercy. But especially is this seen in Christ, the eternal Word. How diligent He was. See this truth, again, in the matters of grace. Conviction of sin; regeneration; justification. And so the individual heart can be speedily revived and quickened, and Churches likewise. III. WHAT SHOULD WE LEARN FROM ALL THIS? 1. The seeking sinner can be saved now. 2. The Word can overtake those who run away from it. Sheep never run so fast after the shepherd as away from him. 3. The Lord can at once give us light and peace. "I have a great trouble," say you; "and if I do not get help by Monday night I do not know what will become of me." Well, God can deliver you by Monday night, for His Word runneth very swiftly. He can cause your dry rod to bud and blossom and bear fruit in an hour. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Word of God*:—We may take the Word of God to mean any expression of the will of God. Such an expression may be the text of a language or the execution of an act. It is the mind of God coming into form, within our apprehension and beyond it. There are two kinds of testimony by which the Deity is revealed to us. There is a message from God which is brought to us very swiftly from afar, and proclaimed in a speech without words; and there is a witness also nearer home, delivered in the same silence within the human heart and addressed to the human consciousness. They are both described in this psalm (vers. 3, 4). Here is a witness speaking to us of God; and here is God His own witness speaking within the human soul. Let us speak of this second testimony, God's witness of Himself. I. IN THE TEACHINGS OF MEN. We acknowledge with thankfulness that God has selected channels for the conveyance of His mind to men, outside the acknowledged authorities of Christian truth. God draws near to the prayer of a heathen, and permits Himself to be touched by the eager apprehension of the seeker. There are times when the God nature within man moves him to seek a power above himself. In those terrible conflicts, common to most men, where passion and judgment contend for the mastery, there are certain perturbations of thought and feeling which are inexplicable on any other supposition than the nearness of a great Presence; and men feel after it if, haply, they may find it. Some of the finest compositions in the literature of the classical world describe these searchings after God. The attitude of the mind in this warfare is to the last degree pathetic. There is within it a feeling that it has a right to that which it cannot find, and it wanders through a wilderness of anxious conjecture, crying out in the desert, "Where is the way, and the truth, and the life?" This partial revelation,

even when not supplemented by Christian truth, has in every age accomplished a great mission. And we cannot praise too generously those noble students of life who have taken the rudiments of this law and framed systems of morality for the conduct of men and the government of states. II. **GOD'S WITNESS OF HIMSELF IN THE PERSON AND REVELATION OF CHRIST.** Every preceding revelation, in whatever form presented and wherever found, points to Jesus Christ. Whatever men were prompted to inquire after in respect of their origin, in respect of the limitations of their knowledge, in respect of the destiny of their intellectual powers, in respect of the design of their creation, is answered in Christ either in exact terms or in affirmative events. The feeling of men after God is expressed in two ways: by thinkers in abstract reasonings and speculations, and by the common people in embodying their hopes and fears in the imageries of worship. Both these forms of search touchingly represent a common humanity. The philosopher cannot rest in abstract ideas; the idolater can find no satisfaction in the incarnations of his own passions. They start from remote points; they meet together in the region of despair. They are both men, and there are depths of want in each of them which neither science nor superstition can reach. But in the person and teaching of Christ both these typical forms of search are anticipated and satisfied. Here is a revelation from the lips of the great Teacher Himself in which the most subtle and exacting demands of metaphysical thought are met, and the sublimest ideal of the imagination is surpassed, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." A kindred revelation is the answer to the cry of the peoples of the earth. The problems of human suffering and sorrow which from the first have perplexed and defied the wisdom of the wise are not only unravelled in the light of Christ's doctrine, but their very springs are explored, and exhausted in the consummation of His work; and the death to which they lead is a new birth of life from which they are shut out. It is the love of God in its aspect of pity and sympathy for the sufferings of men which is destined to conquer the world. This new attribute of tenderness, new outside Christianity, invests the Christ of the Gospel with a strange power, which Buddha never possessed, to attract and charm the races of the East. Here is the distinction between him and the Man of Sorrows. Christ is not for Himself, but for us. It is this contrast which is just now awakening the curiosity of the educated and stimulating the hope of the masses in India. This unselfish love, which is the master-spirit of the Gospel, is the regenerating force of personal and national life. Every nation has its special need, some want made conspicuous by the ruling condition of the people. It may be truth, it may be righteousness where truth is known, it may be freedom, it may be a pure and strong family life, it may be the reign of kindness, but whatever it be, in personal or national demand, a Gospel of universal love meets the condition equally of every people. I want no other evidence of the divinity of its mission. This Gospel is God's witness of Himself. It is the Word of God, and the Christ of these Scriptures is its central light, a light that brings within our sight and interprets the remotest past, and its illimitable ray pierces the unfolding destinies of the future. The scope of the transit of this Word is all time, and it runs very swiftly from age to age. But we must not interpret swiftness to mean merely or chiefly the rate of apparent transit, or the distance popularly covered between two periods. We must bring into the account the obstacles removed, the revolutions accomplished, the victories achieved. And these in their nature do not admit of exact calculation. Many of them belong to a sphere of which we have no present knowledge. When in making our estimate of the progress attained we have arrived at a certain figure, we have the right to extend the record and bring in unseen results. In this sense of transit God's Word always runs swiftly because His Word is His Will. It goes straight to its object. There can be no resistance even to check it, for the opposition it meets is made the instrument of its advancement. But there is another element of meaning in the idea of swiftness as applied to the movement of the Word of God. It is running to reach an end: the goal it is destined to win is the accomplishment of a purpose, which I have no hesitation in saying has been the dreaming prophecy of all times, of all history, and of all races. The purpose is not to make the Word a mere literary factor in the education of mankind, but a spiritual power to change the nations—first to give individual man a new soul, then to rebuild the fallen structure of family life, then to change the aims and policy of governments, to make a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. The progress of this advancing change was never so rapid as it is this day. The world has been prepared

for it by a series of unprecedented occurrences, under the influence of which change is inevitable and becomes not a temporary innovation, but a tide of deep and irresistible current. Take this example, which has been furnished within the period of my public life—the nations fifty years ago and the nations to-day. Then—how well I remember it! throughout the great non-Christian world there was rest—the rest of immemorial usage, the rest of torpor, the rest of insensibility. India was asleep, and China and Japan. There had been in the mind of these vast empires an almost unbroken slumber for ages. Now, thank God! there is unrest; instead of that fatal peace, a sword, not the military weapon, but the dividing edge of truth, the unrest of awakened intelligence, the unrest of a disturbed faith, and that is unrest; of doubt, of suspicion, of uncertainty; the unrest of an eager search for new foundations of belief, and for new principles of society and of life. If I ask which of the active forces of thought and change has had most influence in bringing this about, the educationist will point to the achievements of science, and the amazing triumphs of modern education, the statesman will attribute it to the political knowledge which has quickened and informed the public opinion of nations, resulting in the displacement of effete institutions, and in broader, more enlightened, and more enterprising methods of government. Without disputing the contributions of these immense agencies, and omitting for the present the pervasive influence and activities of the great Churches, I will venture to place beyond any single institution, both in the range of its power and in the ever-expanding effects of its operations, the British and Foreign Bible Society. Nothing is easier than to point out that these newly Christianized peoples are living far below the religion of the Bible which has made them what they are. I am afraid that we are in the same condemnation. But there is the standard to rebuke them; and to live under its rebuke is to have a constant incentive to recover what they have lost. Use it or misuse it, believe it or reject it, attach it to myth, parable, or picture, the indestructible power is there, a savour of life or a savour of death. When we consider that the Bible Society is the angel of the Churches, in going before them to lodge this Word in the languages of the earth and make straight the missionary's path to the intelligence of the nations, we are bound, as the disciples of Jesus, whose Gospel it is the province of the Word to reveal, to sanctify this glorious institution by our prayers, to strengthen it by our co-operation, and to support it by our gifts. (*E. E. Jenkins, LL.D.*)

Vers. 16-18. He giveth snow like wool.—Frost and thaw:—Looking out of our window one morning we saw the earth robed in a white mantle; for in a few short hours the earth had been covered to a considerable depth with snow. We looked out again in a few hours and saw the fields as green as ever, and the ploughed fields as bare as if no single flake had fallen. It is no uncommon thing for a heavy fall of snow to be followed by a rapid thaw. These interesting changes are wrought by God, not only with a purpose toward the outward world, but with some design toward the spiritual realm. **1. THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE.** 1. The directness of the Lord's work. When we can look upon every hailstone as God's hail, and upon every floating fragment of ice as His ice, how precious the watery diamonds become! When we feel the cold nipping our limbs and penetrating through every garment, it somewhat consoles us, and makes us willing to endure its hardness, when we remember that it is His cold. When the thaw comes, see how the text speaks of it—"He sendeth out His Word." He does not leave it to certain supposed independent forces of nature, but, like a king, "He sendeth out His Word and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow." He has a special property in every wind; whether it comes from the north to freeze, or from the south to melt, it is His wind. 2. The ease of Divine working. A man puts his hand into a wool-pack and throws out the wool; God giveth snow as easily as that: "He giveth snow like wool." A man takes up a handful of ashes, and throws them into the air, so that they fall around: "He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes." Rime and snow are marvels of nature: those who have observed the extraordinary beauty of the ice-crystals have been enraptured, and yet they are easily formed by the Lord. "He casteth forth His ice like morsels"—just as easily as we cast crumbs of bread outside the window to the robins during the wintry days. 3. The variety of the Divine operations in nature. When the Lord is at work with frost as His tool He creates snow, a wonderful production, every crystal being a marvel of art; but then He is not content with snow—from the same water He makes another form of beauty which we call hoar-frost, and

yet a third lustrous sparkling substance, namely glittering ice; and all these by the one agency of cold. 4. Consider the works of God in nature in their swiftness. It was thought a wonderful thing in the days of Ahasuerus when letters were sent out by post upon swift dromedaries—it was a new invention when one man upon a dromedary travelled till the animal's speed began to fail, and then passed the mail bags to the next messenger, who, similarly mounted, bore them onward in hot haste. In our country we thought we had arrived at the age of miracles when the axles of stage coaches glowed with speed, but now that the telegraph is at work we dream of stretching out our hands into infinity; but what is all the rapidity of anything we can ever attain to compared with the rapidity of God's operations? 5. Consider the goodness of God in all the operations of nature and providence. (1) Think of that goodness negatively. "Who can stand before His cold?" You cannot help thinking of the poor in a hard winter—only a hard heart can forget them when you see the snow lying deep. But suppose that snow continued to fall! What is there to hinder it? The same God who sends us snow for one day could do the like for fifty days if He pleased. Why not? And when the frost pinches us so severely, why should it not be continued month after month? We can only thank the goodness which does not send "His cold" to such an extent that our spirits expire. (2) Not only negatively, but positively there is mercy in the snow. Is not that a suggestive metaphor? "He giveth snow like wool." The snow is said to warm the earth; it protects those little plants which have just begun to peep above ground, and might otherwise be frost-bitten: as with a garment of down the snow protects them from the extreme severity of cold. II. THOSE OPERATIONS OF GRACE OF WHICH FROST AND THAW ARE THE OUTWARD SYMBOLS. 1. There is a period with God's own people when He comes to deal with them with the frost of the law. The law is to the soul as the cutting north wind. Faith can see love in it, but the carnal eye of sense cannot. It is a cold, terrible, comfortless blast. This cold makes the sinner feel how ragged his garments are. He could strut about when it was summer weather with him, and think his rags right royal robes, but now the cold frost finds out every rent in his garment, and in the hands of the terrible law he shivers like the leaves upon the aspen. The north wind of judgment searches the man through and through. 2. When the Lord has wrought by the frost of the law, He sends the thaw of the Gospel; and when the south wind blows from the quarter called "promise," bringing precious remembrances of God's fatherly pity and tender lovingkindness, then straightway the heart begins to soften, and a sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves the heart of stone; the eyes fill with tears, the heart dissolves in tenderness, rivers of pleasure flow freely, and buds of hope open in the cheerful air. Oh, happy day! Miriam's joy at the Red Sea, when she led forth the damsels, exclaiming, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously!" was all outdone in our case. Our strain was more jubilant, our notes more full of joy, and our hearts more exulting when we sang, "He is my God, and I will extol Him; He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Praise ye the Lord, my brethren, and my sisters, as ye recollect that "He sent His Word, and melted all their fears: He caused His wind to blow, and made the waters of your joy to flow, and our soul was saved in Him." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Lessons of the snow*:—This is a very striking picture of winter. It would be difficult to find one more vivid. It is worthy of a Greenland or Esquimaux poet, if poetry can flourish in such regions. It is at first sight a strange thing that such words should have come to us from an Eastern land—a land of heat—in which it is more difficult to ward off the sun's rays than to grapple with cold. No one can read these words, however, without feeling that they come from one who had seen with his own eyes that of which he speaks. How is this to be accounted for? It may be said that Mount Hermon, which is visible from wide tracts of the Holy Land, is often covered with snow. Doubtless this is so. But no vision of snow on a far-off mountain-top could have given an idea of cold powerful enough to have produced this description. Multitudes of Hindoos can lift their eyes and see in the far distance the snow on the Himalayas, but they get from it no notion whatever of frost, or ice, or cold. The snow of a far-off mountain adds a new beauty to the scene, but scarcely suggests to one who had never felt it the idea of cold or frost. The explanation must be sought in other directions, and chiefly here, that the climate of Palestine is much colder than its geographical position would lead us to expect. I have heard travellers in Palestine say that in the early months of the year they suffered far more from the cold than the heat.

