

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

DANIEL.

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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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DANIEL.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

THE WORLD EVENTS OF THE TIME OF THE CAPTIVITY. The seventy years' captivity opens just after the overthrow of one of the great monarchies, and the destruction of one of the great cities (Nineveh) of the ancient world, which had kept its ground for upwards of a thousand years. It ends with the fall of one that in the colossal greatness of its power and the magnificence of its buildings, surpassed all others. It begins with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and ends with that of Cyrus. It was a time of vast migrations, and struggles of races and of creeds. The religion of Buddha was working its mighty change in India, and altogether beyond the horizon of the Babylonian Empire. The religion of Zoroaster was entering on a new and more energetic life, and the books which embody that faith were assuming their present shape. Not less wonderful was the synchronism of events in regions that lay then entirely out of all contact with the history of the Bible. Then it was that Epimenides, and the Orphic brotherhoods that traced their origin to him, were altering the character of the earlier creed of Greece, as represented by the Homeric poems, that Pythagoras and his disciples were laying the foundations of an asceticism which developed into a philosophy, that Solon was building up the intellectual and political life of Athens. In the far West, Rome was already rising into greatness. The walls of Servius Tullus, yet more the organization of the constitution which bears his name, were marking out the future destiny of the City of the Seven Hills as different from that of any other town in Italy. In the far East, Confucius was entering on his work as the teacher of an ethical system which, whatever may be its defects, has kept its ground through all the centuries that have followed, and been accepted by many millions of mankind, which, at present, modified more or less by its contact with Buddhism, divides with that system the homage of nearly all tribes and nations of Turanian origin. Of many of these great changes we can only think with wonder at the strange parallelisms with which the great divisions of the human family were moving on, far removed from each other, in the order which had been appointed for them. Those which connect themselves directly with the rise and fall of the great Chaldean monarchy will serve to show how, "in sundry times and divers manners," God has taught men to feel after him, and it may be, find him. For centuries before the birth of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon had been carrying on, with varying success, a struggle against the great Assyrian Empire, which had its capital (Nineveh) on the Tigris. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

THE MAN DANIEL AND HIS PROPHETIC BOOK. We have in Daniel, a man of intense religious feeling and a pure patriot, and one possessed also of great ability and a powerful mind upon which numerous and weighty influences were brought to bear. Can we wonder if he viewed the world with a different eye from that of the exiled priest, Ezekiel, living in penury among the poor Jewish colonists planted on the river Chebar? Or from that of Jeremiah, struggling against all the evil influences which were daily dragging the feeble Zedekiah and the decaying people of Jerusalem, down to ruin? Or even from that of Isaiah, whose rapt vision, spurning this poor earth, soared aloft to the spiritual glories of Messiah's reign, and sang how the sucker, springing up from Jesse's cut-down lineage, and growing as a root in a dry ground, should by its wounds, owing to the world healing, and by its death, purchase for mankind life? But each of these had his own office and his special message; and Daniel's office was to show that the Christian religion was not to be an enlarged Judaism, but a Judaism fulfilled and made free. Its outer husk was to fall away, its inner beauty to reveal itself, and instead of a Church for the Jews, there was to be a Church for all mankind. In the Book of Daniel we find no trace of that old contempt for the Gentiles, which the Jews had grafted on the feelings in which they might

indulge, of gratitude to God for their own many privileges. Babylon to him is the head of gold: other realms are of silver, brass, or iron, all precious and enduring substances, though the last was mingled with miry clay. In the colossal image, Judea finds no place, because thus far its influence upon the world had been nought. And when God's universal empire grinds to powder these world powers, though Israel had been God's preparation for the reign of Christ, yet that is passed over, and its establishment is spoken of as God's direct doing—a stone cut out of the mountain by no human hands, but by a Divine power. We know how Daniel loved his nation, and how, even in extreme old age, he still prayed with his face towards Jerusalem; but he places out of sight, the work of his country and of his Church, and sees only the world's history, and the share which it has in preparing for the universal dominion of God. As a corrective to the outer form of previous prophecy, this was not only most precious but absolutely necessary. A careless reader up to this time might have supposed that the Gentiles had no part in God's purposes. True that the old promises in the Book of Genesis included them, but as Judaism developed, the Gentiles were pushed more and more into the background, and became the object of prophecy apparently only in their connection with Judea, or as the future subjects of Judah's Messiah. We, as we read the words of the prophets, cannot help finding proofs everywhere, that what Daniel taught was no new interpretation, but the true meaning of the whole prophetic choir. The Jew saw no world-wide purpose, not merely because patriotism and national pride closed the avenues of his mind, but also because the outer form of prophecy was Jewish, and gave a basis to the narrow interpretation put upon the prophetic teaching by the current national thought. But here the outer form is entirely changed, and the man who was the mighty pillar of their strength in their days of disaster, sets the world before them in a completely different aspect, ignores their old standards of thought, and declares that their Jehovah was as much the God and Father of the whole Gentile world as he was their own. But clear and plain as was his teaching, the Jews refused to it their assent; their synagogue did not include Daniel among the prophets, but placed his book among the "Hagiographa," "the sacred writings," between those of Esther and Ezra. Nor was this place so altogether wrong; for even now, with its numerous points of resemblance to the Apocalypse of St. John, it would rightly hold a place between the Old and New Testaments. It would be hard indeed to spare Malachi from that position, with his ringing announcement of the nigh coming of the Forerunner. But the Apocalypse holds to the Christian Church the same relation as that held by Daniel to the Church of the Jews. The one raised the veil for the covenant people of old, and gave them an insight into, and guidance through the weeks and years that were to elapse before Messiah's first Advent; the second raises the veil for the Church of Christ, gives its glimpses of the world's history, and of God's work in it until its Lord comes again. (*Dean Payne Smith.*)

The Book of Daniel:—this is assigned in the Hebrew canon to the third division, called Hagiographa. The first chapter is introductory to the whole book, giving an account of the selection and education of Daniel and his three companions by direction of the king of Babylon. The prophecies that follow naturally fall into two series. The first, occupying chapters ii. to vii., is written in Chaldee from the middle of the fourth verse of chapter ii. It unfolds the relation which God's kingdom holds to the heathen powers, as seen in a twofold vision of the four great monarchies of the world, in the form, first, of an image consisting of four parts, and then of four great beasts rising up out of the sea, the last monarchy being succeeded by the kingdom of the God of heaven, which shall never be destroyed; in the protection and deliverance of God's faithful servants from the persecution of heathen kings and princes; in the humbling of heathen monarchs for their pride, idolatry, and profanation of the sacred vessels belonging to the sanctuary. Thus we see that the first three of these six chapters correspond to the last three taken in an inverse order—the second to the seventh, the third to the sixth, and the fourth to the fifth. The second series, consisting of the remaining five chapters, is written in Hebrew. This also exhibits the conflict between God's kingdom and the heathen world, taking up the second and third monarchies under the images of a ram and a he-goat. There follow some special details relating to the nearer future, with some very remarkable revelations respecting the time of the Messiah's advent, the destruction of the holy city by the Romans, the last great conflict between the kingdom of God and its enemies, and the final resurrection. The intimate connection between the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John must strike every reader of the Holy Scriptures. They mutually interpret each other, and together constitute one grand system of prophecy extending down to the end of the world. Both also contain predictions, the exact interpretation of which is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, till the mystery of God should be finished. The unity of the Book of Daniel

is now generally conceded. "The two leading divisions are so related, that the one implies the existence of the other. Both have the same characteristics of manner and style, though a considerable portion of the book is in Chaldee and the remainder in Hebrew." This being admitted, the book as a whole claims Daniel for its author; for in it he often speaks in the first person; and in the last chapter the book is manifestly ascribed to him. The uniform tradition of the Jews ascribed the book to Daniel. It was on this ground that they received it into the canon of the Old Testament. The objection that they did not class Daniel with the prophets, but with the Hagiographa, is of no account. Had the book belonged, as the objectors claim, to the Maccabean age, it would not have found a place in the Hagiographa any more than in the prophets. The First Book of Maccabees, which contains authentic history, was never received into the Hebrew canon, because, as the Jews rightly judged, it was written after the withdrawal of the spirit of prophecy. Much less would they have received under the illustrious name of Daniel, a book written as late as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, more than three centuries and a half after Daniel. That they should have done this through ignorance is inconceivable; that they could have done it through fraud is a supposition not to be admitted for a moment, for it is contrary to all that we know of their conscientious care with regard to the sacred text. The language of the book agrees with the age of Daniel. The writer employs both Hebrew and Chaldee, thus indicating that he lives during the period of transition from the former to the latter language. His Chaldee, like that of Ezra, contains Hebrew forms such as do not occur in the earliest of the Targums. His Hebrew, on the other hand, agrees in its general character with that of Ezekiel and Ezra. Though the Hebrew survived as the language of the learned for some time after the Captivity, we cannot suppose that so late as the age of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees, a Jewish author could have employed either such Hebrew as Daniel uses or such Chaldee. The author manifests intimate acquaintance with the historical relations, manners and customs belonging to Daniel's time. Under this head writers have specified the custom of giving new names to those taken into the king's service; the threat that the houses of the magi should be made a dunghill; the different forms of capital punishment in use among the Chaldeans and Medo-Persians; the dress of Daniel's companions; the presence of women at the royal banquet, etc. The real objection to the book lies, as already intimated, in the supernatural character of its contents, in the remarkable miracles and prophecies which it records. The miracles of this book are of a very imposing character, especially adapted to strike the minds of the beholders with awe and wonder; but so are those also recorded in the beginning of the Book of Exodus. In both cases they were alike fitted to make upon the minds of the heathen, in whose presence they were performed, the impression of God's power to save and deliver in all possible circumstances. The prophecies are mostly in the form of dreams and visions; and they are in wonderful harmony with Daniel's position as a minister of State at the court of Babylon, and also with the relation of Judaism to the heathen world. In the providence of God, the history of His covenant people, and through them of the visible kingdom of heaven, had become inseparably connected with that of the great monarchies of the world. How appropriate, then, that God should reveal in its grand outlines, the course of these monarchies to the final and complete establishment of the kingdom of heaven! In all this we find nothing against the general analogy of prophecy, but everything in strict conformity with it. (*E. P. Barrows, D.D.*) *Daniel's Book a Part of Divine Revelation*.—1. The Babylonish captivity constituted an important era in the history of redemption. It was the means adopted by God in His all-wise providence, to purify and reform the Jewish Church, and thus perpetuate the true religion. It was, therefore, to have been expected, that some record of the captivity would be preserved, otherwise a whole era would be left blank, and the Church be thereby deprived of the important lessons, which, even a slight glimpse of such a period could not fail to afford. 2. The whole aspect of Society, both in respect of religion and government is wholly different in Babylon from what it was in Judæa. We are introduced in the Book of Daniel into a moral world altogether new in its construction. We are placed in the midst of scenes to which there is no resemblance in the rest of the Old Testament. The scenes here depicted have a breadth and grandeur about them, unparalleled in Scripture, and an intensity of passion altogether new. 3. The most careless reader must be struck with the number of miracles which it records, and these of a very stupendous cast. These have been adduced as an argument against the authenticity of the book. But Babylon was then the stronghold of idolatry; and it was surely worthy of God's wisdom, and of his goodness, and of all his perfections, to work such miracles in order to assert his sole authority. These miracles were also calculated to exert a very important influence upon the Jewish race, whose

character had then sunk very low. (*William White.*) *Apocalyptic Literature*:—Something remains to be said as to Daniel's method of prophesying. Passing by the opening chapters, in which the imagery is taken from Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, we find him using symbolic figures and symbolic numbers. He discontinues now the use of the Chaldean language, by which he had previously seemed to indicate that his memorial was not addressed to Jews only, but to all the people of the provinces of Babylon, and writes in Hebrew, the holy and sacred language of his people. But how different his method from that of the prophets of old! Mighty animals devour and break in pieces, and trample the nations down, till all the thrones of earthly dominion are cast aside, and the Ancient of Days takes the kingdom. So great an influence did this mode of writing exercise upon the imagination of mankind that the books are legion written by the Jews, especially those of Egypt, in imitation of it. One of the most famous was the Book of Enoch; another, the Second Book of Esdras may be found in our own Apocrypha, though not included in it by the Church of Rome. In Daniel's prophecies the Gentiles no longer appear as mere accessories to the Jews; they are equally the object of the Divine providence, and bear an independent, if not an equal, part in the preparation for Christ. By symbolic numbers he taught with extraordinary clearness that Messiah was to come. But with what bitter revelations is it combined! What must have been the Jew's feelings when, instead of triumph and victory, and an era of glorious conquest and universal empire, he read that Messiah was to be cut off, and that the armies of an alien empire would destroy the city and the sanctuary? That the daily sacrifice would cease, and that the abomination that maketh desolate would prevail for one thousand, three hundred and ninety days. (*Dean Payne Smith, D.D.*)