Whilst it is the opinions of some careful observers that the changes which have been made in the country have rendered the winters less severe than they were in the olden time. An incidental proof of this occurs in Scripture: when the manna fell in the wilderness, to what was it compared? To a round thing as small as the hoar-frost; whilst we hear in the 78th Psalm that even the sycamore trees were destroyed by frost. So that there must have been times when the cold was really severe; not, it may be, every year, but occasionally taking the people by surprise, awakening their astonishment. To this is, perhaps, due the vividness of the description before us. Think of the snow as—**I. A WITNESS TO THE DIVINE POWER.** Any worthy thought of God must include this. We often speak of the power of God. But how utterly faint and weak are all our efforts to realize it. It is high, we cannot attain unto it. When our thoughts of it are the largest, they fall infinitely below the great reality. It is well, therefore, to use all aids which come in our way that may enlarge our conceptions of this power. We hear much—too much—in our day of the power of man. There is an abundance of human glorification. I will not deny that man has done much; but how has it been accomplished? Simply by directing the mighty forces which God has called into being. Man is a director, not a maker. He can guide, not create. Let the men of science do their best to devise, and the men of action their best to carry out, their plans; give them time and space to any extent, and could they cover with snow the land, or bind with ice the waters in a single county—to say nothing of the whole kingdom, or the continent of Europe? They would not attempt such an enterprise; they would not risk the failure they know would follow. If we saw things as they are, and not as they seem, if we judged a righteous judgment, we should talk less of the power of man, and more of the power of God. "Only God is great" (Mahomet). **II. A WITNESS TO THE QUIETNESS OF THE DIVINE WORKING.** The method is almost as wonderful as the result, both are in the deepest sense Divine. If men have a great work to be done, how much stir and noise and tumult are found! Go to the place where great locomotives are made, and the noise is enough to deafen you, the heat will almost blind you, the tumult will be distracting to you. Go even to the place where instruments of music are made, and it will be found a Babel of discord rather than a temple of harmony. God changes the aspect of a country or a continent, robes it in purest white; but no workers are seen scattering the snow, or binding the waters, or unloosing the wind. There is no stir, or tumult, or noise. If we could trace the snow and ice back to their source, we should find them due to some subtle atmospheric change utterly invisible, utterly intangible to men. No great factory would be found in the heavens, no mighty machinery, no great array of workmen. More subtle—more spiritual I had almost said, would the process be found to be. It is so in far higher matters. We are tempted in these days to trust to great organizations and societies for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God;—"we worship our net and burn incense to our drag";—we occupy ourselves with our implements; we fancy that success depends on these. It is not so. The highest work is done by more spiritual methods. It is almost independent of machinery. It lies in a higher realm (John iii. 8). The greatest results follow not when men are trying to perfect their machinery, or arrange their organization, but when their eyes are lifted to the hills from whence cometh their help. **III. A WITNESS TO THE BEAUTY OF THE DIVINE WORKING.** Think of the purity of the whiteness of the snow. Think of the loveliness of the frost-patterns on window and tree. Think of the delicate grace with which it clings to all things. Think of the soft lines and lovely surface of the newly-fallen snow. It might have been otherwise. The snow might have come and covered the earth in sable blackness, the frost might have hung the earth as in garments of gloom, the clouds might have made the sky hideous to look upon. Beauty might have been only in the completed work of nature—aye, not even there. The beauty of the world is too much taken for granted, and so it fails of its true purpose in our hearts and lives. It has a meaning and mission. The great Father was bound to provide a dwelling-place for His children—a place in which they could live. He has made it a very palace of beauty. It is surely the height of ingratitude to take it all for granted and look upon it with dull or unthankful eyes. **IV. A WITNESS TO THE DEFILING INFLUENCE OF MEN.** The snow comes to us as a thing of utter purity, but how soon it is defiled, not so much by the earth as by men. Where nature has full sway it retains its purity, but where men do congregate how soon does its glory depart. So, too, often we defile God's fair gifts—so we, too, often mar His

works. Purity, beauty, grace too often flee before man's approach. It is folly to deny all this. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh it shall find mercy. V. A REVELATION OF PURITY. The snow makes even things we call white to look utterly unclean. We dare scarcely call them white in its presence. It is thus when we stand near to Him who is the pure image of God, in whom was no sin. We may think ourselves pure as we move among men; the feelings of the Pharisee may, in many subtle ways, creep over us; we may credit ourselves with a holiness we do not possess, but when the Divine purity is revealed in Jesus Christ, when He comes to us an image of perfect holiness as the snow is of perfect whiteness, then how black we seem—how our sin is brought to light! "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men" becomes "God, be merciful to me a sinner." How poor even our virtues seem in His light. We may think ourselves rich and increased with goods, and that we have need of nothing; but in His presence we shall know that we are poor and blind, and miserable and hated, and from the deepest depths of our natures will rise the cry, "Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew right spirits within us." (*W. G. Horder.*) *Winter voices*:—There can be no doubt that winter, as well as the other seasons, speaks to us of God and of His ways. Now, to some of the voices of the winter let us listen a while. I. WHO CAN RESIST HIS WILL? 1. Nature cannot. The tremendous power of "His cold" the winter makes sternly manifest to men. 2. Man cannot. When Napoleon, in his madness, invaded Russia, the roll of his cannon, the tramp of his legions, the squadrons of his cavalry, and the long train of his military array, seemed so endless that it looked as if the land he had invaded must yield to such irresistible might. But God sent the winter. Softly, silently, relentlessly, day after day, the snow came down. Keen was the cold northern blast, and beneath the might of the winter that vast army crumbled away and perished. "The best generals in my army," said the Russian Emperor, "are Generals January and February." II. "BE YE ALSO READY." On the heads of many of us the hoar-frost of the winter of life is very visible. Have we harvested in our hearts the love and faith and fear of God? Is all ready for the last long winter that must surely and speedily come? III. BEHOLD GOD IN ALL WINTERS. Men now are apt to talk overmuch of the laws of nature, of force, of eternal order; and other such phrases are plentiful enough. But they serve, too often, to shut out from men's minds the thought of God. Practically they come to look upon the universe as if it were a great machine, working on and on and on, but without heart or soul or will in it. And we are much exposed to the influence of such thought. Well, therefore, is it to be reminded—as in such simple but august words as these of this psalm we are reminded—that God is the Author of all. "Thou hast made winter" (*Ps. lxxiv. 17*). And what it is so well to recognize in regard to the natural winter is even more important to us to remember in regard to the winter of the heart. For there are moral and spiritual conditions, caused generally by providential circumstances in our lives, which are aptly symbolized by the natural winter. There are such, and they settle down upon the soul with a drear and desolating power. The home bereaved; health failing; our riches making to themselves wings and flying away; poverty threatening, etc. Remember, these are all sent by God. They are included in His covenant of grace. "Be not afraid; only believe." IV. "IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED." God never tears love out of any severity that He sends. The sternness of God—and He can be stern, as winter shows—is ever a merciful sternness (*Rom. xi. 22*). See in history of Manasseh, David, Israel, and in histories manifold, proof that the goodness of God is in the winter as well as elsewhere. "Our light afflictions which . . . work out for us," etc. V. "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENETH ME." "Who can stand before His cold?" asks our text. "I can," and "I can," and "I can," reply a multitude of voices. See the speakers. Look at them, how they leap and play; they are ruddy, and comely, and strong; how their merry laughter and joyous shout ring all down the ice over which they are wildly careering. Yes; they can stand the cold, and will, it is likely, be very sorry when the thaw sets in. Now, why is this? It is because they are full of life. Their blood courses healthily through their bodies. They brim over with a joyful vitality. What a lesson this is. Only let us have life—the life Christ gives—and the cold of poverty, trial, sorrow, death—"His cold," in whatever form it comes, as in some form it will come, we shall be able to bear, and to this last voice of the winter we shall be able to add our "Amen." (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

Winter scenes:—The frost and the snow and the ice serve a great purpose in the physical economy, so that without the cold of winter we would have no spring bursting with renewed life, no summer with its warmth and invigorating growth, and no autumn with its rich fruit. In the same way there is a Divine purpose in those harder and more stern experiences of our human life. Like the snow, the frost, and the ice, trials and difficulties and sufferings come from the hand of God, and are the greatest of blessings in the formation, correction, and development of our character, if they are rightly used. God produces and controls, and uses them for His own purposes in us, and by their means He disciplines our character, and induces in us greater spirituality of heart. He holds in His hands all things and all trials and all sufferings; and when He is spiritually recognized by us, He imparts to our souls power to bear them, just as the blade of grass holds the hoar-frost, or the water bears the ice, or the earth the snow. As the earth is richer and more productive by the processes of winter, so the right endurance and the right use of sufferings and difficulties and trials make us nobler and greater, and more Christian in feeling and spirit and life, and give us a greater inheritance of blessing and joy for ever. We must not, however, regard winter from a mere utilitarian point of view. In its greatest severity it is a scene of beauty most sublime and ennobling. The frost and the ice and the snow clothe the earth with a robe richer and more attractive and magnificent than the most splendid pageant or brilliant display of kings or kingdoms. The scenes of winter are capable of exercising a powerful influence over our imagination in ministering to its wealth, and also over our heart and judgment, and the emotions and habits of our life. In the wisdom and power necessary to create and put into form such a scene as has been described we have a manifestation of God's glory. The creative power displayed in a snow-storm taxes the highest flights of imagination, it gives action to the noblest powers of mind, and it is a source of joy to the heart which recognizes the Divine Father in it all. It affords occasion for the exercise of holy admiration and devout gratitude to the beneficent Creator, who not only weighs the mountains in scales, pours the rivers into the oceans, and rolls planet upon planet through immeasurable space; but who also forms the smallest flakes of snow, and straightens the rivers of water with ice, and beautifies the earth with hoar-frost. And the study of such a Divine glory as this is intended by God to exert a salutary influence upon our character, both social and religious. Hence the profusion of wonders and attractive beauty with which God has crowded this world, in order that we may examine and admire them, and by them may rise from the admiration of nature to the admiration and love of God, who is both the God of nature and the God of redemption. That we may really admire, we must carefully examine and study the works of God; for without study the novelty and brilliancy which lie on the surface will soon cease to interest us. In order to interest our minds and benefit our hearts, and so to have a moral and spiritual effect upon us, we must devoutly look into the inner nature and forms of things, and acquire a relish for research and study. In this way we became possessed of a source of happiness of which nothing can rob us—a sweet voice from the works of God falls upon our souls with blessed power—there is unfolded to us a marvellous display of Divine skill and benevolence which, during our earthly pilgrimage, impart to our hearts confidence in God, and make us hope for higher developments and nobler enjoyments in the world of spirits. Our spiritual nature, too, finds in the snow Divine comfort and encouragement. Snow has been employed by the sacred writers to symbolize that purity and spiritual excellence which God offers to all men in the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. Snow-water is peculiarly fitted for washing all impurities of the hands, and making them white and clean. The washing of the soul by the power of God effects a spiritual purity whiter than snow. The words of pardon to guilty men, made known in the Gospel, will melt their hardened and ice-bound hearts to repentance and newness of life. And when this Gospel of forgiveness is heartily believed and practically received into the life, God, who gives snow like wool, scatters the hoar-frost like ashes, casts forth His ice like morsels, and by His Word melts them again, and makes the waters to flow, is able by the Word and power of His Son to restore warmth and energy to cold and weak hearts, and to impart purity and grace to sinful and corrupt souls, until they become whiter than snow, brighter than hoar-frost, and purer than ice. (W. Simpson.) *The benefits of snow:*—This comparison expressly indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep

which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies, and prepare it for fresh efforts in the spring; and being, like wool, a bad conductor, it conserves the latent heat of the soil, and protects the dormant life of plant and animal hid under it from the frosty rigour of the outside air. Winter-sown wheat, when defended by this covering, whose under-surface seldom falls much below 32° Fahr., can thrive, even though the temperature of the air above may be many degrees below the freezing point. Some districts, enjoying an equable climate, seldom require this protection; but in northern climates, where the winter is severe and prolonged, its beneficial effects are most marked. The scanty vegetation which blooms with such sudden and marvellous loveliness in the height of summer in the Arctic regions and on mountain summits would perish utterly were it not for the protection of the snow that lies on it for three-quarters of the year. But it is not only to Alpine plants and hibernating animals that God gives snow like wool. The Esquimaux take advantage of its curious protective property, and ingeniously build their winter huts of blocks of hardened snow; thus, strangely enough, by a homeopathic law, protecting themselves against cold by the effects of cold. The Arctic navigator has been indebted to walls of snow banked up around his ship for the comparative comfort of his winter quarters, when the temperature without has fallen so low that even chloric ether became solid. And many a precious life has been saved by the timely shelter which the snowstorm itself has provided against its own violence. But while snow thus warms in cold regions, it also cools in warm regions. It sends down from the white summits of equatorial mountains its cool breath to revive and brace the drooping life of lands sweltering under a tropic sun; and from its inexhaustible reservoirs it feeds perennial rivers that water the plains when all the wells and streams are white and silent in the baking heat. Without the perpetual snow of mountainous regions the earth would be reduced to a lifeless desert. God giveth snow like wool, and chill and blighting as is the touch of snow, it has protective influences which guard against greater evils. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. Who can stand before His cold?—His cold:—In former days religious people were too much given to introducing the Deity directly into the workings of nature and the movements of history. The consequence was, that our forefathers made the Creator responsible for details, rather than for great leading principles and modes of action. In these last days there has been a marked recoil among thoughtful people from the old ideal. In certain intellectual quarters some have even gone to the other extreme; and, as usually happens in extremes, these cultured people of to-day have dropped into as great errors as their less cultured predecessors. As they represent Deity oftentimes, it would seem as if they had divorced Him from both nature and history; so that it is impossible to discover where His operation comes in, if it comes in at all. In the rich religious light of to-day it ought to be possible surely to bow before a God walking in the dignity of infinitely wise laws, and working in the silent majesty of infinite power; but also thinking, feeling, loving, in the interest of creatures on whom He has conferred a dignity first among living things. I. **HIS COLD AS A SYMBOL OF POWER.** The power that can, in a few hours, bridge over the mightiest rivers with a pavement secure and stable, in strength and smoothness surpassing far the grandest of engineering feats; the power that can split up the rocks of the mountains, like cordwood under the axe of the feller; the power that can laugh at all known human powers, or forces arrayed against it; that must surely be a fit emblem of Him who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and before whom the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers—Him who weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. May we have the true religious vision to see Him, and the ear to hear His voice. II. **THE WISDOM DISPLAYED IN "HIS COLD."** Water alone among bodies expands under cold. That anomaly explains how a small quantity of water getting deep down into the crevices of a mountain will, on freezing, split up its adamantine rocks as easily as a child sunders the petals of a buttercup. It explains why ice floats and does not sink; why the clayey soils so retentive of moisture are pulverized in winter, and made ready for the harrow in spring; why myriads of insects secreted in the soil are killed off in the torpid state where their parents thought they had found a secure nest for them against the rigours of the cold; and why cold is the best disinfectant if it be intense enough—destroying instantly the germs of disease as they appear in decaying vegetation, or foul garbage, or in impure drainage. What foul and

hurtful thing "can stand before His cold"? The greatest blessing of all, however, is to be seen in the freezing of the flowing river. Because water expands under cold its specific gravity diminishes in the process of freezing, and so frozen water floats upon the unfrozen and heavier water below. By that means the ice-pavement is formed, which, on the one hand, is of immense value both to animals and man, and, on the other, preserves for the finny tribes their natural habitat intact. III. THE GOODNESS OF "HIS COLD." That standing exception of water alone expanding under cold, while other bodies contract, is not the least of many clear tokens of our almighty, all-wise Father's care and goodness in the operation of His cold. Indeed, we might call it the greatest material blessing we can enjoy in that connection, for it is essential to our very existence. Still, after all, it is in the spiritual blessings which the material blessings suggest that the best blessing lies for devout souls. What stimulus to our spiritual nature in the contemplation of the Deity putting forth His mighty power and exercising His mighty mind to protect and provide for His creatures, as well as to expand and elevate their thoughts by the grandeur of His power in the works of His providence. III. THE METHOD OF "HIS COLD." Silently in the still night, under the jewelled canopy of heaven, a giant's hand is laid upon rippling stream and solid land. Then, without the slightest sound of contending forces, or cry of pain, the vastest display of power under the mighty heaven is presented to thoughtful mortals, when the morning breaks, and eager life, awaking to its daily toil, finds the throne of the ice-king set up once again. What need we more impressive to inform us of a present divinity than such a feat of Divine workmanship? What a sublime consistency in work proclaiming abroad the sublime worker! All silent might; resistless power revelling in silence. What a lesson here also of the Divine majesty! No noisy demonstration in His grandest works; no straining after effect; no giant-like effort to secure success. In all His wide dominion self-confident, self-possessed, and modest, the great God marches silently through all the seasons working wonders as He goes. (J. E. Hill, B.D.) "Who can stand before His cold?"—"Not we," say the frozen lips of Sir John Franklin and his men, dying in Arctic exploration. "Not we," answer Schwatka and his crew, falling back from the fortresses of ice which they had tried in vain to capture. "Not we," say the abandoned and crushed decks of the "Intrepid," the "Resistance," and the "Jeannette." The highest pillars of the earth are pillars of ice—Mont Blanc, Jungfrau, the Matterhorn. The largest galleries of the world are galleries of ice. Some of the mighty rivers are at this moment lying in captivity of ice. The greatest sculptors of the ages are the glaciers, with their arm and hand and chisel and hammer of ice. The cold is imperial, and has a crown of glittering crystal and is seated on a throne of ice, with a footstool of ice and sceptre of ice. One-half of the industries of our day are employed in battling the inclemency of the weather. The furs of the North, the cotton of the South, the flax of our own fields, the wool of our own flocks, the coal from our own mines, the wood from our own forests, all employed in battling these inclemencies, and still every January, with blue lips and chattering teeth, answers, "None of us can stand before His cold." I am glad that the God of the frosts is the God of the heat; that the God of the snow is the God of the white blossoms; that the God of January is the God of June. The question as to how shall we warm this world up is a question of immense and all-encompassing practicality. In this zone and weather there are so many fireless hearths, so many broken window panes, so many defective roofs that sift the snow. Coal and wood and flannels and thick coats are better for warming up such a place than tracts and Bibles and creeds. Kindle that fire where it has gone out. Wrap something around those shivering limbs. Shoe those bare feet. Hat that bare head. Coat that bare back. Sleeve that bare arm. It is useless to preach to bare feet, and to empty stomachs, and to gaunt visages. Christ gave the world a lesson in common sense when, before preaching the Gospel to the multitude in the wilderness, He gave them a good dinner. It is the powerful heater—is the glorious furnace of Christian sympathy. The question ought to be, instead of how much heat can we absorb? how much heat can we throw out? Warm greetings, warm prayers, warm smiles, warm Christian influence. There are such persons. We bless God for them. We rejoice in their companionship. I have been for twenty-seven years studying how to make the Church warmer. Warmer architecture, warmer hymnology, warmer Christian salutation. All outside Siberian winter, we must have it a prince's hothouse. The only institution on earth to-day that proposes to make the world warmer. Univer-

sities and observatories, they all have their work. They propose to make the world light, but they do not propose to make the world warm. Geology informs us, but it is as cold as the rock it hammers. The telescope shows where the other worlds are, but an astronomer is chilled while looking through it. Chemistry tells us of strange combinations, and how inferior affinity may be overcome by superior affinity; but it cannot tell how all things work together for good. Worldly philosophy has a great splendour, but it is the splendour of moonlight on an iceberg. The Church of God proposes warmth and hope—warmth for the expectations, warmth for the sympathies. Oh, I am so glad these great altar fires have been kindled! Come in out of the cold. Come in, and have your sins pardoned. Come in by the great Gospel fire-place. That is the way the cold world is going to be warmed up by the great Gospel fire-place. All nations will come and sit down at that banquet. While I was musing the fire burned. "Come in out of the cold, come in out of the cold!" (T. De Witt Talmage.)