DANIEL: HIS BOOK AND ITS CRITICS. The Book of Daniel has long been one of the high places of the field where the contest is waged for the faith once delivered unto the saints. With men to whom a miracle is a thing incredible, and prophecy an offence or an impossibility, it is not surprising to find the most inveterate opposition displayed towards a writing which contains a record of such miracles as those of the Babylonian exile, and a series of prophecies second to none in the Old Testament in the extent of their range and the minuteness of their details. If Daniel is numbered among the prophets, then the oracles of Tübingen are confounded like the magicians over whom he triumphed twenty-four centuries ago. It is a book, as Dr. Pusey says in his opening paragraph, which "admits of no half measures. It is either Divine or an imposture. The writer, were he not Daniel, must have lied on a most frightful scale, ascribing to God prophecies which were never uttered, and miracles which are assumed never to have been wrought." In the case of this book, we have now nothing of the patchwork system advocated like the piecemeal authorship of the Pentateuch, and the so-called first and second Isaiahs of Rationalistic criticism. The whole book is relegated by its impugnors to the Maccabean era, and its prophecies distorted to give them no later application than to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and the war of independence, thus making them prophecies *post eventum*. All the theories which eliminate the Messianic and eschatological references from the book are beset with difficulties far exceeding that which recognises Daniel as a member of the "goodly fellowship of the prophets," and are based upon assumptions so cumbrous and arbitrary that they can be expected to find credence only where there was a foregone conclusion of disbelief. As to the person of the prophet, we learn that he was led captive into Babylon in the third year of King Jehoiakim (B.C. 606—5); hence his birth would seem almost to have coincided with the great reformation of religion in Judah under King Josiah. For one like Daniel, of noble, if not of royal birth, there was the promise of a prosperous career, until the nation was filled with mourning by the death of Josiah occasioned by the wound received at Megiddo. A younger son of Josiah (Shallum) was hastily proclaimed king in his father's stead under the name of Jehoahaz, but the Egyptian king Pharaoh-Necho was the real master of the country. After a reign of only three months, the young monarch was carried off to the camp of the conqueror at Riblah on the Orontes, and his elder brother was placed on the throne as a vassal of Pharaoh, taking the name of Jehoiakim. It was the twilight of the Jewish monarchy; Jeremiah's denunciations reveal to us a state of oppression wherein the degenerate princes of the house of David copied the examples of neighbouring despots. The chronicler sums up the record of Jehoiakim's reign in the brief and awful statement that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God;" and the national archives are referred to as supplying the particulars of "the rest of the abominations which he did." The political situation in the nations around was far from promising. The empire of Niurod and Sennacherib had collapsed a few years before, but another

great world-power had risen on the Euphrates almost as suddenly as the city of the Tigris had fallen. Nabopolassar, the captor of Nineveh and the founder of Babylon, was at war with Pharaoh-Necho, the lord paramount of the Jewish king. Necho had attacked the frontier fortress of Carchemish, but his army was driven back from the Euphrates to the Nile with such crushing defeat that the Egyptian monarchy was shaken from its ancient centre at Memphis, and forced to take refuge at Thebes. Judea lying between the two hostile powers—the Belgium of the East—and being a dependency of the conquered king, the whole land was filled with fear of invasion. So general was this dread that even the nomadic sons of Jonadab and Reelab forsook their tents for the security which the city was supposed to furnish. Soon the son of the King of Babylon, ere long to be his successor, came against the Holy City, which fell after a brief siege, and Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim prisoner, but afterwards restored him as his vassal. Then began the removal of the vessels of the sanctuary to Babylon, and in the train led across the Syrian desert to the land of their conqueror were Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael of the royal seed of Judah, to be trained in the schools and to serve in the court of Babylon. For the third time in the history of the old Covenant the interests of the chosen nation were centred in a Hebrew youth surrounded by all the allurements and perils of a heathen court. But if, according to human ideas, the destinies of the covenant race seemed to tremble in the hands of a young captive, Babylon presented a counterpart to the trials and triumphs of faith at Memphis centuries before; and Daniel, like Joseph and Moses, was found “faithful” as a servant of God even in the house of the conqueror of his country. In ancient times the great opponent of the genuineness of Daniel’s writings was the notorious adversary of Christianity, Porphyry. Staggered by the remarkably exact fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecies in the subsequent history of the world, and pre-eminently in the Coming and Passion of the Messiah, he invented the theory that the book was the production of a Jew who lived in the times of the Maccabees. His theory was nobly and triumphantly controverted by Eusebius, Jerome, Methodius of Tyre, and Appollinaris of Laodicea. So complete was his discomfiture, that even Spinoza did not venture to assail the genuineness of the prophecies in the later chapters. And it is only within the last hundred years or so that Porphyry has found advocates and disciples. For a brief summary of the literature of unbelieving criticism on this subject the reader is referred to Keil’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, translated in the *Foreign Theol. Library*. The principal points alleged by those who deny the genuineness of the book, are: (1) Its place in the Hebrew Canon among the books of the Hagiographa, and not with the rest of the prophets; (2) The corrupted language of the book; (3) The omission of Daniel’s name in a catalogue of Jewish worthies enumerated by Jesus, the son of Sirach, in the 49th chapter of Ecclesiasticus, as well as the silence of the three last prophets concerning him; (4) The alleged romantic and self-laudatory character of the book; (5) Its dogmatic and ethical teaching is assumed to be out of agreement with the date of the Captivity. In considering the first of these objections, it appears to us that no valid argument can be raised against the historical or prophetic character of the book, because in our Hebrew Bibles it stands among the “Writings,” and not in conjunction with the greater and lesser prophets. Dr. Pusey has dealt with this subject in one of his lectures, from which we extract the following paragraph:—“The arrangement of the Canon among the Jews, though different from that of the Christian Church, proceeded on definite and legitimate principles. (1) The Law, as the original fountain-head of revelation, stands at the head; (2) then all those books, believed to have been written by men exercising the prophetic office, whether those called the first prophets (the historical books from Joshua to the Kings), or what we call the prophets, *they* the later prophets; (3) then, a more miscellaneous class, “Scriptures,” sacred writings, Hagiographa, written by persons who, whether endowed with the gift of prophecy or no, had not the pastoral office of the prophets. This last class consisted even chiefly of persons in high secular office. There were kings, as David, who, in that wider sense, was eminently a prophet; Solomon, who wrote at least one glorious Psalm, prophetic of Christ; Ezra, who had charge to lead his people back from their captivity, *the priest, the scribe*, yet who speaks of Haggai and Zechariah as having an office of “prophets” distinct from his own;—Ezra, the author of the Chronicles, as well as of the book which bears his name; Nehemiah; probably Mordecai also, as the author of the Book of Esther. The distribution is allowable, since plainly it is as permissible to class books according to the offices borne by their authors, as according to the subjects of the books themselves. But according to this distribution, the Book of Daniel could occupy no other place than it does. Daniel had no immediate office of a practical teacher of his people. He was the statesman, the protector probably. The historical portion of his book contains some great dispensations

of God, set down in the order in which they took place, but with no account of the date of its composition. The prophetic portions of his book, in which he himself was the organ of prophecy, belong to the last years of a life beyond the common age of man. His first vision was probably not vouchsafed until he had reached the fourscore years, after which man's ordinary lot is suffering and sorrow. Even at this period those visions were but insulated events in his life, gifts vouchsafed to him in the midst of a secular life. . . . His office was different from that of those whom God sent, *daily rising up early and sending them*, to speak in His Name the words which He gave them. *Theirs* was an abiding Spirit of prophecy resting upon them; to *him*, as far as we are told, insulated revelations only were disclosed."—*Pusey*, p. 351. As to the corrupted language of the book, a more profound and candid investigation of the matter has only revealed in this case another example of the disingenuous deductions of the self-styled higher criticism. But granting, for the sake of argument, that the language is as corrupt as the baptized successors of Porphyry would have us admit, are the *a priori* considerations of the matter such as would cause us surprise, not to say dismay, at such a discovery? Keil puts the matter fairly and well when he asks: "Can we expect classic Hebrew expressions throughout from a man who received his education at the Chaldean court, and who spent his whole life in Babylonia? Or can later Chaldee and Persian words in Daniel prove anything, when such are to be found in all the writers of the period of the Exile? Or has Ezekiel a purer or better style?"—p. 23. As to the *double* language employed in the book, even De Wette has acknowledged the uniformity of style to be such as to indicate a single authorship, "binding together the Chaldee and Hebrew portions, not only in themselves but with each other." The earlier modern adversaries of the book made much of certain words occurring in it which they pronounced to be Greek words, and then assumed that they were unquestionable proofs of its spuriousness. Out of ten words which Bertholdt brought forward as Greek, the most recent Rationalist critics have surrendered six as availing them nothing, so the issue is confined to three or four, which, as names of musical instruments in the catalogue of Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra, belong to a category in which the language of any nation is most readily affected by mercantile or other intercourse with foreigners. As long as the Englishman drinks congou or cocoa, eats potatoes or curry, and wears calico or cambric, the names of these articles will help him to remember that his vocabulary, as well as his table and wardrobe, has been replenished from foreign sources through the agency of commerce. The Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's age was far from being a sealed empire like the Japan of former days. The Euphrates formed a ready highway of intercourse with Armenia on the one hand and India on the other. In the former, if not the latter region, the venturesome Phœnician merchants plied their trade, and helped to transmit words while they exchanged merchandise. Tadmor in the wilderness had been built by the great patron of commerce, Solomon, as a midway station between his capital and the Chaldean home of his ancestors as long prior to the Exile as the discovery of America antedates our own time. Five centuries earlier still, a "goodly Babylonish garment" was found among the spoils of Jericho. Two prophetic testimonies describe her as a "city of merchants" that "exulted in her ships." The rich Queen of the Euphrates was too luxurious to be a mere workshop for the nations. She bartered her own productions and the spoils of her conquests for the pleasures of other lands. In one of the most pathetic of the dirges of the Captivity, the exile Jew describes his conqueror as calling him to song. Not an ode to Belus or a ballad of Babylonia is demanded, but the oppressor asks for "one of the songs of Zion in a strange land." Mercantile intercourse with Greece or the Ionic cities of Asia Minor, carried on directly or indirectly through the ubiquitous Phœnician merchants, would be sufficient reason to account for the introduction of the three or four Greek names of musical instruments. But the Babylonian history of Berosus records a victory of Sennacherib over Greek invaders of Cilicia as early as the eighth century B.C. And Esarhaddon marched through Asia with Greek mercenaries following his standard, while Javan appears among other countries in an inscription of Sargon as a land that yielded him tribute. We need spend but little time in considering the silence of the son of Sirach. The "praise of certain holy men," in Ecclesiasticus xlv.—1., is far from a complete celebration of departed worthies. Adam, Seth, and Enoch are those enumerated from the antediluvian patriarchs; Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph from the Deluge to the Exodus; Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Joshua, and Caleb represent the period of the Wilderness and the Conquest; the Judges are commemorated in a short passage of two verses; Samuel, Nathan, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Josiah, and an incidental reference to Isaiah, cover the period of the Kingdoms; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua the son of Josedec the priest, represent the age of

the Captivity. The twelve minor prophets are commemorated in a single verse, "And of the twelve prophets let the memorial be blessed, and let their bones flourish again out of their place: for they comforted Jacob, and delivered them by assured hope." *Eccles.* xlix. 10. Pusey, p. 354, note, shows good cause for considering this verse an interpolation; if so, the wonder at the omission of the prophet Daniel from the list is lessened, and still further, when Isaiah's name occurs, not as the prophet whose writings exceed in quantity those of any of his brother seers in the Canon, but simply as the counsellor of Hezekiah in his pious course. And they seem to overlook the circumstance that the same argument would remove Joseph from the list of the patriarchs, Zadok from the priesthood, and Ezra from the leaders of the Return. As to the alleged improbable and romantic character of its contents, when we consider the age, region, and important interests and bearings of the events recorded, a reader, unblinded by the prejudices which bias the opponents of the book, would be prepared to expect some things very different from the even course of our Western nineteenth-century life. Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of the magicians in the matter of his dream is not so unlike the cruel and arbitrary conduct displayed by many Oriental despots towards their dependents in much later times, for it to be seized upon as a strong presumption of Daniel's untruthfulness. The dimensions of the "golden image" on the plains of Dura are used against us by critics who, without any warrant from the text, assume that it was a well-proportioned human statue of solid gold, and then argue against the narrative on the ground that such an amount of the precious metal as would be required to construct it on their model was not likely to be available. Whereas, there is no reason why we should not suppose it to have been a slender pillar or pedestal, supporting a human or other symbolical figure. The term "golden," as applied in the Old Testament to the altar of incense, would fully warrant the hypothesis that gold was only used as the external plating of some inferior substance. The argument as to the purposeless waste of miraculous power is but the complaint of a school which never wearies in the attempt to resolve every miracle into a myth, and we shall have occasion subsequently to refer to the circumstance of the agents and the great interests involved, as furnishing a good answer to the murmuring of unbelief, "For what purpose was this waste?" The assumed discrepancy in the dates given, i. 5, 18, and ii. 1; from which it appears that Daniel was carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the *third* year of Jehoiakim, and was then entrusted to Ashpenaz for a three years' course of training; while we read that he interpreted the king's dream in the *second* year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. From *Jer.* xxv. 1, we learn that the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim was the *first* of Nebuchadnezzar. From these independent dates of Scripture we arrive at the same conclusion as the statement of Berossus, viz., that the captivity of Daniel began in the year preceding Nebuchadnezzar's accession, and, consequently, his Babylonian curriculum may have been completed before the close of Nebuchadnezzar's second year in possession of the kingdom. The dogmatic and ethical representations in the Book of Daniel have been quoted as favouring the theory of a post-captivity date of composition. Keil (*Introd. to Old Test.* Vol. II., p. 37) shows that the whole range of apocryphal literature indicates no progress in the development of the Messianic idea, and knows nothing of a personal Messiah, while in the pages of our prophet we trace the unfolding of the doctrine of Christ's Divine-human person already revealed to Isaiah. The kingdom of Christ is also spoken of in its universality and its connection with the general resurrection, which is perfectly intelligible if we regard the prophecy as an expansion of the revelations made to earlier seers, but inexplicable if the book is a pious fraud of a period four centuries later, when narrow and exclusive views of Jewish privilege prevailed. The angelology of the book is another occasion of offence to Daniel's critics. The earliest books of the Bible teach the existence and ministry of angels. The principalities and powers in heavenly places appear in the visions vouchsafed to Isaiah and Ezekiel. The prophet who has not written a line of our Canon,—Micah, the son of Imah,—testified to Jehoshaphat and Ahab that he saw the host of heaven standing about the throne. The value of prayer, its repetition thrice a day, fasting and abstinence from unclean food, were all practices sanctioned by long usage, as we learn from many anterior Scriptures, so no inference of a later authorship can be based on the references to these observances in the face of positive or even probable evidence of its genuineness. And it is manifestly unfair to interpret its doctrine of angels by the hierarchical systems of the Rabbis, or to invent a theory of Parsee influence, and then to call Daniel in question for the errors and absurdities of the Rabbinical and Zoroastrian systems. After his inauguration in the prophetic office, thirty years rolled by, during which Daniel continued to hold his high position in the government of the empire. Meanwhile his fame spread among the scattered tribes of his people, so that Ezekiel, writing among the exiles on the Chebar,