Vers. 19, 20. **His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.**—*The Law of Moses*:—That Law which God delivered to His own people, and for which just returns of praise are here made to Him, shall be the subject of our present inquiries, particularly the end and design of it, and its perfections, and also some defects in it which the Christian revelation hath enabled us to discover. 1. From the Scriptures we learn that God chose the children of Israel, as He had promised to Abraham, to be His peculiar people; that He miraculously rescued them from slavery; that He gave them the quiet possession of a fruitful country; that He wrought many wonders for their preservation; that He delivered precepts to them, the observance of which necessarily separated them from other people; that He raised up a succession of prophets to instruct them or correct them; that He ruled over them Himself in a singular manner. After He had preserved them a distinct people for more than fourteen hundred years, He sent His Son to them, who was born amongst them, and came to make a new and a better covenant, to which both they and all other nations should be invited, and to teach a more pure and spiritual religion. This Messiah was obscurely represented in their religious ceremonies, and promised in the Law and the prophets; and as the time of His coming approached, the predictions concerning Him were more full and clear. If we consider the Law as intended to instruct the Jews in moral truths, and to keep up the worship of God in the world, we may observe that these ends were sufficiently secured. From the Law and the prophets the Jews might learn that God did not so much delight in ceremonial observances, as in piety, justice, and charity; from many expressions in them they might suppose and hope that a quiet possession of the land of Canaan was not the only reward of well-doing, but that God reserved for those who loved Him a better recompense in a better world. In those books they might find descriptions of God's goodness and mercy proper to raise their trust in Him, and to encourage them to amendment and repentance, gracious promises of pardon, and a promise of future blessings, of which the Messiah should be the author and dispenser; which may be said to belong rather to the Gospel than to the Law, and to be founded upon all that Christ did and suffered for mankind. And as good laws naturally tend to make good subjects, and a good religion to make good men, so the lives and behaviour of some worthies recorded in Scripture are witnesses to the excellence of the religion which they had received, and by which they were guided. They were remarkable for piety to God, and for a disinterested love of their country, they preferred their duty to all worldly advantages, and endured with patience cruel persecutions, even to death, for the sake of a good conscience. Another end of the Law was to preserve the people of Israel distinct and separated from all nations. Many precepts were appointed for this very purpose: "I am the Lord your God, who hath separated you from other people: ye shall therefore put difference between beasts clean and unclean." That having a diet peculiar to themselves, they might be restrained from eating with the Gentiles, and so from learning their idolatrous and vicious customs. Another end of the Law was to set up a form of government differing from all others, in which God Himself should be the King, and rule over the people in a most remarkable and wonderful manner. Another end for which we may suppose the Law to have been given was that it might be in some measure a light to enlighten the Gentiles, to spread the knowledge of one God, and so to preserve it that it might not be quite obliterated by idolatry. 2. I shall now make some remarks on the defects and imperfections of the Law. Though that part of the

Law which was ceremonial served for good and wise purposes, yet, considered in itself, and compared with the Gospel, it was a weak and imperfect institution, fitted only for children in knowledge, and also a burthensome and severe ordinance, as the apostles testify. St. Paul hath represented the state of the Jews as a state of infants and slaves. He says that whilst they continued under the Law they were children, and that their rites and ceremonies were rudiments adapted to the low capacities of children, and designed to train them up and prepare them for the Gospel; he says also that they were slaves, that they had received the spirit of bondage to fear, because they were obliged to the performance of external services which in themselves had no goodness, and compelled to the observance of them chiefly by servile motives, by the fear of punishment. The Law was defective, also, in that it was not a general revelation of God's will to mankind, nor indeed of its own nature fitted for universal use. It seems confined to the people to whom it was delivered, in its promises, in its threats, in its rewards and punishments, in several duties and conditions which it required, in the ceremonies, sacrifices, feasts, and customs which it appointed. It admitted proselytes indeed; but it could not have been the religion of any other nation; and the number of the proselytes, though considerable enough sometimes, when compared with the number of the Israelites, or Jews, yet when compared with the Gentile world, was so small, that the psalmist might well say in the text, God hath not so dealt with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws. From the defects of the Law it seems reasonable to suppose that it was not designed to continue always. Therefore God, by the prophets, added from time to time new revelations to the Law, removing some of its obscurity, and allaying some of its severity, and also promised greater discoveries to be made in His appointed time. Thus was the Law a preceptor to the Jews, as the apostle speaks, to bring them to Christ; a dispensation appointed, in condescension to the weakness of that people, to train them up and fit them by degrees for the reception of the Gospel. 3. I shall now proceed to vindicate the Law of Moses and the Jewish religion from some objections which have been raised against them, both in ancient and in modern times. First, sacrifices were disliked by some learned and respectable philosophers; and for this and other reasons Judaism appeared to them an injudicious and a superstitious religion. We must therefore observe that sacrifices were not appointed as the most excellent way of serving God, or even as a practice good in itself, but partly in condescension to the weakness of a stubborn people, partly by way of fine and punishment for their transgressions, partly as emblematic ceremonies showing the heinous and dangerous nature of sin which deserved death, and partly as a figurative representation of the atonement to be made by the Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world. Secondly, God never commanded sacrifice as a thing of its own nature right and fit, but only as useful or necessary by way of consequence. It was usually a rite by which men renewed a covenant with God, and it supposed some transgression, so that if men had never sinned it would have had no place. When God accepted it, He approved it only as it was a testimony of contrition, a humble acknowledgment of unworthiness, a desire to honour Him with a present, and to be received again into favour and alliance with Him. Another objection to the Jewish religion is taken from the bloody wars which the Israelites waged with some nations, and with some cities, by Divine command, and in which they were directed to give no quarter to their enemies, but to put them all to the sword. But it is strange that any one who believes in God should think this to be an insuperable objection, a difficulty not to be removed, and a full confutation of the Jewish religion, because such sort of reasoning will overset natural as much as revealed religion. It will prove, if it proves anything, that God cannot suffer diseases and calamities to destroy so many of His creatures every day; for diseases and calamities are in some sense of His appointment, and arise from the constitution and the nature of the things which He hath created. Another objection to the Old Testament is that Moses and the Prophets had not just notions of the Divine perfections, and ascribe to God things unworthy of Him. Thus, for example, they represent God as punishing the children for the faults of the parents, as being the author of evil, and as obnoxious to human infirmities, and to the passions of grief, anger, and jealousy. As to God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children—First, this threatening being annexed to the commandment against idolatry, is not properly personal, but rather national. Secondly, God still reserved to Himself a power, by a particular providence, to show favour to particular persons who should dis-

tinguish themselves by their good behaviour, and carefully avoid the vices and iniquities of their forefathers. Thirdly, when the nation was degenerated, and was punished for it, and the righteous and the wicked were involved in the same public calamities, God was able to make a compensation to the least guilty and the more innocent, partly in this world, and fully in another world. As to the objection that they represent God as the Author of evil—by this way of speaking they never meant to remove the guilt of wicked actions from men and to lay it upon God; they only intended to acknowledge the superintending providence of God, and to declare that no event took place without His knowledge and permission. In this sense they held that He created both good and evil, and that there were not two Gods, two Principles, or First Causes, but only one Author of all, of all those powers and qualities which the righteous employ to good purposes, and of which sinners make a bad use. As to those passages of Scripture in which God is clothed with human infirmities, and subject to human passions, these things are spoken in condescension to our capacities, and arise from the imperfection of human language, and the necessity of representing things spiritual in a way suitable to our conceptions. Another and a common objection to the Old Testament is taken from the behaviour of those illustrious persons who are represented as holy men and servants of God, and some of whose actions are not condemned in Scripture, and yet are not justifiable. First, we must remember that the doctrines of morality in those ancient times were not so perfect as those of the Gospel; and, therefore, proper allowances must be made upon that account. Secondly, the history of the Old Testament is often very short and concise; and as we know not all the circumstances, we should rather incline to judge too favourably than too severely of the actions of good men which are of an ambiguous nature, and to admit of any candid apology which may be suggested for them; at least, we should suspend our judgment in such cases, and not decide too hastily. (*J. Jartin, D.D.*)

PSALM CXLVIII.

VERs. 1-14. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens.—*The great, the greater, and the greatest*:—I. **THE GREAT.** Sun, moon, stars, etc. 1. How boundless in variety. 2. How immeasurable in extent. II. **THE GREATER.** 1. Rational and responsible existences. (1) Angelic existences. (2) Human existences. 2. This moral universe is greater than the non-moral. (1) It reflects more of God. It mirrors His spirituality, His freedom, His conscience, etc. There is more of God seen in one holy soul than in the whole stellar universe. This moral universe is greater because—(2) The non-moral is but the symbol, the instrument, the tement, the garment of the moral. Great as is the non-moral universe, what is it without moral mind? A theatre without a spectator, a school without a pupil, a temple without a worshipper, a house without a tenant. III. **THE GREATEST.** What is the greatest? "The Lord." "His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven." Greatest because—1. He is the Author of all. 2. He is the stability of all. 3. He is the law of all. The whole universe is His will in action. (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. Praise Him, all ye stars of light.—*Lessons of the stars*:—1. One of the most impressive lessons we learn from a study of the stars is the immensity of creation. As they crowd the sky on a clear, bright night we see the beauty and force of the words employed of old to express the increase of Israel—"God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude." The distance between the furthest planet and the nearest star is twenty-one billions of miles. If we could travel as fast as light travels, we should go round the world four hundred and eighty times a minute; and yet, travelling at the same rate, it would take us three years and seven months to get to that nearest star. The distance of Sirius is so great that it would require a journey of twenty-one years to reach it. There is another star, visible by the naked eye, so far away that we could not cover the distance in less than seventy-two years. Travelling at the same rate, it would take seven hundred thousand years to visit the group, remote and cloudlike, which

Sir William Herschell discovered with his telescope. 2. We learn from the stars the existence of abiding law and order in creation. The celestial bodies perform their revolutions in fixed periods; and though some seem an exception to this rule, yet they only exemplify it the more strikingly, for their irregularities, occurring at stated times, have as much method as their uniform movements. Byron sings of—

“A pathless comet and a curse,
The menace of the universe.”

But now it is known of some, and may be inferred of all, that they are as obedient to law as the planets themselves. Another illustration of law we have in the elliptic movements of the planetary bodies. We owe to Kepler the discovery of the fact that they all move in elliptic orbits—that if you draw a line from the planet to the sun, the areas described by that line in its motion round the sun are proportional to the times employed in the motion, and that the squares of the periodic times are as the cubes of the distance. The first of these is a law of forms, the other two are laws of numbers. By their mutual attractions the planets sometimes produce disturbance among themselves. Through observing the irregular movements of Uranus the astronomers discovered Neptune; yet even at such times order reigns. The primal law of gravitation, discovered by Sir Isaac Newton—that law which keeps all the stars in their places and regulates the descent of a snowflake—abides for ever. Law and order are seen in the motions of the double stars. In many parts of the heavens two or more stars are seen, apparently near each other, and mutually connected as part of a system. In some cases these companion stars revolve round each other; in other cases two or more revolve round a common centre. They are at a much greater distance from each other than the furthest planet of our system is from the sun. The period of their revolution varies from thirty to upward of seven hundred years. Yet they all travel according to fixed law. And this reign of law is observable in the most remote part of the heavens as much as in the nearer. Every fresh discovery reveals its existence and operation. 3. The stars remind us of the beauty and grandeur of creation. In the spheroid shape of the planets and their satellites we have beauty of form. Then we have degrees of magnitude and brightness. It requires the light of a hundred stars of the sixth magnitude to make that of one of the first magnitude. One star differeth from another star in glory. There is a variety of colour as well as of size and lustre. “Through the clear, transparent atmosphere of a Syrian night, without any optical aid whatever, one star is seen to shine like an emerald, another like a ruby, a third like a sapphire, and a fourth like a topaz—the whole nocturnal heavens appearing to sparkle with a blaze of jewels.” There are individual stars, each shining in a splendour all its own. There are starry clusters which hang in the heavens like fruit in the tree. Some are extremely irregular in shape, while others show regular forms of a round, spiral, or other tendency. The Great Bear is a grand and striking constellation. Pleiades glitters and quivers with radiance like a breastplate of jewels. Orion, with his brazen girdle, is not only the most glorious constellation in the heavens—he is also one of the few visible in all parts of the habitable globe. 4. The stars witness for God. An atheistic leader of the French Revolution said one day to a Christian villager: “We are going to pull your church-tower down, so that you may have nothing left to remind you of God, or religion.” “You will not only have to pull down the church-tower,” said the man, “you will also have to blot out the stars before you can destroy all that reminds us of God. They speak to us of Him.” (1) They speak of His living, all-pervading presence; and so illustrate Christ’s words, “My Father worketh hitherto.” He upholds them by the constant acting of His power. (2) They bear witness to God’s condescension and care. While they speak of His majesty and power, they speak at the same time of our littleness. Yet the power that made and upholds the stars made and upholds man. (W. Walters.)