spoke of his wisdom as proverbial (Ezek. xxviii. 3). And in another passage of the same prophet he is grouped with two eminent saints of patriarchal times as an eminent example of steadfast fidelity to God. The microscopic critics of the unbelieving class have boasted loudly over these references as if they were incontrovertible testimonies against the personality of the Daniel of the Exile and the genuineness of his book. But Ezekiel's prophecies are both dated documents. The one in which Daniel's wisdom is celebrated was written eighteen years after the same gift had been rewarded by the king, and the other mention of his faithfulness was not till some fifteen years after the test of his fidelity in the matter of the king's meat; and, moreover, the commendation is not that of a man's praise resting on common report, however well founded, but it is the benison of the Searcher of hearts, who had attested the integrity of His servant. The weapons of the adversaries of the faith are well turned against them by one of the ablest expositors of the prophecy:—"The mention of Daniel, then, by Ezekiel, in both cases has the more force from the fact that he was a contemporary; both corresponded with his actual character as stated in his book. Granted the historical truth of Daniel, no one would doubt that Ezekiel did refer to Daniel as described in his book. But then the objection is only the usual begging of the question. 'Ezekiel is not likely to have referred to Daniel, a contemporary, unless he was distinguished by extraordinary gifts or graces.' 'But his book not being genuine, there is no proof that he was so distinguished.' 'Therefore,' &c."—*Pusey On Daniel*, p. 108. And with reference to the Rationalistic hypothesis that Ezekiel referred to some distinguished person of remote antiquity, like another Melchisedec, only with this difference, that Scripture is not sparing, but altogether silent in its testimony, the Oxford Professor continues:—"This school is fond of the argument 'ex silentio.' They all (though, as we shall see, wrongly) use it as a palmary proof of the non-existence of the Book of Daniel in the time of the Son of Sirach, that he does not name Daniel among the prophets. Yet, in the same breath, they assume the existence of one whom no one but themselves ever thought of, to disprove the existence of him who is known to history. . . Truly they give us a shadow for the substance."—*Pusey*, p. 109. The madness of Nebuchadnezzar is copiously dealt with in Bishop Wordsworth's notes on the fourth chapter. He follows Hengstenberg, Pusey, and others, in regarding the king's malady as that form of mental disease known to medical science as Lycanthropy. He inserts the following communication from E. Palmer, Esq., M.D., of the Lincolnshire Asylum at Bracebridge:—"It very commonly occurs that patients, on their recovery from insanity, have a full recollection of their sayings and doings, and of all that happened to them during their attack. . . In the case of Nebuchadnezzar it was not until 'the end of the days'—or, as may be supposed, at the first dawn of intelligence, when partially lycanthropical and partially self-conscious, and in a state somewhat resembling that of a person awakening from a dream—that he lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being, probably, not yet rational enough to offer up a prayer in words, but still so far conscious as to be able dimly to perceive his identity. But when his understanding returned to him, there came back not only a recollection of his sin and the decree of the Most High, but also a vivid reminiscence of all the circumstances of his abasement amongst the beasts of the field; and he at once acknowledged the power and dominion of God."—*Wordsworth*, p. 17. Dr. Palmer's letter to the Bishop concludes with an extract from Esquirol's *Des Maladies Mentales*, giving an account of an epidemic outbreak of Lycanthropy in France some 300 years ago. The part which Daniel took in the administration of the realm during the king's madness, would form an interesting subject of conjecture. There seems to be a trace, in one of the extant inscriptions, of a regency exercised by the father of the king's son-in-law, the Rag-Mag, or chief of the magicians, whose son, Neriglissar, gained the crown two years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, by a plot which deprived his brother-in-law Evil Merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor, of his throne, and of his life. With such a party of ambition and intrigue so near the succession, and with the regency vested in them, it may seem surprising that the great king found his place waiting for him on his recovery, and that his crown descended to his heir. But our history shows us one who, from his foreign birth, may have been precluded by Chaldean etiquette, or jealousy, from holding the name of regent, who nevertheless exercised the real power of government. More than 30 years before he had been placed at the head of the order which furnished the *savans*, statesmen, and not unfrequently the generals of the nation. In the record of his second dream, Nebuchadnezzar, in the precise style of a royal decree, accords to Daniel the title which indicated sacerdotal and political primacy. So, if not in name, it is by no means improbable that in fact, Daniel, like his forerunner Joseph in the days of Egyptian calamity, guided the great empire of the Euphrates through the dark and troubled period while its master was absent from the helm,