Ver. 8. Snow and vapours.—*The glaciers as prophets*:—From the visible we divine the invisible. In what is physical we find parables concerning the spiritual, and even discern natural law in the spiritual world. The Teacher of teachers took often His texts from the freer Bible of Nature when He would expound either the constitution of His Kingdom or the attributes of Deity. To-day let us “enter into the treasures of the snow,” and remind ourselves of some precious lessons

therein. Snow is the vapour of water crystallized. The atoms of which all matter is compounded tend, when free, to assume the crystalline form, and by water, which is a solvent of nearly all substances, atoms are generally set free, and in their freedom they combine. So we get rock crystal from the resolution of flint, Iceland-spar as a crystalline form of the atoms of chalk, diamonds from carbon, and snow-crystals from the moisture aggregated in clouds directly the temperature is low enough to freeze that moisture. When the air is calm six-rayed stars are produced, as we can see with the naked eye when they are caught on a cold surface. Their being driven together by currents of air causes their beauty and their individuality to be lost in the shapeless snowflake. The colder the air, the smaller the crystal. Can we doubt that their geometrical form is an evidence of the active presence and action in nature of an orderly mind? That the structure of all crystals being based on mathematical laws and relations shows the handiwork of a grand Geometrician of the Universe? Catch some snow-crystals. So ordered in beauty are they, that we feel that to them also has been whispered, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father is perfect." Tiny is each, but perfect in beauty of form. On our microscopes we may have learned to inscribe, *Maximus in minimis*—Immeasurably great art Thou in Thy least, O God! The lovely sculptura of diatoms in the vegetable kingdom, of the tests of infusoria in the base of animal life, and the remembrance that only the most infinitesimal number of their inconceivable hosts can ever be seen by the eye of man, that only their Maker can delight in their absolute perfection, bids us burst out with a creed that is a commandment. We can, we must, aim at perfection, for nothing short of perfection expresses and imitates the quality of the Divine mind and work. So beautiful is each, and yet how varying. Over a thousand forms of snow crystals have been noted, albeit all have the necessary unity of being six-rayed. There is no act of uniformity here, or anywhere in Nature, for uniformity is man's ignorant parody of the unity which alone God desires and creates. But now let us trace these crystals and these flakes, not backwards but forwards, as one might who saw them falling softly on a mountain top. Into quite other thoughts than those of beauty and goodness will they lead, and what has been as a guiding star may now become a beacon of warning. Tiny is each, and well nigh without weight. Can such as they have had relation to the valleys from which we have ascended, the ravines we have clambered up? Have they anything to do with the hard blue ice of the glacier, its crevasses, and its graving of even the granite rocks? Light, and falling noiselessly; white from the entangled air of the flakes and from the blending of the prismatic colours in their reflection from the minute faces of the crystals; yet in their multitude causing pressure as they lie sheet upon sheet; and this pressure gradually eliminating the air until *névé*, half snow and half ice, is formed. But still the pressure increases by fresh falls of snow above, and at last the *névé* becomes the blue, airless ice of the glacier. But this mighty field of ice remains not level or at rest; surely, and without pause, it is moving downwards, although imperceptibly to the eye. Nor is it without effect on all it touches. It chisels out with its imbedded stones grooves in the cliffs that bound it and form its bed; it smoothes, as with a vast plain, the hardest rocks over which it crawls, and leaves these testimonies graven in the rock to be read in ages far in the future when and where the glacier itself has ceased to be. Now in all this we may see a parable of the usual course of moral evil, from its beginning in the almost unnoticed venial sin which is unresisted as being considered unimportant, continuing by repetition and aggregation to gather force and destructive power, until at last there is the fixity of evil that mightily affects its surroundings. So light is each snow-crystal as it falls; so trivial it seems that little bit of self-love, or self-will, or self-confidence, the slight exaggeration, the only momentary harbouring of an evil thought; that questionable additional one per cent. of profit; the pride that is little more than the consciousness of success; the resentment which seems justified, that, considering each one by one, and forgetting the cumulative weight of numbers, the sense of sin is as yet unroused, and watchfulness appears unneeded while still it is the day of small things. And even the snowflake, formed when crystals have been blown together, is felt only when falling on the uncovered and uplifted face, and then but as a touch—no bruise, and certainly no wound resulting, no burden felt; and so white still from the entangled air. So together with the venial sins there is yet so much of the atmosphere of habitual grace, such spiritual vitality still, such activity in good works, that there seems no prospect of the elimination of the air of heaven that may in time turn the snowdrift that

a wind may move into the ponderous and crushing, dark and airless ice of the glacier. Yet the process is natural when once begun. The multitude of imponderable crystals causes weight. The superimposition of small forces creates the power that hardly can be resisted. Gradually the snow-beds change into *névé* as their pressure forces out the air; and gradually, unnoticed and unresisted, little sins chill the heart, dull the sensitiveness of the conscience, and form first the tendency and then the habit of coldness and apathy towards the interests, and invitations, and even the commands of duty towards one's higher life-duty towards one's neighbour, and duty to God. Not that overt evil is as yet apparent: *névé* to the casual glance is not so very different from snow. Respectability remains, morality is not apparently lost: the hardness of the airless ice is not yet produced. But it is only a question of time and of the continuance of increasing pressure as snowstorm upon snowstorm and winter after winter thickens the superincumbent mass. At last the ice is formed—airless, hard, and ready to destroy. To the eye, at any given moment, there seems no motion, and only by minute and scientific observation is the downward flow noted and calculated. Is it not so in the moral decadence of the human spirit? One day brings no obvious deterioration of character. The lethargic and frozen spirit thinks and avows that it is much as usual from year to year, and yet all the while, visibly enough to the grieving eye of its Creator, its Redeemer, and its Sanctifier, the continued downward course is rendering any arrest of this deathward progress less easy. Acts create habit, and habit forms permanent character assuredly, though perhaps as unobservedly, as snow changes into *névé*, and *névé* into the glacier. But, again, we observe the dead, descending stream of ice not merely in itself, but as it affects all it touches. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself is an axiom true in the economic, the social, the natural, and the spiritual order of things. How absolutely impossible is the existence of any trust in the common saying, "He is no man's enemy but his own," and still more in the popular excuse, "If I do it, I injure no one but myself." The cold heart must chill other hearts. Not only the fervour of zeal, but the paralysis of indifference and inaction is contagious. Our friends, our associates, and the greater number who, unknown to us, yet must be and are influenced for good or evil by what we say, or write, or do, and by the greater eloquence of what we are, form, as it were, the banks of the river of our life, and each atom of that bank is thrilled by our motion. Do they seem of sterner stuff than we? Yet even the granite cliffs are planed by the softer ice of the passing glacier, and scored by the fragments of rock it has absorbed. And, lastly, the scars remain when the glacier has disappeared, melted away by a kindlier climate. Glaciers in England passed away ages before historic or even traditional memory, but their effects remain. Not only "the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom in the dust," but equally are unrighteous deeds a source of infection long after the doers are forgotten. These thoughts have been solemn—sombre if you will—but nature is a school-room, not simply a playground, and it is by enduring hardness, intellectually and spiritually, that one becomes the soldier of Christ, the prophet of God. Our mountain rambles derive their charm from the mixture of what is ever terrible with that which is lovely; black precipices linger in our mind as well as the wealth of flowers in the meadows; the startling roar of an avalanche echoes in our memory as well as the soft harmony of bells and rivulets below; and so, while mostly we are noting with thankful glee all things that seem sparkling ripples on the stream of a Maker's love, the undertone of warning may well be heard—Be wooed to life; be scared from death. Sing thy Eucharist at the evidences of the love; chant also thy Litany at the reminder of the necessary justice of God. (*J. W. Horsley, M.A.*) **Stormy wind fulfilling His word.**—*The Divine use of destructive forces:*—Some of us may remember a walk through a park on the day after a hurricane: leaves, twigs, branches wrenched violently from their trunks strew the soil in every direction; oaks which have stood erect perhaps since the days of the Plantagenets now lie prostrate. Nor is vegetable life the only sufferer. The eye rests on what may remain of a nest of young birds dashed from their shattered home upon the ground; or perhaps here and there the carcase of an animal which had run for shelter beneath the cover of a tree already tottering to its fall. Or we are on the sea coast, the angry waves are subsiding, and as we watch them they presently lay at our feet the timbers of what we know a few hours ago must have been the home of human beings; and then one and another fragment of a ship's furniture is floated up, and then, perhaps, at last, a human body, so bruised and gashed

by its rude contact with the rocks as to be scarcely recognizable. "Fulfilling His word." Somehow or other, then, His word is fulfilled in this devastation and disfigurement of that which His own hands have made; and the agent which inflicts it obeys some law as regular as that which governs the motion of the planet, although with more complex conditions. In its early history this earth seems to have been the scene of a series of catastrophes, each of them the product of existing law, each of them the preparation for some higher forms of life. As we pass from the physical and inanimate world and enter the human, the spiritual, and the moral, we find new and rich applications of the words before us. Here the wind and the storm become metaphorical expressions, having, however, real counterparts in the passions and the agency of man. Here, too; as elsewhere, we watch them fulfilling God's word. I. LET US BEGIN WITH THE STATE. Every reflecting person must know how intimately the well-being of mankind is bound up with the maintenance of social order, and the stability and vigour of existing institutions with good government, with the due security of life and property. It is the State which organizes and combines the conditions of well-ordered human life. The State answers in the social life of man to physical nature in man's animal life. Its strength and unvarying order are the guarantee of man's well-being; and yet the State is exposed to destructive storms which rival in their sphere the most violent catastrophes of nature: and the question is how such storms are fulfilling God's word. 1. There is, for instance, the storm of invasion, the extreme and most dreaded result of the storm of war. Never, probably, before the establishment of the Roman Empire were such blessings as well-ordered government can secure secured for so large a proportion of the human family as was then the case. Upon the subjugation of a number of petty States continually at war with each other, the Romans established a vast system of law and police, which was almost conterminous with the civilized world. It extended from the Euphrates to the Straits of Gibraltar, from the Grampian Hills far into the deserts of Africa. This wonderful political edifice, which was begun by the soldiers of Rome, which was built up and completed by her lawyers and her administrators, was such that its seeming strength and its compactness and its practical wisdom made men believe that it would last for ever. But the centuries passed, and moral corruptions, imported chiefly from the East, ate out the very heart and fibre of Roman strength; and then there came the storm of the barbarian invasions. On they came, Goths, and Huns, and Vandals; on they came, wave after wave, breaking upon the enfeebled defences of decaying civilization; on they came, wrecking cities, devastating provinces, breaking up altogether the old fabric of society, and establishing in its place a state of things from which Rome had delivered the world, a number of petty States constantly at war with each other, and lacking in not a few instances the primary conditions of social order. And yet this wind and storm, we can see it, fulfilled God's word. Rome had done its work, and the evil which festered under its ordered splendour at last greatly outweighed the good that could be secured by its longer continuance. It left to the world its great conceptions of law and rule that were never better appreciated than in our own day; it had to make room for new and vigorous nations instinct with a healthier spirit, guided from the infancy of their existence by a Divine religion; and the scenes of ruin in which it perished had a sanction which has been justified by the event. 2. There is the storm of revolution, more dreadful in its extreme phases than the storm of invasion or the storm of war, just as cruelty or wrong at the hands of relations is more unendurable than at the hands of strangers. Such a storm was that which burst upon France in the closing years of the eighteenth century. We may go far, indeed, to find a parallel to the Jacobin terror in point of deliberate ferocity perpetrated in the name and in the midst of an advanced civilization. The brutalities of the Committee of Public Safety are the more revolting from the contrast which they present with the lofty professions of a sensitive philanthropy amid which the Revolution was ushered into being. And yet, as we look back on those terrible years which occupied the whole attention of our grandfathers, we can trace in them, too, the wind and storm fulfilling God's word. The old society which was thus destroyed was inconsistent with the well-being of the greater part of the French people; and the agonies of the Revolution have been counterbalanced by the exchange which millions have made of a life of great hardship and oppression for a life in which all men are equal before the law. He who makes the clouds of human passion His chariots, He who walks upon the wings of the wind of human violence, He permitted a company of

pedantic ruffians, who for the moment controlled the destinies of France, to work its miserable will, because He had in view a larger future which would show that, however unconsciously, they were fulfilling His high purposes of benevolence and justice. II. **IN THE CHURCH, THE DIVINE SOCIETY, WE TRACE THE OPERATIONS OF THE SAME LAW.** The Church is exposed to storms which in her higher life correspond to the storms of invasion and the storms of revolution in the life of the State. 1. Thus there is the storm of persecution which in Scripture is distinctly ascribed to the agency of Satan. It might well have seemed to the first Christians hard and almost unintelligible that the almighty and loving Father should have called out from among mankind into existence the society of His true children and worshippers only to expose it to the fierce trial which beat on it with such pitiless, with such well-nigh incessant fury during the first three centuries of its existence; and yet as we look back we can see that this education in the school of suffering was neither needless nor thrown away. If the Head of the new society had been crowned with thorns, the members could not expect to be crowned with roses, and withal to be in true correspondence and communion with the Head. If the storm of persecution swept round the cradle of Bethlehem when the holy innocents were sent to their appointed thrones by the sword of Herod; if it beat with relentless fury upon that cross where He hung, the Infinite and the Eternal, expiating human sin, it could not but be that His members would be perfected through suffering. 2. And there is the storm of controversy. Between the sacredness of Divine truths, and the angry passions which rage around them when the floodgates of controversy have been opened, there is the hideous contrast which we all feel most deeply in our best moments; and yet the wind and the storm of controversy have their place and use in God's providential government of His Church. If St. Paul had not withstood St. Peter to his face at Antioch, it seems probable that, humanly speaking, the Church of Christ would never have exceeded the dimensions of a Jewish sect. If Athanasius had not opposed Arius at Alexandria, it is difficult to see how, but for a miraculous intervention, the Church would have continued to teach the Divinity of Jesus Christ. If Augustine had allowed Pelagius and his coadjutors to pass uncontradicted, Western Christendom at least would have ceased to believe that we are saved by grace. The controversies of the sixteenth century plunged a large part of Europe into spiritual anarchy; but at the same time they cleared away mists which else must have hung in ever-thickening corruption over the face of Christendom. Our own age has not been wanting in its full share of religious disputes, and we have not escaped the heart-burnings and the other evils which always accompany them. But those winds and storms of controversy have in their measure fulfilled God's word by rescuing from oblivion almost-forgotten truths; by reminding Christians of a truer and higher standard of life and practice which they had well-nigh forgotten; by bringing out into the sunlight the agreement which often underlies apparent differences, as well as the deep differences which often traverse a specious agreement; by persuading men of goodwill to combine courage in defence of truth with a chivalrous and charitable bearing towards its opponents; by deepening our sense of the preciousness of that well of truth of God which is itself attested by our misunderstandings, by our struggles, by our faults of conduct and of temper which accompany the effort that is made to recognize and to proclaim it. Yes, even controversy may have its blessings. III. And not less applicable are the words to **THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE** which is assailed by storms that in their various ways fulfil the will or word of God. There are the outward troubles of life; loss of means, loss of friends, loss of reputation, the misconduct of children, the inroads of bad health, the slow decay of hopes that once were bright and promising; these things are what men only mean when they use the metaphor in their common talk. The storms of life also represent disasters and failures of a more or less external kind. And no doubt when they fall upon us in quick accumulation they do break down nerve and spirits, they do lay us low, as the psalmist says, "even to the dust." But these storms most assuredly are not seldom our best friends if we only knew it. They break up the class of alliance which the soul, despite her higher origin and destiny, is ever too ready to make with the outward world of sense. They throw us back from the realm of shadows upon the other kingdom which is so close to us, which we forget so easily, but where all is life. Life is full of illustrations of the truth that these storms are meant to fulfil and do fulfil God's word by promoting the conversion and the sanctification of souls. There are, for instance, souls who are exposed to fierce intellectual trials, because in no other way, as it

seems, would they or could they learn the patience, the courage, the humility, the self-distrust which are so essential to the Christian's character. There is no doubt a dreadful risk lest the violence of the storm should wear them out and they should sink disheartened and lie down and die. But the struggle need not be given up in any case; and God's grace is sufficient for all who will seek it, since "His strength is made perfect in weakness." (*Canon Liddon*.) *God's word fulfilled in Nature*.—We are apt to think and speak as if everything had been made for us—as if the sun and moon and stars, the mountains and hills, the fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl had had no other object but our pleasure and comfort. Whereas, in truth, all these were designed to praise God. First, then, each of these glorifies the Lord by obeying its Maker's will. The fulfilment of His design in making them is, according to His own appointment, the proof that He has wrought them well, and therefore that He is worthy to be praised. They also praise Him by accomplishing His work. Sometimes He entrusts them with special commissions. The fire which came, at Elijah's prayer, to decide the people's choice between Baal and the Lord, fulfilled a distinct word of God; so did the hail which destroyed the crops of the Egyptians; so did the cloud which received our ascending Lord; and the mighty wind which raged around Jonah's ship; and the great rain which began in the little cloud of promise granted to the kneeling prophet. And so, again, the glory of God is subverted by these, when they awaken the minds of His sons and daughters to consider in these material forces the operations of His hands. How good it is, what honour is rendered to the Lord of all things, when we are taught by those sights and sounds of nature which are the instruments of God, to discern even Him the Lord Himself, in the snow-storm, and the ocean tempest, and the prairie fire, and the great hailstones, and the impenetrable mists! How gloriously, too, all of these may extol Him by suggesting analogies to us—teachings of that spiritual world, whereof we find so many pictures and parables around us on all sides. These are not fanciful—God forbid that we should think so. They are employed again and again by our blessed Lord, in His Gospel doctrine, when He is showing the heavenly meaning of earthly scenes. And as the Everlasting Son, so also the Eternal Father, does, in Gospel prophecy, use just this imagery (*Isa. lv. 10, 11*). 1. One of the very first lessons to be learnt from such visitations is our utter dependence upon God. Look at the way in which the complex machinery of this great country has been suddenly put out of gear by a few hours' snow—how our postal service, our telegraphs, our common business, our markets, our trade, our schools, our mutual intercourse have been interrupted as in a moment by the tiniest particles of snow joining together against us in irresistible masses—a great army of the Lord, as mighty as the locusts of His sending. Here is, indeed, a disclosing to us of the power of God to hold us down, and to show us His great strength at any time. 2. Since we are entirely dependent on Him ourselves, we should remember, with a self-denying charity, those whom He has suffered to be smitten by the rushing waters, or the raging wind, or the cutting frost and snow. There must not only be,—though He does desire this,—the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name: besides this, we must not forget to do good and to distribute, for it is with such sacrifices that God is well pleased. 3. Though the heart is the seat of holy gratitude, the lips are the gates through which it passes to the throne of the heavenly grace. Should not our prayer be this, the familiar petition which yet is too little our own: "O Lord, open Thou our lips; and our mouth shall show forth Thy praise"? (*G. E. Jelf, M.A.*) *God's hand in the wind and storm*.—God's hand is in the wind and storm. He raises it, He directs and rules it, and He stilleth it again. I. GOD EMPLOYS THE STORMY WIND TO FULFIL HIS THREATENED JUDGMENTS. I do not say or suppose that men who perish in the storm are sinners above others, more than were the men on whom the tower of Siloam fell, or the men whose blood Pilate mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. We are forbidden to judge of any man's eternal state by the manner of his death. But we know and are assured that death is never an accident—that in every case, and as the common effect of sin, it is always a judgment; and that, so often as it is brought to pass by the stormy wind, this is the minister of the judgment which God has decreed and threatened. II. THE STORMY WIND FULFILLS GOD'S WORD OF PROMISED MERCY. Directly, and by its proper effect, it is the executioner of judgment; indirectly God makes use of it for the very opposite result. For need I tell you that God pursues a plan of mercy on behalf of our world, as well as judgment, which in His

wonderful working doth in part accomplish it by the very judgment which He sends abroad on the earth? The same events in providence, you know, work to the most opposite ends in regard to different individuals—as the pillar of cloud, which threw fear and confusion into the host of Pharaoh, animated the camp of Israel with courage and confidence. And who of you all, that are careful to mark God's dealings with you, but has, in connection with the storm, reason to sing of mercy as well as of judgment—that, amid your frequent exposures, you have been preserved—that you have been delivered from those dangers in which this and that other of your messmates have perished? This surely demands of you, at the least, that you acknowledge the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering to you-ward, as not willing you should perish, but that ye should come to repentance. III. THE STORMY WIND FULFILLS GOD'S WORD AS SERVING IN MANY WAYS TO PROMOTE THE GREAT END OF MORAL DISCIPLINE. 1. To recall men to the sense of a forgotten God. 2. To rebuke and chastise men. 3. To try the grace of God's people, to explore its weakness, or to manifest its strength. (J. Henderson, D.D.)

Ver. 9. Mountains and all hills.—*Mountain pictures in Scripture*.—In Scripture mountains are used to set forth—I. THE PLACE OF SPECIAL COMMUNION WITH GOD. The Bible often refers to mountains as if, in a special sense, they belonged to God. Actually all things are God's—valleys as well as hills, plains as well as mountains. But I believe you never meet with God speaking of these other things as He does of mountains. He doesn't say, "My valleys," "My rivers," but He does say, "My mountains." And when we stand and look at a mountain, with its top piercing the clouds, the thought may well come to us, If the valleys and plains have been given to man, God has reserved the mountains for Himself. If man is able to scale them he is unable to live upon them. And there are some whose summits can never be reached. Yes, if we want to banish little earth-born thoughts, and cares, and troubles, if we would exclude them by the entrance of greater thoughts, then climb the mountain, go to its summit if you can, and you are likely to come back another man. It is in accord with all this that our Saviour, when He wanted His three disciples to lose sight of earth while they beheld His heavenly glory, took them away to a mountain-top. And whenever He Himself wanted to leave the world behind Him, and to find a place where He could feel His Father to be very near, and have intimate communion with Him, "He went up into a mountain to pray." II. GOD'S GREAT POWER. The old Hebrew teachers, when they wanted to show the people how strong the arm of Jehovah was, used, in effect, to point to the mountains, and say, "Let me tell you what Jehovah can do with them." Isaiah is rich in imagery of this sort. At one time the prophet wished to make the people feel the immense disparity between themselves and God, and he asks them the significant question, "Who hath weighed the mountains in scales?" When the prophet again wishes to tell us what mighty things God has done, and especially to call attention to the quiet, easy, noiseless way that God can bring about marvellous events, how splendidly he effects this by saying, "The mountains flowed down at Thy presence"! When Jeremiah wished vividly to picture to the people the terrible judgments which his prophetic eye could see that God was about to bring upon their land because they had been rebellious, among other things he says: "I beheld the mountains, and, lo! they trembled." When Nahum seeks to make the impenitent sinner sensible of the terrors of the Lord, even though He is slow to anger, he says, "The mountains quake at Him, the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence." And Habakkuk shows that Jehovah's power is not to be trifled with when, more than once he says, "The mountains saw Thee, and they trembled." Yes, these immovable hills tremble when they see God; and what, then, will impenitent sinners do—men who take no notice of what God has to say to them; who keep their thoughts bound down to earthly things, and never acknowledge God in any of His ways? III. GREAT ANTIQUITY AND UNCHANGEABLENESS (Hab. iii. 6; Ps. xc. 2; Isa. liv. 10). IV. SYMBOLS OF IMMENSE OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES (Matt. xvii. 20; 1 Cor. xiii. 2). 1. The pathway of every individual life has its obstacles. Not only do we pass through cloud and sunshine, and along rough places and smooth, but sometimes we have to confront obstacles which seem to be as much beyond our power to move aside as the high mountain would be. But take courage, friend! for if you can't remove it, if you can't get it out of your way in an instant—as most of us in our impatience would like to do with all

our mountain-difficulties—yet by steady and persistent effort you may master the mountain and get the right side of it by and by. 2. But mountains are put, too, in Scripture as symbols of difficulties which lie in the way of Christ's conquest of the world. The Alps lay in the way of Hannibal and Napoleon when they were seeking to conquer Italy; and vaster mountains still seem to lie in the way of Christ's conquest of the world. The unwillingness of the people to listen to the message of reconciliation is a mighty mountain in the way of the victorious march of the Saviour; and even when they listen the unbelief and cold indifference of men stand out like a vast mountain with snowy summit and ice-bound sides. We might well believe that these difficulties would never be overcome if God had not said they should be. But God can make even these icy mountains shake and tremble and melt away. The thing that is impossible with men is possible with God. Out of these very mountains God can make a way. He can convert a Saul, the persecutor and unbeliever, into Paul, the persuasive preacher. And if we have faith we shall not only climb mountains by an incessant effort, but we shall be able to put some of them out of the way (Isa. xl. 4, 5). (*J. Clarke, B.A.*) *Mountains declare the majesty of God's handiwork:*—The majesty of the Creator is set forth anew in the recent classification of nature's vast work of what Warren Upham, of the United States Geological Survey, terms "mountain-building." Mr. Upham says that he finds six modes of mountain construction throughout the western hemisphere; namely: folded, arched, domed, tilted, erupted, and eroded. The Appalachian-Laurentian systems are specimens of the folded mountain range; parts of the Cordilleran belt in Western United States, of the arched construction; the Henry Mountains in southern Utah, of the domed; the Sierra Nevadas, of the tilted; the Andes range, of the erupted—as seen in the traces of grand volcanic-action throughout the entire extent; and lastly, the remnants of vast areas once uplifted, specimens of the eroded mode of mountain architecture. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 12. Both young men and maidens.—Happy work for everybody:—I. WHAT IT IS TO PRAISE THE LORD. Praise is the heart singing. We want the heart that sees and feels how kind our heavenly Father is, and loves Him for everything. One day as I was going along the road I saw a large coil of telegraph wire lying in a heap. There keeping itself all to itself, dull and heavy, it was the very last thing that you would ever expect to get any music out of. Soon afterwards, as we were going that way again, my little girl said to me, "Hark! what is that playing?" I pointed up to the wire—the same wire that lay coiled up in heavy silence. Now it was stretched along from post to post, and was making music the whole day through. And so it is with us. We keep our love in to ourselves and wrapped around ourselves, and then there is no music. But when our love stretches away to Jesus, then it makes the constant music of praise—at home or at school, at work or at play. **II. REASONS WHY WE SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD.** 1. Because He has loved us, and given Himself for us. 2. We are the only creatures in the world that can praise Him. After all, the dragons and great deeps can't really praise Him, nor the sun or stars. It is like the telegraph wire again. When the wind has come to the wire, then the music comes. The air that is in this chapel is blown into the organ, but it has no sound until it comes through the organ pipes. So all things in God's great world are dumb until they come to us. We are the harp and the organ by which their praise is to go up to heaven. 3. Praise is the only thing that we can give to the Lord. 4. Loving praise is the only thing that can satisfy our loving Lord. 5. It is the happy work that we shall do in heaven. Let us practise it down here. (*M. G. Pearse.*)

Ver. 13. Let them praise the name of the Lord.—Universal praise due to God:—I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO THE IRRATIONAL CREATURES. Although Nature is out of joint, yet even in its disruption I am surprised to find the almost universal happiness of the animal creation. On a summer day, when the air and the grass are most populous with life, you will not hear a sound of distress unless, perchance, a heartless schoolboy has robbed a bird's nest, or a hunter has broken a bird's wing, or a pasture has been robbed of a lamb, and there goes up a bleating from the flocks. The whole earth is filled with animal delight—joy feathered, and scaled, and horned, and hooved. The bee hums it; the frog croaks it; the squirrel chatters it; the quail whistles it; the lark carols it; the whale spouts it. The snail, the rhinoceros, the grizzly bear, the toad, the wasp, the spider, the

shell-fish have their homely delights—joy as great to them as our joy is to us. Goat climbing the rocks; anaconda crawling through the jungle; buffalo plunging across the prairie; crocodile basking in tropical sun; seal puffing on the ice, ostrich striding across the desert, are so many bundles of joy; they do not go moping or melancholy; they are not only half supplied; God says they are filled with good. The worms squirming through the sod upturned of ploughshare, and the ants racing up and down the hillock, are happy by day and happy by night. Take up a drop of water under the microscope, and you find that within it there are millions of creatures that swim in a hallelujah of gladness. The sounds in Nature that are repulsive to our ears are often only utterances of joy—the growl, the croak, the bark, the howl. The good God made these creatures, thinks of them ever, and will not let a ploughshare turn up a mole's nest, or fisherman's hooks transfix a worm, until, by Eternal decree, its time has come. God's hand feeds all these broods, and shepherds all these flocks, and tends all these herds. The sea anemone, half animal, half flower, clinging to the rock in mid-ocean, with its tentacles spread to catch its food, has the Owner of the universe to provide for it. We are repulsed at the hideousness of the elephant, but God, for the comfort and convenience of the monster, puts forty thousand distinct muscles in its proboscis. I go down on the barren seashore and say, "No animal can live in this place of desolation," but all through the sands are myriads of little insects that leap with happy life. I go down by the marsh and say, "In this damp place, and in these loathsome pools of stagnant water there will be the quietness of death"; but lo! I see the turtles on the rotten log sunning themselves, and hear the bogs quake with multitudinous life. When the unfledged robins are hungry, God shows the old robin where she can get food to put into their open mouths. Winter is not allowed to come until the ants have granaried their harvest and the squirrels have filled their cellar with nuts. God shows the hungry ichneumon where it may find the crocodile's eggs; and in Arctic climes there are animals that God so lavishly clothes that they can afford to walk through snow-storms in the finest sable, and ermine, and chinchilla, and no sooner is one set of furs worn out than God gives them a new one. He helps the spider in its architecture of its gossamer bridge, and takes care of the colour of the butterfly's wing, and tinges the cochineal, and helps the moth out of the chrysalis. The animal creation also has its army and navy. The most insignificant has its means of defence—the wasp its sting, the reptile its tooth, the bear its paw, the dog its muzzle, the elephant its tusk, the fish its scale, the bird its swift wing, the reindeer its antlers, the roe its fleet foot. We are repelled at the thought of sting, and tusk, and hoof, but God's goodness provides them for the defence of the animal's rights. II. THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORLD TO THE COMFORT AND HAPPINESS OF MAN. The sixth day of creation had arrived. The palace of the world was made, but there was no king to live in it. Leviathan ruled the deep; the eagle, the air; the lion, the field; but where was the sceptre which should rule all? A new style of being was created. Heaven and earth were represented in his nature. His body from the earth beneath; his soul from the heaven above. The one reminding him of his origin, the other speaking of his destiny—himself the connecting link between the animal creation and angelic intelligence. In him a strange commingling of the temporal and eternal, the finite and the infinite, dust and glory. The earth for his floor, and heaven for his roof; God for his Father; eternity for his lifetime. 1. The Christian anatomist, gazing upon the conformation of the human body, exclaims: "Fearfully and wonderfully made." No embroidery so elaborate, no gauze so delicate, no colour so exquisite, no mechanism so graceful, no handiwork so divine. So quietly and mysteriously does the human body perform its functions that it was not until five thousand years after the creation of the race that the circulation of the blood was discovered; and though anatomists of all countries and ages have been so long exploring this castle of life they have only begun to understand it. Volumes have been written of the hand. Wondrous instrument! Behold the eye, which, in its photographic gallery, in an instant catches the mountain and the sea. 2. I take a step higher, and look at man's mental constitution. Behold the benevolence of God in powers of perception, or the faculty of transporting this outside world into your own mind—gathering into your brain the majesty of the storm, and the splendours of the day-dawn, and lifting into your mind the ocean as easily as you might put a glass of water to your lips. Watch the law of association, or the mysterious linking together of all you ever thought, or knew, or felt, and then giving you the power