keeping his crown and dignity inviolate from open ambition or secret intrigue. Whether the seven prophetic "times" of his madness be interpreted as denoting years or shorter periods, a brief interval of life only remained for the recovered monarch. The one recorded act of the short reign of his son, Evil Merodach, the release of the King of Judah from his 37 years' imprisonment, with a precedence at the royal banquets above all the other captive monarchs, would seem to point to Daniel's continued influence in the state. His reign of two years being ended by the conspiracy of Neriglissar, the usurper's rule lasted only four years, and he was succeeded by his son, Labarosoarchod, a boy king, who, in the course of nine months, was tortured to death by the Chaldean chiefs, who placed Nabonadius on the throne. During the earlier part of his reign of seventeen years he restored to some extent the waning glory of Babylon, but only to see it totally and finally eclipsed. For while Cyrus was engaged in his war with Cræsus, Nabonadius entered into an alliance with the Lydian king. When Cræsus was vanquished the Persian turned his victorious arms towards the Queen of the Euphrates. Nabonadius headed the army in the plain before Babylon, leaving the defence of the city to his son Belshazzar, whom he had associated with himself in the government. The Babylonian army being routed in a single battle, Nabonadius took refuge in the neighbouring fortress of Borsippa. Then came the siege, and the brave but over-confident defence, and the laborious device of Cyrus, whereby "the great river, the river Euphrates," itself was diverted from its course, when "a sound of revelry by night" furnished the besiegers with a signal for opening the flood-gates for the great assault. For a long time the impugnors of the book's authenticity made great use of the absence of Belshazzar's name from the lists of Nebuchadnezzar's successors found in the fragments of Berosus and Abydenus. Even Keil is unsatisfactory in his dealings with the last who wore the Babylonian purple, and confounds the Belshazzar of Daniel with the Evil Merodach who had died twenty years before the city fell. It is true Nabonadius appears as the last king of Babylon, according to the old chroniclers in their extant fragments, and he was not of the family of Nebuchadnezzar, neither was he slain in the night of the city's capture, but, having surrendered himself to Cyrus, was relegated to a provincial governorship in Carmania, where he died. But the adversaries of the Holy Oracles have been put to silence by the mute but powerful evidence of the potter's clay. "It appears, from extant monuments—namely, from cylinders of Nabonnedus discovered at Mugheir—that a prince called Bil-shar-uzur (Belshazzar) was his son, and was associated with him in the empire. In those cylinders the protection of the gods is desired 'for Nabonadid and his son Bil-Sharuzur,' and their names are coupled together in a way that implies the sovereignty of the latter. (*British Museum Series*, Plate 68, No. 1. Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, iii. 515, whose remarks are confirmed by Oppert, who, when in Babylonia in 1854, read and interpreted those cylinders at the same time, and in the same way, as Sir H. Rawlinson did in England. See Oppert's letter to Olshausen, dated Jan. 16th, 1864, in *Zeitschrift d. Deutsch. Morg. Ges.* viii. 598). This opinion was further corroborated by another learned Orientalist, Dr. Hincks, who deciphered an inscription of Nabonnedus, in which he prays for Belshazzar, his eldest son, and in which he is represented as co-regent. See Pusey, pp. 402, 403."—*Wordsworth*, p. 20. If Herodotus has preserved for us the story of the siege, the Book of Daniel gives us the graphic description of the scene within the massive walls. The king had turned a national festival into a time of licence and intoxication; the drunken revel was further degraded into a scene of sacrilegious defiance of Jehovah, as Belshazzar sent for the golden vessels which his father (i.e. grandfather, the Hebrew and Chaldean languages both being destitute of any word for grandsire or grandson) Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem that he might defile them in his palace orgies. The mighty conqueror had shown in his way a kind of religious veneration for them, by placing them, probably only as trophies, in the temple of his god, but it was reserved for the young voluptuary to give the more grievous affront to Jehovah, by using the golden bowls of His ministry in his own deification, or for his inebrious shame. Then "over against the candlestick," in the light of those lamps which had been wont to shed their rays upon the path to the mercy-seat, the mysterious hand appeared tracing its strange and terrible writing upon the wall. In the confusion which followed, the queen (probably Nicotris, the queen-mother) called to remembrance the discoveries of her father's dreams made by Daniel, whose obscurity during recent reigns seems to be implied in the queen's words, "There is a man in thy kingdom," &c. (v. 11, 12). Once more the interpreter of secrets spoke out as the messenger of God's judgment to princes as fearlessly as Elijah to Ahab, or John the Baptist to Herod. The visitation of Nebuchadnezzar, known but unheeded by his descendant, was rehearsed, and the strange inscription of numbering, weighing, and dividing, was interpreted and applied to the case of the profligate prince, and to the immediate dissolution of his empire.

"In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain," but not before he had fulfilled his promise of investing the prophet with scarlet and gold, and proclaiming him third ruler of the vanishing kingdom. And in the degree of precedence accorded to Daniel we trace a corroboration of the history already given, not only as confirming his own recent retirement from state dignity and care as intimated in the queen's address, but as furnishing in the unusual numerical order "third," an exact coincidence with the testimony of the cylinder as to Belshazzar's own place in the government as his father's co-regent. But if thus, in the 67th year of his captivity, Daniel reappears suddenly upon the historic portion of his own pages, the prophetic portion of his book shows us a glimpse or two of him in the years immediately preceding the city's fall. In the first year of Belshazzar he received the vision of the four beasts, descriptive of the succession of earthly empires, and affording a fuller revelation of them than had been vouchsafed to Nebuchadnezzar in the dream which he had interpreted some sixty years previously. The four beasts were seen rising "up from the sea" and striving "upon the great sea," and when (in verse 17) the beasts are interpreted as four kings, the sea from whence they came is explained in accordance with the uniform symbolical application as denoting the world, "shall arise from the earth." Thus the interpretation is guarded against any limitation to the Mediterranean coasts or powers characterised by naval prowess or maritime enterprise. The first beast was "like a lion, and had eagle's wings," the king of beasts joined with the king of birds. We are all familiar through the Assyrian antiquities with the composite sculptured forms with which the mighty conquerors of the East adorned their palaces, and by which they designed to illustrate the characteristics of their dominion. So, like the parables of our Lord, the prophetic vision derives its imagery from objects which were familiar and easy of interpretation to the seer. What the gold is among metals, and the head among the members of the body, such is the lion among beasts, and the eagle among birds. And the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, with its glory somewhat revived under Nabonadius, and his co-regent son Belshazzar, has in the vision of the prophet, as in the dream of its founder, the precedence of honour. Its splendour, however, was only like that of the evening sun breaking from the clouded west, but just above the horizon. "In the first year of Belshazzar, when Daniel saw this vision, the sun of the Babylonian empire was now setting. It was setting (as it seems) in its grandeur, like the tropic sun, with no twilight. . . . Daniel sees it in its former nobility. As it had been exhibited to Nebuchadnezzar under the symbol of the richest metal gold, so now to Daniel, as combining qualities ordinarily incompatible, a lion with eagle's wings. It had the solid strength of the king of beasts of prey, with the swiftness of the royal bird, the eagle. Jeremiah had likened Nebuchadnezzar both to the lion and the eagle. Ezekiel had compared the king, Habakkuk and Jeremiah his armies, for the rapidity of his conquests, to the eagle. So he beheld it for some time, as it had long been. Then he saw its decay. Its eagle-wings were plucked; its rapidity of conquest was stopped; itself was raised from the earth and set erect; its wild savage strength was taken away; it was made to stand on the feet of a man. In lieu of quickness of motion, like eagle's wings, "is the slowness of human feet." And the heart of mortal man (*Ch. enash* with the idea of weakness as in *Heb. enosh*) was given to it. It was weakened and humanised. It looks as if the history of its great founder was alluded to in the history of his empire. As he was chastened, weakened, subdued to know his inherent weakness, so should they. The beast's heart was given to him, then withdrawn, and he ended with praising God. His empire, from having the attribute of the noblest of beasts, yet still of a wild beast, is humanised."—*Pusey*, pp. 71, 72. Keil (p. 224) refers the latter part of the vision to the madness and recovery of Nebuchadnezzar, when in his thanksgiving to Jehovah "for the first time he attained to the true dignity of a man, so also was his world-kingdom ennobled in him." The next beast was a bear, or "like to a bear, and it raised itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it." It answers to the brazen chest and arms of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. The animal denotes power, great and crushing in its destructiveness, but without the attributes of lightness and swiftness found in the former symbol. As the representative of the Medo-Persian empire, Pusey has shown the appropriateness of the symbol in an interesting enumeration of some of the expeditions organised by that power. "It never moved," he says, "except in ponderous masses, avalanches precipitated upon its enemy, sufficient to overwhelm him, if they could have been discharged at once, or had there been any one commanding mind to direct them." The lifting up of one side of the beast denotes the elevation of the Persian division of the double empire, whereby the other member was not dissolved, assimilated, or annexed, but, retaining its integrity in the united kingdom, remained quiescent under the more vigorous leadership of Cyrus. The three ribs between its teeth have often formed a subject of perplexity. Keil shows