to take hold of the blue-line, and draw through your mind the long train with indescribable velocity—one thought starting up a hundred, and this again a thousand—as the chirp of one bird sometimes wakes a whole forest of voices, or the thrum of one string will rouse an orchestra. Watch your memory—that sheaf-binder, that goes forth to gather the harvest of the past, and bring it into the present. Your power and velocity of thought—thought of the swift wing and the lightning foot; thought that outspeeds the star, and circles through the heavens, and weighs worlds, and, from poising amid wheeling constellations, comes down to count the blossoms in a tuft of mignonette, then starts again to try the fathoming of the bottomless, and the scaling of the insurmountable, to be swallowed up in the incomprehensible, and lost in God! 3. I take a step higher, and look at man's moral nature. Made in the image of God. Vast capacity for enjoyment; capable at first of eternal joy, and, though now disordered, still, through the recuperative force of heavenly grace, able to mount up to more than its original felicity; faculties that may blossom and bear fruit inexhaustibly. Immortality written upon every capacity; a soul destined to range in unlimited spheres of activity long after the world has put on ashes, and the solar system shall have snapped its axle, and the stars that, in their courses, fought against Sisera, shall have been slain, and buried amid the tolling thunders of the last day. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 14. A people near unto Him.—Believers near to God:—I. THE POSITION OF THE PEOPLE NEAR TO GOD, OR THE RELATIONSHIP INDICATED BY NEARNESS. 1. A legal nearness. "Made nigh by the blood of Christ." 2. A covenant relationship. A solemn mutual pledge, sealed at the Cross. 3. A filial relationship. Not more certainly will affection be felt in the heart of both parent and child among the families of men than in the "Abba Father" of the believing soul, and the tender pity of God's gracious bosom. 4. A mystical union between Christ and the soul. All His becomes yours, and yours becomes His. 5. Partakers of the Divine nature. **II. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE PEOPLE NEAR TO GOD.** What shall we say to that protection which this nearness ensures to your soul, seeing that the place of your defence shall be the munitions of rocks, that your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure? Jehovah is like a wall of fire about His people. What shall we say of that provision made for you in this wilderness, where every possible want of the body and the soul meets its full and perpetual supply in the riches of Divine goodness, which are all pledged to you by the love and faithfulness of your covenant God? What shall we say of the promises "exceeding great and precious," made to all collectively, and to one by one personally. What shall we say of providences, all arranged by wisdom which never errs, and love which never fails, and controlled by power that is never weary, so as most effectually to promote the salvation of your souls? **III. THE TRANSFORMING EFFICACY OF THIS NEARNESS TO GOD.** See how it will and must operate from principles necessarily at work. 1. There is the solemnity of your position. If God's nearness be fairly and fully recognized, if He be seen as He is, and you seen as you are, in the light of His purity, will you, can you, dare you be contented to remain in the corruption of nature? 2. There is admiration of God's character. Let His character be seen and felt as revealed in the way of pardoning sin by the Cross in infinite power and wisdom, holiness and truth, all displayed in sweet harmony and ineffable glory, while mercy casts her bright radiance over them all to assure the trembling sinner, and constrain him to draw nigh; then can you see all these perfections engaged on the side of the sinner, engaged to sanctify and save his soul, and feel not a lofty admiration of the beauty of the Lord? 3. But admiration begets desire. If we feel admiration for any person, do we not wish to make him a friend? The moment that admiration of anything ceases, desire to have and enjoy it ceases too. But the beauty of the Lord is manifested to your faith just that you may feel the kindlings of desire to be His, and to be like Him in His loveliness. 4. But surely the soul that has such desires will frequently, solemnly, and closely commune with this infinitely lovely and blessed God. Such communion gives a consciousness of the reality of Divine things, and is fitted to stir you up and spur you on in the effort to become like your God. It thus necessarily leads to—5. Imitation. This is the end of the process, imitation of "God manifest in the flesh." His Word will make you wise. His truth will render you truthful. His justice will move you to rectitude. His sovereignty will make and keep you lowly. His purity will lead

you to holiness of heart. His mercy and pity will make you tender, and loving, and gentle. (*John Walker.*) *Nearness to God*:—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS TRUE BELIEVERS ARE NEAR TO GOD. 1. The awful breach is healed, and they are reconciled. The separating wall of sin is broken down, and they have boldness and access with confidence to Him who would otherwise be a consuming fire. 2. The power of sin is subdued, and they are near as to union and likeness. Nearness, as to the former, is by the blood of Christ: the latter is by the influences of the Holy Spirit. 3. They are near as to communion and fellowship. Jacob had his Bethel, David his hill Mizar, and Paul, though sometimes pressed out of measure, had also his raptures in the third heavens (Isa. xii. 1). 4. They are near to Him in a way of endearment, being precious in His sight. They are near to His heart, and to His eye, and His ear is open to their complaints. 5. They are so near to Him that they will soon be with Him—at home, and at rest. Faith gives you an interest in the Divine favour, and death will bring you to the full enjoyment of it. Your warfare shall be accomplished, and the victory complete. II. THE REASONS WHY THIS NEARNESS IS MATTER OF EXULTATION AND JOY. 1. This nearness is lasting: those who are thus brought near to God shall be for ever near. 2. Those who are near to God have God also near to them. He will guide, protect, and comfort His people amidst all their difficulties and dangers. 3. They have blessings and privileges which none else can enjoy. They may hear from Him, and He from them; may contemplate His glorious majesty, and commune with Him, as it were, face to face. 4. Being near to God, they are also near to heaven. Improvement—(1) How vain are all our hopes of happiness without God (Ps. lxxiii. 27). (2) Let us be reconciled to those providences which tend to bring us near. The severest trials are often among the means which God employs to bring us to Himself. (3) Let nearness to God be the object sought after in every holy duty, both public and private. We may as well be in Geshur as at Jerusalem, unless we see the King's face. (4) Not only let us desire to be brought near in a way of interest, but to keep near in a way of communion. This will soften afflictions, heighten our mercies, fortify us against the fear of death, and be our best preparative for heaven. (5) If the Lord's people be near and dear to Him, let them be so to us. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The privilege of dwelling near to God*:—Communion with Christ is the happiest life. If you gained all the world, and did not lose your soul, but only lost the light of Christ's countenance for a few days, you would make a poor bargain. There is heaven in every glance of His eye. There is infinite joy in every word of His mouth when He speaks comfortably to His servants. Go not away from Him. Be like Milton's angel, who lived in the sun. Abide in Christ, and let His words abide in you. Closer, closer, closer, this is the way to spiritual wealth. To follow afar off, and live at a distance from Christ, even if it does not make your soul to perish, yet it will wither up your joys, and make you feel an unhappy man, an unhappy woman. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

PSALM CXLIX.

VERS. 1-9. *Sing unto the Lord a new song.*—*The song of the saints*:—1. The elect, regenerate, or true believers have a song of their own for mercies proper to them, beside the praise which they have to give for the Lord's work round about them, and therefore they have a proper reason to praise God for their own particular. 2. The song of the redeemed elect and converted is a new song which shall never wax old, nor be cut off, an everlasting song. 3. It is God's ordinance that the worshippers of the Lord should have assemblies and meetings wherein publicly and jointly they may glorify the Lord in proclaiming cheerfully His praise. (*D. Dickson.*) *Cumulative praise*:—Mr. Moody says: "There is much more said in the Bible about praise than about prayer. The Psalms are nothing but praise, and as David got nearer the end of the journey he seems to have thought of little else. So it is with Christians—the nearer they get to heaven, the more they praise God. Everything that God has created except the heart of man praises Him. I knew a man who always used to praise God under any circumstances.

One day he came in with a severe cut on his finger, and said, 'Praise God, I didn't cut it off.' Let us also praise God that our misfortunes are no worse."

Ver. 2. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.—*The children of Zion joyful in their King*:—I. BELIEVERS IN THEIR CHARACTER AS "THE CHILDREN OF ZION." 1. Zion is here used as the name of "the kingdom" of which all believers are the subjects. 2. But while believers are subjects they are also children. (1) They entered "the Kingdom" by birth—"born of God." (2) Inherit it—"brethren of Christ"—"sons of God"—"heirs of God"—joint-heirs, etc. (3) High place in the Kingdom—children's interests and affection. "Behold, what manner of love," etc. II. JESUS CHRIST IN HIS CHARACTER AND OFFICE OF "KING OF ZION." 1. Anointed. "I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." 2. A Legislator. "The Lord is our Lawgiver." 3. An Administrator. "Zion, Thy God reigneth." 4. He subdues to His laws. (1) His people are under authority. (2) None else can, without sin, be called the King of Zion. (3) Believers must not yield obedience to any other in Zion. (4) Submission to Christ's officers is submission to Christ. 5. He defends His subjects (Gal. iv. 22). III. THE CHILDREN OF ZION "JOYFUL." 1. Joy—a fruit of the Spirit—"Rejoice in the Lord." 2. Joy—a command—"Be joyful." 3. Joy—a feeling, often beautifully expressed in the prophecies and "songs of Zion." 4. This joy a most natural and proper feeling. They possess—(1) Deliverance. (2) Acquaintance. (3) Safety. IV. THE CHILDREN OF ZION "JOYFUL IN THEIR KING." They rejoice—1. Because Jesus Christ the Lord reigneth. 2. Because of His greatness and glory. (1) He is a Divine King—the Eternal God. (2) He is a Kinsman and Brother. (3) He is a Redeeming King. 3. Because of the blessings which He has and gives. 4. Because of the relations in which He stands to them. 5. Because of what He has done for His people—for them—in them. 6. Because of what He will still do for His people—(1) For each of them. (2) For the whole house. (a) On earth. (b) In Heaven—throughout eternity. (J. Stewart.) *The children of Zion joyful in their King*:—I. BELIEVERS ARE "THE CHILDREN OF ZION." 1. Zion is often used as an emblem of the Church of God (Ps. ii. 6; Isa. xxviii. 16; Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 6). (1) It was stable (Ps. cxxv. 1); so is the Church (Matt. xvi. 18). (2) It was secure (Ps. xlviii. 3, 11, 12); so is the Church (Eph. v. 29). (3) The situation of Zion was exceeding beautiful (Ps. xlviii. 2); so is that of the Church (Matt. v. 14). (4) Zion was a holy mountain; because on Mount Moriah, which joined it on the north-east, the temple of God was built (2 Chron. iii. 1; Ps. xlviii. 1); the Church is holy (Eph. v. 27). (5) Mount Zion was peculiarly loved by God (Ps. lxxxviii. 2); so is the Church (Eph. v. 25). 2. Believers are children of Zion by birth. Naturally we are all "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise" (Eph. ii. 11, 12). 3. Believers can continue children of Zion no longer than while they retain faith (Heb. x. 38). 4. Zion is emblematic of heaven (Heb. xii. 22; Rev. xiv. 1; 1 Cor. ii. 9; Rev. xxii. 4, 10–27). 5. Believers are children of Zion by a title to heaven (Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. i. 18; Col. i. 12; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4). II. BELIEVERS HAVE A "KING." 1. Royalty is the centre of supremacy. A king is a supreme governor. God in this sense is the King of believers. 2. Royalty is the source of legislation. God is the Legislator of His people. His code is more pure than any ever conceived by the human mind for the perfection of human jurisprudence (Rom. vii. 12). 3. Royalty is the fountain of protection (Job i. 10; Ps. v. 12; xxvii. 1; xxxvii. 17, 39; lv. 22; cxviii. 8–12; cxlvi. 3–6). III. BELIEVERS SHOULD BE "JOYFUL IN THEIR KING." 1. Because He is the most glorious and dignified of all beings. (1) Consider His nature. He is the independent Jehovah. (2) Consider His moral attributes. 2. Because by His charter they enjoy great privileges and immunities. He communicates to them through His Spirit an evidence of their acceptance (Rom. viii. 16); and through His Word exceeding great and precious promises (2 Pet. i. 4). They possess peace and joy (Rom. xiv. 17; xv. 13). 3. Because the monuments of their great men are protected. The Bible is a record of the saints. In it are contained monuments of their patience, meekness, courage, faith and heavenly-mindedness. Here we are taught to admire their virtues, and excited to follow their example (Heb. xi.; vi. 12). 4. Because their enemies are totally inefficient to disturb His government (Deut. xxxiii. 26–29; Ps. xciii. 1). 5. Because His kingdom will ultimately be universal, and all opposing powers will be destroyed. IV. REMARKS. 1. How great and glorious is the moral elevation of a believer, and how insignificant does

the honour of this world appear contrasted with the dignity of a Christian! 2. How great should be our solicitude to become subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Jehovah. 8. How indefatigable should we be in spreading the knowledge of God by personal instruction, by example, and by the dedication of property, talents and influence! (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Believers joyful in their King*.—I. THE LORD JESUS IS OUR KING. 1. He is in person and character pre-eminent—above all others even of the saintliest, and wisest, and noblest. 2. To each believer He is a King to be obeyed. When His blood cleanses us, His love rules us. 8. He is King in the midst of His Church. Secular courts have no authority in the Kingdom of Jesus. 4. He will be seen to be King in the day of His second advent. II. HIS ROYAL CHARACTER. 1. Was there ever such a Prince as our Emmanuel, if we think of His person, His pedigree, His descent, His nature? This King of ours is not only the flower and crown of manhood, but He is also very God of very God. He is God over all, blessed for ever: the Son of the Highest. 2. His deeds of love to us. 3. His glorious achievements. 4. The principles of His government. They are fountains of peace and purity. III. THE BENEFITS OF HIS REIGN. 1. He is the Creator of His own empire. Each one of us must own for himself, and all of us together unitedly, that He hath made us, and not we ourselves; by His sovereign grace He has chosen, and redeemed, and called, and sanctified us, therefore will we be joyful in Him. 2. While our King has created His own kingdom, He has also sanctified and sustained that kingdom. Let the streams rejoice in the fountain, let the walls of the temple be joyful in the foundation. 3. It is He who has saved us and given us peace. 4. Is there anything that is needful which He has not given? Is there anything that is good that He has withheld? Have we any virtue? Have we any praise? Then not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be the glory. Nor is it alone in the past and in the present that we are debtors; we look forward to a future of obligations. IV. LET US BE JOYFUL IN THE CONTINUANCE OF THE REDEEMER'S REIGN. 1. The ages past have not taken away from the length of His reign. 2. The age of our King has not enfeebled Him. 3. As to His Kingdom, there is no fear of its failing. V. LET US OBEY HIM WITH DELIGHT. Let us take into our hands a duty and a thanksgiving, a precept and a praise. Let us make up our whole life of the intertwisting of duty and delight. Let us be holy and happy. Let us turn obedience into gladness. That which else were drudgery we will exalt to a priestly sacrificing as we serve the Lord with gladness and rejoice before Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Our King in joy*.—The Book of Psalms ends in a sacred tumult of joyous praise. He who ends this life with praising God will in like manner begin the next. Let us begin below the music which shall be prolonged through eternity. Like the birds let us welcome the break of day, which, when life is closing, faith discerns to be near. Concerning this joy, note—I. IT IS PECULIAR TO A CERTAIN PEOPLE. "Let the children of Zion be joyful," etc. No others can be. But ye children of Zion, be thus joyful—1. Because of your loyalty. Ye delight to think that "the Lord reigneth." But we are also—2. Attached to His Person. It is not merely His throne, but Himself, that is dear to us. When any thus rejoice they sink themselves in Him, and this heightens our joy. And so does the admiration we feel for Him. II. THIS JOY HAS A MOST PROPER OBJECT. For we should rejoice to be ruled by Him, and that He is Lord of all, and that His power is so great, and His glory likewise. The old poem of one of our writers sings of the "Man of Ross," and declares that every good thing in the town is owing to him and his benevolence. So that if you asked, "Who built this fountain?" or, "Who founded yonder school?" the one answer was, "The Man of Ross." So surely if you ask us concerning our privileges, our hopes, yea, the vast all that we possess, our answer is, "We owe them all to our King." Therefore let us be joyful in Him. III. THIS JOY IS PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE. Everything here below is uncertain. Many are the reasons for our disquietude. Nevertheless let us be joyful in our King. Yes, though ministers and Church members fall off from true doctrine; though there be many backsliding Christians, and so few zealous and really Christ-like; though our own hearts be so cold, our prayers so unworthy, our work so scanty and our fruit so rare. Your bottle, like Hagar's, may be dry, but yonder is the well of water which never can fail you. And when you come to die, then will be the time to be more than ever joyful in your King. IV. THIS JOY HAS CERTAIN OCCASIONS FOR ITS MORE ESPECIAL DISPLAY. When does a nation rejoice in its king? At his coronation. So, when Christ was crowned in our souls. At