that the conquest of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, by the Medo-Persians, satisfies the requirements of the symbolism, and, further, as conquests by the *united* power of the Medes and Persians, is an additional safe-guard against the attempt of Rationalism to separate the component members of that empire into two of Daniel's kingdoms, and thus to make the fourth power's blasphemy against God coincide with the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. The third was a leopard, or perhaps a panther. Insatiable in its thirst for blood, and its great agility increased by wings. If the wings are not those of the eagle, as in the first vision, what it loses in quality it gains in number, four. In this it corresponds with the rapid enterprises and thirst for conquest of the impetuous Alexander. And its four heads mentioned last, and thereby implying posteriority, point to the quartering of his empire after his death. The vision was a brief one, inasmuch as Daniel was ere long to have a fuller revelation of the coming of the great conqueror. The last beast was unlike all the rest, so "dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly," that Daniel had no name that could describe it. Its teeth were iron, with which it "devoured and brake in pieces" its prey, trampling underfoot in its fury what it had not time or inclination to devour. And it had ten horns. Such was the prophetic foreshadowing of the Roman power. If brief, the reason might be that the Spirit of Inspiration knew that another Daniel would be found after two-thirds of a millennium had passed away, who should take up the prophetic scroll and fill in the lineaments of the terrible beast in a final Apocalypse. St. John's predictions help to the understanding of the little horn that rose up among the ten, which had human eyes, and whose characteristic was "a mouth speaking great things." Here, for the first time in the Holy Book, is the mention of the Man of Sin, the last "great word" proceeding from whose mouth, on July 18th, 1870, in the assertion of the Papal Infallibility, is fresh in every man's memory. With reference to the vision of the four beasts, the heat of the controversy turns upon the application of the fourth to the Roman empire. If this be the true interpretation, then the Hebrew exile in the days of the Roman kings, or even the imaginary Daniel of a century prior to Julius Cæsar, would have to be credited with the spirit of prophecy. To avoid this application all kinds of combinations and divisions of the symbols and empires have been attempted, The lion answering to the head of gold in ch. ii. has been applied to Nebuchadnezzar, and the bear to his successors, or individually (as by Hitzig) to Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian kings. But it is clear that the beasts denote powers and not princes, and the emblem of the lion indicates the Babylonian empire in its integrity up to the moment of its dissolution. In the vision of the image it is not difficult to perceive that the head referred to Nebuchadnezzar, and the Chaldean monarchy personified in him. So Daniel explained it, "O King . . . *Thou* art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee" (ii. 38, 39). The second beast has been taken as referring to the Median monarchy; and the third (the leopard) to the Persian one. Delitzsch, to support a pet theory of the identity of the two horns in the 7th and 8th chapters, has advocated this severance of the joint-power which overthrew Babylon. All through the history the phraseology is uniformly that of an amalgamated power. Both sections were spoken of as the conquerors in Daniel's message to Belshazzar. "The law of the Medes and Persians" is an official phrase, denoting a single consolidated government as unmistakably as our own realm is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. M. Godet says:—"This distinction of two monarchies, Median and Persian, is a pure fiction. The first could have lasted but two years, because Darius, the Mede, who would have founded it, was dead two years after the capture of Babylon, and Cyrus, the Persian, succeeded him. The fact is that it did not exist a single instant in an independent form, for, from the commencement, it was Cyrus the Persian who commanded in the name of Darius the Mede, or Cyaxares. The latter only reigned in name, and that is exactly the sense of vi. 28, which speaks of one and the same empire with two sovereigns reigning simultaneously. What otherwise would signify the expression, 'Arise, devour much flesh,' addressed to the pretended Median empire which would have lasted but two years. Delitzsch replies it is the expression of a simple *conatus*, a desire of conquest which is not realised, as if a desire remaining impossible would have found a place in the prophetic picture in which history is traced with such clear lines! . . . The bear, therefore, represents undeniably the Medo-Persian monarchy. It raised itself on one side, i.e., that of the two nations which constituted the empire there was but one—the Persian people—on which rested the aggressive and conquering power of the monarchy. The three pieces of flesh, which the bear held in his jaws, represent the principal conquests of this second great empire."—*Études Bibliques, Appendice*, 389. The third beast, the leopard or panther, if not the emblem of the Persian empire, must refer to the kingdom of Alexander. The former supposition has been excluded by

what has been already advanced; but if the successors of Nebuchadnezzar, or the Median monarchy alone, could be denoted by the bear, we should have to consider the appropriateness of the leopard with its four wings and four heads to the Persian monarchy. We will again quote M. Godet on this point:—"The rapidity of the conquests shown by the four wings was not the distinguishing characteristic of the Medo-Persian empire, while it is the most prominent trait of the power of Alexander. As for the four heads, it is pretended that they represent the first four sovereigns of Persia. This application would be forced even if Persia had but four kings, for the four heads represent four simultaneous powers and not four successive sovereigns. They belong to the organisation of the beast ever since its appearance. But further, Persia has had more than four sovereigns. What of the two Artaxerxes, Longimanus and Mnemon? and the two Dariuses, Ochus and Codoman? If the author wrote as a prophet, how did he see so mistily in the future? we ask of Delitzsch. If he wrote as an historian, that is to say a prophet who wrote after the event, how could he ignore so completely the history which he wrote? we ask of the Rationalists. And how will you accommodate the eighth chapter with this view? The rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now, that being broken; whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."—*Études Bibliques, Appendice*, 391. The identity of the fourth beast and its ten horns with the legs and feet of the colossus of Chapter II. is apparent. Both are represented as trampling down and breaking in pieces everything that comes in their way. The last beast is the immediate precursor of Messiah's kingdom, as the statue is thrown down by the stone hewn without hands. Suppose, according to our opponents' hypothesis, Alexander and the Greek monarchy had not been already portrayed by the four headed leopard, what would be the meaning of the ten horns? It has been answered that they denote the ten kings of Syria, from the death of Alexander to Antiochus Epiphanes, under whom the pseudo-Daniel is supposed to have lived. M. Godet shows that there were but seven kings of Syria before Antiochus Epiphanes, viz.: 1. Seleucus Nicator; 2. Antiochus Soter; 3. Antiochus Theos; 4. Seleucus Callinicus; 5. Seleucus Ceraunus; 6. Antiochus the Great; 7. Seleucus Philopator. These seven are drawn out to the required ten, by the opponents of the Roman application of the fourth beast, by inserting three men who should have reigned, but whom Antiochus drove from the throne,—Heliodore, the poisoner of Antiochus's predecessor, and whose reign lasted but a moment; Demetrius, the legitimate successor, who was a hostage at Rome; and Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, who had some pretensions to the throne. This insertion of kings *de jure* in a list of actual sovereigns is just as valid as any attempt, for a fanciful purpose, to make Queen Victoria the fortieth English monarch from the Conquest, which would stretch the roll of the Plantagenet princes from fourteen to eighteen by the insertion of Henry Plantagenet, the crowned Prince Royal, Arthur of Brittany, Edward of Lancaster, and Richard of York. This theory also lies open to the objection of confining Alexander's successors within the line of the Seleucide kings of Syria to the exclusion of Macedonian, Thracian, and Egyptian dynasties. Does the number ten stand for the indefinite multitude of leaders of these four co-existing monarchies? To offer such an interpretation of a writing, where numbers are used with such singular exactness, is evidently the last effort of a hopeless assault upon the Messianic testimony of the prophet,—a "stroke of despair," as Godet well characterises it. This failing to effect its propounders' design, it only remains that the fourth beast and the lower extremities of Nebuchadnezzar's image point to the Roman Empire and its subsequent divisions in the states of modern Europe, which should in turn give way to a kingdom not of this world. In this part of the Prophecy, as may be expected by all who are acquainted with his Notes on the Apocalypse, the high Anglican Bishop of Lincoln gives no quarter when he turns the weapons of exposition and controversy against the Papal power and its unholy pretensions. If Daniel saw afar off the inveterate and implacable persecutor of the Church of these later times in the little horn which rose out of the ten which preceded it, the vision closed with a far different scene. Nebuchadnezzar had only seen the stone hewn from its mountain quarry without hands, which wrecked in its advance the colossus of the kingdoms of this world. Daniel, however, beheld the Person of the King whose kingdom was to come and to prevail. The vision likewise embraced the "innumerable company of angels" witnessing the triumphs of the heavenly kingdom over the beast, and it found its glorious climax in the revelation of the Son of Man,—then first made known under that blessed name,—not as Isaiah had seen Him on the way to Golgotha, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but in the majesty of His heavenly coronation in our nature. His New Testament fellow-seer saw his Master on the earth again. His