the royal marriage. So, when Christ united us to Himself. When peace is proclaimed after war. So, when peace was made in and for our souls. At victories. When He keeps His jubilee. On his levée days, when He receives His friends. V. AND THIS JOY IS SURE TO HAVE PRACTICAL RESULTS. An Eastern merchant of great wealth had in his employ a workman of great skill and genius in all works of art. But by some means this workman had fallen deeply into debt, and was sinking deeper day by day. He grew more and more depressed, and as he sank in spirit his old skill and power declined with it. Each product of his hand revealed less power. Meanwhile his creditor became more and more exacting, and at last threatened to sell the poor man's children as slaves, according to the law of the land, unless he was paid his debt. This weighed yet more heavily upon the poor man's soul, and his work was worse and worse. At length the merchant inquired of his steward how it was that this workman, once so renowned, was now producing nothing worthy of his former fame. "No masterpieces come from him now, and our name suffers in the market and in the esteem of the merchants. How is all this?" "My lord," said the steward, "he is daily of a sorrowful countenance and forgets to eat bread. He keeps a long and cruel fast, for he is drowned in debt and that to a cruel creditor, and his soul pines like the heath of the desert, and therefore his hand is slow as that of an herdsman, and his eye dull as that of the owl in sunlight. And this is why his hand hath forgot all its wonted cunning." "Send for him, bring him hither," said his lord. He came. His lord told him that his debt should be all paid, and he and his set free. How that man worked afterwards! (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. **For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people.**—*The objects of the Divine delight:*—I. **THE PEOPLE REFERRED TO.** 1. They bear the Lord's name. They are His disciples, subjects, servants, soldiers. 2. They bear the Lord's image (2 Pet. i. 4). 3. They possess the Lord's Spirit. He directs, comforts, and sanctifies them. 4. They are zealous for the Lord's glory. II. **THE LORD'S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE.** 1. In their persons. 2. In their graces. 3. In their services. 4. In all their concerns. 5. At all times, and in all circumstances. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The Lord's delight in His people, and His designs towards them:*—I. **THE DELIGHT WHICH THE LORD HAS IN HIS SAINTS.** 1. Who are the Lord's people? "The meek." (1) As it respects God, it implies poverty of spirit; humiliation of heart arising from a sense of guilt, and a feeling of corruption; submission and resignation to His will; silence and patience under His rod, and a surrender of our own natural desires and inclinations to His overruling appointments. (2) As it respects man, it comprehends lowliness of mind, and a readiness to prefer others before ourselves; gentleness of disposition and behaviour; forbearance under provocations. 2. Why does He take pleasure in them? Because they are His people, purchased by His blood, renewed by His Spirit, redeemed by His power. 3. In what respects does He take pleasure in them? (1) He delights in the exercise of their graces towards Him. (2) In their services. (3) In their prosperity. II. **HIS GRACIOUS DESIGNS CONCERNING THEM.** 1. The happy effects of religion even in the present life. 2. They are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son"; and when they awake up in another world, it will be after His likeness, without any remaining blemish, defect, or spot. (*E. Cooper.*) *God's pleasure in His people:*—I. **THE CLASS OF CHARACTER DESCRIBED.** 1. The title they bear. "His people"—(1) By Divine choice. (2) By regenerating grace. (3) By personal dedication. 2. The spirit they evince. A humble, contrite spirit, softened by the power of Divine grace, and melted by the love and compassion of Christ. II. **THE EXTENT OF PRIVILEGE ENJOYED.** 1. As the objects of Divine complacency. 2. As the subjects of the Divine munificence. (1) The inestimable blessing—salvation. This consists in a deliverance from evil, and the enjoyment of all good—pardon, peace, joy, hope, heaven. (2) The manner of its application. "Beautify." How beautiful does the believer appear, arrayed in the garments of salvation, clothed with the robe of righteousness, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit—worshipping God in the beauty of holiness—going to the sanctuary to behold the beauty of the Lord. How beautiful, with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. How beautiful, laden with the fruits of righteousness, and resigned to the will of God under trials. How beautiful in death! (*E. Temple.*) *God's delight in His people:*—I believe that every true sculptor can see in the block of marble the statue that he means to make. I doubt not that the artist could see the Laocoon of the Vatican after he had chipped for a little time the figure of

the serpent, and the father, and the sons all standing out in that wondrous group, long before anybody else could see it. And the Lord takes pleasure in His people because He can see us as we shall be. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but it does appear to Him. In the case of His mind and the shaping of His eternal purpose He knows, dear sister, though you are now struggling with your fears, what you will be when you shall stand before the blazing lamps of the eternal throne. He knows, young man, though you have but a few days turned from sin, and begun to struggle with vice, what you will be when, with all the blood-washed host, you shall cast your crown before His throne. Yes, the Lord takes delight in His people as knowing what they are yet to be. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **He will beautify the meek with salvation.**—*Beautiful for ever*.—I. THE CHARACTER TO BE AIMED AT. 1. Towards God. Entire submission to—(1) His teaching. (2) His chastening. (3) All the influences of His Spirit. 2. Towards men—gentleness. 3. In themselves—lowliness. II. THE FAVOUR TO BE ENJOYED BY THEM. 1. Peace of mind. 2. Delightful contentment. 3. Great joy. 4. Holy character. As men and women, who are what they ought to be in Christ, grow old, their temper mellows, and their whole spirit ripens. III. THE GOOD RESULTS TO BE EXPECTED. 1. God will be glorified. 2. By our meekness Christ is manifested. 3. This meekness makes a Christian attractive. If we want to draw others to Christ, we must let them see how sweetly blessed is the Christian life, and how a man can be sternly upright, and yet at the same time be blessedly cheerful,—how he can be dead against sin, and yet full of holy love to the sinner,—how he would not, to save his life, budge an inch from that which is right and true, and yet would give his life away if by blessing another he might bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord beautify us thus with salvation, and great good will come of it! (*Ibid.*) *The meek beautified with salvation*.—I. THEIR CHARACTER. "Meek"—1. Towards God. (1) Under the Word of God—its threatenings, commands, truths and doctrine. (2) Under the dispensations of His providence. 2. Towards man. The Christian knows that others have as much or more to bear with him than he has to bear with from others; this tends to humble him, and to keep him meek. He endeavours to "show all meekness to all men"; "in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves." II. BEAUTIFIED WITH SALVATION. 1. The garment of salvation. It was wrought out by the Son of God, and, like Himself, is "holy and without spot." 2. The graces of salvation (Gal. v. 22, 23). 3. The glory of salvation. How beautiful will he be with the palm of victory in his hand, and the crown of glory on his head, and sitting down, with the wedding-garment wrought by the Son of God Himself, at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! (*W. Bolland, M.A.*) *Beauty*.—To be religious is just to be like Jesus, and salvation, in the text, means religion; the meek there spoken of are persons who are gentle, and sweet, and kind. Now, there is something beautiful about the gentle, and sweet, and kind, although they may not be religious. How much greater, then, must be the beauty of such persons when they have, with their good qualities, religion also, with all its heavenly sweetness! Religion is not equally beautiful in all who profess to have it; a disagreeable temper may mar that beauty. The chief beauty of religion is found in the gentle, and sweet, and kind. And this beauty is seen in the face of religious people and also in all their kind acts. Bad tempers and unkind dispositions make the faces of people ugly, while sweet tempers and kind dispositions make them pretty. It is very hard to beautify some people even with religion. Some are sweet in temper and some are sour. It is a difficult thing for an artist, out of a piece of wood that is tough, and crooked, and knotted, to carve a beautiful image. And so it is not an easy task, out of some one in disposition very much like that piece of wood, to make a religious person beautiful in face and in action. But this can be done. Now, if the heathen man in old times, without any one helping him, learned to be gentle and sweet and kind, there is no one, surely, no matter how bad the disposition may be, who cannot, with God helping, learn the same lesson. I am sure that you all want to be beautiful. How can you become so? Some people think that any one can be made beautiful by wearing rich clothes and nice ornaments; but this is not what the Bible teaches us. It says (1 Pet. iii. 3, 4). Every child can have such adorning by getting and keeping a sweet religious disposition, and by doing kindly religious acts. We have seen such beauty as this. At first, may be, we thought that some one had not a bit of beauty, but we found in that one a lovely soul and saw a lovely life; and then the plain face changed at once, and, in our sight, it became, like the soul and life,

lovely too. (W. L. Spottswood.) *Transfigured*.—One of the most beautiful sights in the world is the Bay of Naples. No one who has ever seen it on a quiet summer evening, and watched it as the night gathered and through the darkness the flashes of fire from the summit of Vesuvius, like some torch of God, lighted it, can ever forget the scene. But scientific men tell us that that lovely Bay of Naples is the crater of a worn-out and flooded volcano. In the early morning of the world's history it was perhaps the greatest volcano on earth; it belched forth from its heart floods of seething lava. At last it sank down and down, its fiery heart was quelled, the lava ceased to flow, and in from the Mediterranean, perhaps first in some glorious day of storm, swept the white caps of the sea and overflowed the crater and filled it full, and to-day the beautiful waters lie in peace and mirror back the shining heavens above. So many of our lives are like the crater. Passions have swept over us and left us worn out. But God's grace can fill our empty lives and make them sweet and beautiful and peaceful. (*Sunday Circle*.)

Ver. 5. **Let the saints be joyful in glory.**—*The saints in glory*.—I. **THEIR NAME.** "Saints." 1. Because they are separated. Not the world, or the god of this world, but the God who made and redeemed them, is their Master and Lord; God's service is their service; God's will is their law; God's Word is their rule. 2. Because they are sanctified. By the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus their eyes are turned away from viewing vanities, and are turned towards holy objects of contemplation. II. **THEIR HONOUR.** "In glory." 1. The state of glory. Heaven—eternal rest, but not inaction. 2. The place of glory. The holy city is all glorious, "having the glory of God," within, above, and around. Its sky is ever cloudless, its light is ever clear, its sun never sets, and its day never ends. 3. The society of glory. 4. An eternity of glory. III. **THEIR JOYFULNESS.** 1. Wholly joyful. 2. All joyful. 3. Ever joyful. (*G. Robson.*) *Hallelujah*.—Once, when the seraphic Samuel Rutherford was preaching, he came ere long to speak on the high praises of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was a theme upon which he was at home, and when he reached that point, and had spoken a little upon it, the Duke of Argyle, who was in the congregation, cried out, "Now you are on the right strain, man; hold on to that." I. **SOME REASONS FOR PRAISE.** 1. The delight of God in His people—their prayers, and their praises. 2. The beauty He puts upon His people. This text may be read in three different ways. First, as in our version, "He will beautify the meek with salvation!" Next, "He will beautify the afflicted with deliverance." Hear that, you afflicted ones; jot it down for your comfort. And, next, "He will beautify the meek with victory." The men that cannot fight shall be beautified with victory. When the fighting men and those that stood up for their own rights will find themselves covered with shame, "He will beautify the meek with victory." II. **SPECIAL PHASES OF PRAISE.** 1. *Glorying in God.* By anticipation and by foretaste we have already obtained the life eternal, therefore, "let the saints be joyful in glory." "I cannot get up to that," says one. Try. At any rate, get as far as this: wherever there is grace there will be glory. Grace is the egg, and glory is the hatching of it. Grace is the seed, and glory is the plant that comes out of it. Having the egg and the seed, we have practically and virtually the glory; therefore, "Let the saints be joyful in glory." 2. The next special kind of praise is joy in special circumstances: "Let them sing aloud upon their beds." (1) This is a message for the time of sickness. Praise the Lord when you are ill; sing to His glory when you cannot sleep; sing when the head aches, for that is the highest kind of praise that comes out of the body that is racked with pain. "Let them sing aloud upon their beds." (2) Your bed? Why, that is the place of seclusion! There you are alone. Commune with God upon your beds, and sing His praises, if not aloud with the voice, yet aloud with the heart. (3) Upon your bed? Why, that is the place of domestic gathering; for the bed here meant is a couch, on which the Orientals reclined when they ate. Sing the Lord's praises on your couches; that is, when you gather in your families. (4) The bed of death. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 9. **This honour have all His saints.**—*The honour paid to saints departed*.—The honour here alluded to is that of being special favourites with heaven and instruments in the hand of God for the conversion of sinners to repentance. "Saint," in its original meaning, is a person set apart for the service of God, and in that sense "holy." This was the general title of Christians in the New

Testament. They were considered as persons separating themselves from the rest of the world, professing and practising holiness in all manner of conversation.

I. WHAT HONOUR IN FACT WAS PAID TO THEM AFTER THEIR DECEASE. 1. From the records of the primitive Church it appears that, whilst the number of converts in each place of worship would admit of it, the names of all who had departed this life in communion with their brethren were particularly recited with praise to God, and offered with great solemnity at the altar in the Eucharistical service. 2. As the increase of numbers soon rendered this usage impracticable, a general oblation of them was substituted in the room of it. (1) The general oblation of praise to God for all His saints departed we make upon a peculiar festival, marked out by our Church for this pious purpose. Even for the glorious company of the apostles, for the goodly fellowship of the prophets, for the noble army of martyrs; and indeed for the holy Church which hath been throughout all the world. (2) Our more particular acknowledgments of praise to Him for the illustrious examples and pious labours of His most eminent and renowned champions we reserve (as Christians did in the time of Tertullian) for the yearly return of their respective martyrdoms. (3) By both we plainly symbolize with the practice of the Church in her earliest and purest ages. **II. WHAT OF THIS KIND IS, OR IS NOT, PROPER TO BE PAID THEM.** 1. The limitations to be set to it. (1) The saints departed are no fit objects of our prayer to them, are entitled to no sort of religious worship from us (Matt. iv. 10; Rev. xxii. 8, 9). (2) But may we not be permitted to ask the intercession of saints departed, and through their mediation with the Lord of all things, in whose Presence we may suppose them standing, to seek a redress of our several grievances, and a supply of our respective wants? Not not this! For as we have but one God, so we have but one Mediator (1 Tim. ii. 5). (3) If any degrees of a supposed uneasiness in departed souls, upon the delay of the resurrection, should be conceived to require our prayers and intercessions that God would remove or lighten them, these the charity of our Church hath indulged to us in her burial office, where we beseech Almighty God that it may please Him of His gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom; that so we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of His holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in His eternal and everlasting glory. 2. What of this sort may with safety be allowed to us? (1) We are to praise God for the benefit of their labours, through which we have been brought out of darkness and error into His marvellous light. (2) The lustre of their example is another circumstance deserving our praises to God, which will best be expressed in our imitation of it. (3) From the rest which they now enjoy from their labours, and from the blessedness of those who die in the Lord, we may comfort ourselves with the prospect of following them, and of partaking with them in the joy of our common Master. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *The best lot the common lot.*—Our present aim is to point out some of the choice gifts and privileges which pertain to all saints, but of which through mistaken ideas many deprive themselves; our anxiety is to encourage the most distrustful of God's people to claim the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. We specify—I. COMMUNION WITH GOD. That all have a personal and equal access to the heavenly Father is a precious truth. 1. Yet thousands, from a sense of personal unworthiness, touch not the sacramental cup, shutting themselves out from this fellowship with their dying Lord. They cheerfully acknowledge a fitness in others, whilst they sorrowfully fail to find that fitness in themselves. "This honour have all His saints." If Christ received only perfect ones to His table, He would sit there alone; but He receives sincere souls, whatever may be their faults, and sitting with Him they become perfect. 2. This same self-depreciation expresses itself in the straitened supplication and lowered expectancy of many of God's people. The Old Testament is full of glorious records of the power of prayer; the New Testament is not less rich in similar instances; and we know still that God's ear is not heavy nor His arm shortened. Here, again, we bring in the idea of privilege, and limit marked answers to prayer and large answers to prayer to special men and extraordinary times. Yet is God's Word most clear in this matter, levelling all up to the open throne. In our sorrow, feebleness, want, danger, fear, any of us may come to God with the confidence of Moses, the importunity of Jacob, the undeniableness of Daniel, the sweet, filial freedom of Jesus Himself. Let us act like princes of God. **II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** There is unquestionably much that is sovereign in the gifts and movements of the Spirit

of God. Gifts of healing, utterance, interpretation, etc., are peculiar to certain epochs and persons. The Spirit divideth "to every man severally as He will." But the grandest influences of the Holy Ghost—His enlightening, quickening, purifying powers—are imparted without partiality. His sovereign gifts and appointments are secondary; His essential and choicer influence is poured forth with undistinguishing richness on all receptive hearts. Let us make the great surrender, let us live in resolute purity, and concealed depths of our nature shall be broken up, unsuspected powers evoked, latent forces and talents shall surprise us into greatness. Those who can hardly stammer a testimony shall become clear and bold as golden trumpets filled with God's breath; the coldest glow as shining braziers full of live coals; the harshest characters become "musical instruments, and that of all sorts"; the weak pottery strong and bright as adamant; the coarse, crooked instrument a polished shaft; and the vessels of wood and iron shall be transmuted into vessels of alabaster and gold full of incense and odours.

III. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT. For each doubting soul there is assurance: a scroll for every bosom. The prodigal son moaned: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants"; and this sentiment of mistrust is so deep in our heart we fail to see when the robe and ring are positively ours. Seek the sense of sonship as something belonging to you, waiting for you, and you shall not walk in darkness. Seek it with resolution. Plead for it in this very hour.

IV. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION. We believe in the ability and purpose of Christ to cleanse us from every defilement, and to keep us in perfect purity of flesh and spirit. But are all to be thus saved? Here we falter. We think some are destined to attain pre-eminent excellence, whilst others must abide frail and faulty. Is the young student taught that some impracticable barrier separates him from the highest intellectual excellence? On the contrary, he is taught to cherish a sense of brotherhood with the illustrious spirits of all time. And it would be fraught with endless mischief if we were to deny the student the hope of utmost mental eminence. Surely then we ought to hesitate to place any gulf between the grandest characters of the Church of God and the lowliest of its members. The purpose of God is not realized in the occasional brilliant fruition of a Leighton, a Baxter, a David Stoner or a John Smith; God watches over His vineyard, watering it every moment, to the end that every flower should be full of beauty, every plant reach the ideal grace, every branch bend with the largest, ripest clusters.

V. EVEN INTO OUR ULTIMATE GLORIFICATION we carry the depreciating idea of ourselves. Many of God's people live with the hope of just getting through at last; they believe "they shall not arrive in the ship, but float ashore on a plank"; they figure to themselves some subordinate place in heaven they will be thankful to secure. A false humility is about as bad as a false ambition; and it will be well for us, thinking as meanly as we please about ourselves, to cherish to the full the great promises and immortal hopes of Christianity. (W. L. Watkinson.)

PSALM CL.

VERS. 1-6. Praise God in His sanctuary.—*Worship*.—I. ITS SPIRIT IS EXULTATION. Is there gratitude in it? Yes, gratitude of the highest type and degree, and gratitude is an element of joy. Is there admiration in it? Yes, admiration of supreme excellence, and the mind admiring beauty, whether artistic or natural, physical or moral, is the mind in rapture. Is adoration in it? Yes, adoration of the most transcendent order, the adoration of ineffable excellence, and the mind adoring is the mind in ecstasy. Talk not of worship as a means to heaven, it is heaven itself.

II. ITS REASON IS SUPREME. Praise God—1. Because of His works. (1) Creation. (2) Redemption. 2. Because of His transcendent excellence. III. ITS OBLIGATION IS UNIVERSAL. (David Thomas, D.D.) *The hallelujah chorus*.—Throughout the last five psalms we discover no wail of penitence, but a heightening tone of jubilant and adoring praise. The melody swells higher and louder until it reaches its climax in the "doxology" or "hallelujah chorus" of this psalm, where everything that breathes is summoned to join in the grand oratorio!

It is a fitting finish to such a splendid collection of spiritual songs. Praise is the poetry of worship—the loftiest mood of the devout soul—the outflow of adoring affection—the rhythmic language of holy joy and loving gratitude. I. *Where* the chorus is to be rendered (ver. 1). The song and the sanctuary, the chorus and the cathedral, are admirably suited to each other. II. *Why* (ver. 2). For His “mighty acts” in daily life, according to the “excellent greatness” of His love as Father, compassion as Benefactor, power as Deliverer. III. *How* (vers. 3–5). “Whoever despises music,” says Luther, “I am displeased with him. Next to theology, I give a place to music, for thereby all anger is forgotten, the devil is driven away, melancholy, many tribulations, and evil thoughts are expelled. It is the solace of a desponding mind.” IV. *By whom* (ver. 6). Here the psalmist reaches the climax in his exhortation; he has exhausted language; he can particularize no more; he rushes to the culmination; he demands a universal outburst of adoration; he calls upon all in whom the breath of life is to help swell the “hallelujah chorus!” O what a thrilling crash of melody! what a volume of perfect harmony, when animate and inanimate creation, with all creatures, rising rank upon rank, order above order, species above species, purged from corruption, delivered from all evil, and attuned to the euphony of the skies—when “everything that hath breath,” the consecrated breath Divine—“shall join in one harmonious song, and crown Him Lord of all!” (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The evolution of praise*:—Have you ever noticed the general advance which is presented in the Book of Psalms from the confessions, prayers, and conflicts of the earlier parts of the book to the truly sublime outburst of praise which, in the 150th Psalm, crowns the whole, and leaves us purely praising the Lord in an endless hallelujah? This advance, checked and broken at times, going back and standing still, and then pressing forward again, is a reflection of all Christian life, and is specially to be observed in the life of prayer. 1. As a general rule it is likely that the life of prayer finds its earliest expression in asking God for earthly gifts, deliverances, and helps. But some never pass far beyond this stage. I am in pain; I cry to God to relieve me. I want greatly to succeed at an examination, and I pray about it. My father or mother is ill, and I go to my own room, and, perhaps in a flood of tears, implore Him to make my loved one well. I have, later on, difficulties about money: I pray God to help me in some unexpected way. Definite petition for tangible earthly good is the first step in this “Jacob’s ladder” of prayer. 2. Time passes on, and brings the strange experience of the soul’s awaking. The thought of spiritual realities surrounding us is borne in with vivid freshness on the heart. I learn that I have sinned, and that God is holy. Judgment to come is a real thing. I must live for ever, and where shall that eternity be passed? “Out of the depths I cry unto the Lord,” and I say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” I ask a direct gift, but it is now no earthly blessing that I crave, but life for my sinful soul: “I am a sinner; save me, O Lord; Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me” (Ps. xxxii; li.; cxxx.). This is a prayer for every stage. Were it not so, our Lord’s own Prayer would, after a time, in Christian experience, go out of date. Yet here, again, the fact is observed that, as we go forward, these petitions form a smaller proportion of our prayers. There are other things which, to a great extent, come to press more on the soul for utterance. 3. For, thirdly, comes the long period of conflict and of self-discipline, during which our greatest desire is for growth in grace; for the development, under the Holy Spirit’s direction and help, of the life of holiness. This noontide, as it may be called, of the Christian’s day is a time of self-cultivation, of imitation of Christ, of temptation, fall, and rising again; of Christian work; of growing knowledge and experience. “Teach me to do Thy will, O my God; show me the way in which I should walk.” And here, again, the Book of Psalms is a very storehouse of petitions. In the greater part of this book you find an almost endless variety of states of religious life and feeling. 4. Up to this stage prayer for our own selves, our body, soul, and spirit, has filled up most of our interest. But now, as love and sympathy grow—direct results of the grace which has been given through those earlier stages of prayer—we begin to find a habit of intercession developing within us. The family is the limit of our first real intercession. But the circle soon widens. It widens when we come to love our Sunday scholars, our school companions, our near neighbours, our colleagues in work. It widens much when, with a glow of real interest, we first bear before God the names of our enemies. “Father, forgive them:” this is intercession indeed. Nothing grows more rapidly than this habit of spiritual

intercession; nothing brings us nearer to Christ. 5. And yet, even at this more advanced stage of the life of prayer, the Christian soul, as it rises, must not stand still. As the eternal kingdom is neared, there are heard faint echoes from the heavenly choir, and their song is all a song of praise. The course of prayer has been like the course of the Psalter, and the Psalter ends with hallelujah! "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!" (*Archdeacon Wynne.*) *A psalm study*:—Psalm cl. is a Jewish hymn of praise; but it would not be out of place to describe it as the Psalm of Propositions, seeing it is only by marking those words that we light on the progression of thought. I. THE SPHERE OF PRAISE. "In His sanctuary," etc. 1. Saints on earth. 2. Angels in heaven. II. THE REASON. "For His mighty deeds." The cross of love will become all the more marvellous if it be viewed as the central picture of a universal spectacle. What a new incentive to praise when the universe of the scientist, that staggers us by its vastness and startles us by its awfulness, is recognized as the sphere also of Divine love; and when the Cross is interpreted as focussing eternal power in its tenderness and pity. III. THE MEASURE AND QUALITY. "According to His excellent greatness." Our praise, to be worthy and acceptable, must be dominated by a due sense of God's character. IV. THE USE OF INSTRUMENTS. Any musician, apart altogether from questions of moral qualifications and religious fitness, can "play": only a worshipper can "praise." Whether, then, the instrument be an organ or a harp, a violin or a trumpet, it must become a medium between the soul and God. V. THE INCLUSION OF ALL. "Let every breath you breathe praise the Lord." Thus rendered, it is not an extensive appeal addressed to the universe, including birds, animals, insects, fish; so much as an intensive appeal addressed to the audience already in mind. The thought is climatic. Breathing, with its double function, is to become symbolic of prayer and praise. By every inspiration we are to take in more than breath, viz. the oxygenized air of the Divine presence; and by every expiration we are to give out more than breath, viz. the thought and feeling of the very soul. A worshipper may say when thinking of the service of praise and his own limitations, "I cannot sing, nor can I play, and speech is inadmissible." "Granted," replies the psalmist, "but you can breathe: let that exercise become a medium between you and God. If the vocal and the instrumental be denied you, the inspirational is not." (*H. Elderkin.*) *The duty of praising God*:—I. THE MOTIVES. 1. Creation. 2. Preservation. 3. Redemption. II. WITH WHAT HEART AND MIND WE ARE TO PERFORM THIS SERVICE. He that singeth hymns, and psalms, and spiritual songs *must make melody in his heart* unto the Lord; he must hold *faith* and a *good conscience*; he must also have a mind superior to the world and its low enjoyments and cares; for that soul which is chained down to the earth, no praises, no, not the finest harmony in the world, can lift up into heaven. III. THE BLESSED AND SALUTARY EFFECTS. 1. The first and immediate effect is, that it serves abundantly to confirm our strength and confidence in God; it fixes the heart upon the contemplation of Him who is the object of our praise, awakens in us a devout attention to heavenly things, increases the powers of the mind, and leaves it serene and pacified in a manner that cannot be expressed. 2. Another effect of it is the same with that which the hosannas of the children produced, who sung and celebrated our Lord when He appeared in the temple at Jerusalem; their hosannas to the Son of David silenced the adversary. 3. The last and most blessed effect of all others which our giving praises to God in this world will have upon us, is, that it will entitle us to praise Him for ever in the next; and nothing but beginning to do it *here* will make us capable of it hereafter. (*W. Jones, M.A.*)

Vers. 3-5. *Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet.*—*Musical instruments in worship*:—1. Albeit the typical ceremonies of musical instruments in God's public worship, belonging to the pedagogy of the Church, in her minority before Christ, be now abolished with the rest of the ceremonies, yet the moral duties shadowed forth by them are still to be studied, because this duty of praising God, and praising Him with all our mind, strength and soul is moral, whereunto we are perpetually obliged. 2. The variety of musical instruments, some of them made use of in the camp, as trumpets; some of them more suitable to a peaceable condition, as psalteries and harps; some of them sounding by blowing wind in them; some of them sounding by lighter touching of them, as stringed instruments; some of them by beating on them more sharply, as tabrets, drums and cymbals; some of them sounding by touching and blowing also, as organs: all

of them giving some certain sound, some more quiet, and some making more noise; some of them having a harmony by themselves; some of them making a consort with other instruments, or with the motions of the body in dances, some of them serving for one use, some of them serving for another, and all of them serving to set forth God's glory, and to shadow forth the duty of worshippers and the privileges of the saints. The plurality and variety, I say, of these instruments, were fit to represent divers conditions of the spiritual man, and of the greatness of the joy to be found in God, and to teach what stirring up should be of the affections and powers of our soul, and one of another, unto God's worship; what harmony should be amongst worshippers of God, what melody each should make in himself, singing to God with grace in his heart, and to show the excellency of God's praise, which no means nor instrument, nor any expression of the body joined thereto, could sufficiently set forth; and thus much is figured forth in these exhortations to praise God with trumpet, etc. (*D. Dickson.*)

Office of music in Divine service:—Thanksgiving, a consciousness of the goodness and glory of God, the soul's joy in God—how seldom do you find an utterance of this in the prayers of the sanctuary. There is a provision, even in our churches, for the excitation and expression of praise. It is the song-service of the church. But the first and most fatal difficulty in this is that we have no religious music; or, rather, that the music of the church is for the sake of music, and not for the sake of praise. It expresses the æsthetic or art-feeling about praise—not heart-feeling. It is aimed at a wholly different thing from that which music was designed to be in the sanctuary. In the household, music aims at a domestic feeling. A mother's lullaby is sung in the family. No one would expect a mother to sit by the side of the cradle and attempt to sing Handel's "Messiah," or to execute the difficult passages of an opera. Something sweet—a simple carol—is the mother's song. The child knows it, and feels it. It is aimed at a domestic effect. In songs of patriotism that express and excite that feeling the music becomes subordinate. The most patriotic tunes in vogue have no merit as tunes, but they possess a subtle element that stirs up a patriotic feeling in the heart, and it therefore answers the end of music. Multitudes of tunes in the church of God are hewn out of symphonies, and oratorios, and operas. They are music as operas, and oratorios, and symphonies, but they are trash in God's house. In many cases the better a tune is, the worse it is in the service of the sanctuary. For the office of music in Divine service is praising. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 6. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.—*The breath of praise:*—I. PRAISE IN EVERY AGE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS OF WORSHIP. The holiest saint, what is he in the sight of God by nature? A poor sinner, born, no doubt, again of the Spirit, made a new creature by the Holy Ghost. But what does he owe it to? He owes it all to the free grace of God. "By the grace of God," said the great apostle of the Gentiles, "I am what I am." And ought not this creature, delivered from such a miserable state of death and condemnation, redeemed and renewed to cultivate continually the thankful spirit? Let him pray by all means; but let him also praise. II. THERE IS NO PART OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP THAT SO TENDS TO UNITE CHRISTIANS, IF THEY REALLY TAKE IT UP IN SPIRIT AND UNITY, AS PRAISE. Men who cannot agree on the platform agree when they come to sing praise. III. THERE IS NO PART OF WORSHIP WHICH SO TRAINS AND FITS US FOR HEAVEN AS DOES THE SERVICE OF PRAISE. In that world there will be no more need of prayer, for all will be supplied; no more need for sacraments, for we shall sit face to face with Him who shed His own blood for us, gave His own body for us; no more need to search diligently for the things written for our learning. They will be swallowed up in sight, and will be absorbed in certainty. Praise will be the one grand employment of the inhabitants of heaven. (*Bp. Kyle.*)

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