priestly robes encircled with the regal belt of gold, and also with many crowns upon his head. Daniel, rapt away in the spirit, beheld the heavenly side of the cloud which cast its shadow upon the temporarily-orphaned disciples at Olivet. And the dominion with which he saw the Son of Man invested was declared to be "everlasting," and "His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Thus was the forsaken minister of Babylon comforted in his retirement, and prepared for the fall of the dynasty in whose service a great part of his long life had been passed. Though an angel had been the interpreter of his vision—a vision which was a sketch of the future rather than a perfectly-filled-up view of the coming ages—there was much reason left for him to ponder what all of it might be, and how it should come to pass. When we read his words, "As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart" (vii. 29), we need no lengthened description to help us mentally to sketch the daily life of the ex-minister of state. We know his religious manner of life from his youth up—the devout retirement three times a day, the frequent study of the holy oracles (ix. 2), the true religious patriotism which, in restored greatness and amidst cares of state, caused him to fast and weep in sackcloth because of the desolation of Jerusalem. All this would not be wanting in his private life under the princes who knew him not. Thus he mourned over the actual waste of his holy city, and the predicted fall of the realm he had helped to govern, and to guard, until two years had passed away. At the close of that period he is seen again engaged in some royal commission. The scene of the vision is Shushan, the Persian capital. And for a while Rationalism, with its keen scent for Scriptural discrepancies and its strong *à priori* faith in its own deductions from fragmentary uninspired narratives, cried Error here. How, they asked, could Daniel, a well-known servant of the Babylonian crown, be at a place within a neighbour's territory? The assumption was a hasty one, like many formed in the same school, that the two powers were then engaged in hostilities. Again, it assumes that the prophet was there *in propria persona*, whereas the more probable inference is that he was carried in prophetic ecstasy, and awoke to do "the king's business" in his own realm. Loud was its boasting when it proclaimed that Shushan had not then been built. Brief notices in Pliny and Ælian, who wrote six and eight centuries respectively after Daniel's time, have been eagerly caught up as proving its later foundation. If their testimony were more credible than that of the book, our antagonists would have the *onus probandi*, 1, that these words indicate the foundation of the city rather than of a royal residence; and, 2, that such was an entirely new foundation, and not an extension or restoration. The cuneiform inscriptions, however, have done good service here as well as elsewhere, for they mention Shushan as one of the two Elamitic capitals in the reign of Sennacherib's grandson. In the vision, the ram with two horns, one higher than the other, is the equivalent of the side-raised bear of the former one. Its westward, northward, and southward pushing marking the exact geographical directions of the Medo-Persian conquests. There, where learned doctors have long disputed over the application of the symbol, the seer has the interpretation made sure to him by the angel Gabriel. "The rough goat is the king of Græcia. The great horn between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power" (viii. 21, 22). As to the figure of the conqueror, the he-goat corresponds to the four-winged panther of the previous chapter, as he bounds "from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground." No emblem could be more expressive of the rapid rush of conquest achieved by the young Macedonian leader. The great horn, broken in the day when it was strong, and succeeded by four horns (kingdoms) out of his nation but not in his strength, can find no other page of history with which they agree, than the death scene of Alexander, and the four-fold partition of his monarchy. To make his the *fourth* and not the *third* prophetic empire, will require that "wresting" of the Scriptures which is only done to the "destruction" of the unstable operators. As to the view that the ten horns denote the successors of the Macedonian conqueror, we may well afford to postpone its serious consideration until the time when its supporters have arranged their conflicting and heterogeneous lists into one mutually accepted table. The burden of this vision, however, was in its closing scene: the little horn which rose out of the four, "which waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." Thus the invasion of Egypt, Babylonia, and Daniel's native land—to him still in memory, and yet more in view of its future possession by his people, the "glory of all lands"—by Antiochus Epiphanes, was revealed. He sees in vision the foe of the Church of God waxing great, magnifying himself even to the Prince of Israel's host, casting down His sanctuary and causing the daily sacrifice to cease. We know what an occasion of mourning

lamentation, and woe this must have been to the Old Covenant saint whose devotions were stimulated when he turned his face towards the wasted city and sanctuary of his race. Grievous indeed it was for him to have a view of the "abomination of desolation standing where it ought not," but more sad and heart-sickening was it to behold this, preceded and occasioned by the "transgression of desolation." Great as was the impiety of the persecutor Antiochus, far deeper was the sin, and heavier the curse, of the apostate and traitorous High Priests of that age. They renounced their covenant vows and privileges, teaching the Jews to repudiate their circumcision. Three successive heads of the sacerdotal order assumed new and heathen names. One of them, Onias, styled Menelaus, conducted the heathen tyrant into the holy place, where he desecrated the altar with a sacrifice of a sow, and defiled the whole sanctuary with the broth of its flesh. What the heathen satirist complained of as a sign of Roman degeneracy (Juv. *Sat.* iii. 60),—

"Non possum ferre, Quirites

Græcam urbem"—

was far more bitterly felt by the faithful few who thought the highest honour of Jerusalem consisted in its being the "city of the Great King." They knew how little they had to gain, and how much they had to lose, if their "holy city" were to become a copy of Antioch, Alexandria, or even Athens itself. "This process of secularisation was the source of the weakness and of the woes of the Jewish Church. Many of its priests renounced their belief in the religion of their forefathers, and apostatised from the faith of Moses and the Prophets. Thus they became the victims of the persecuting power of Infidelity. God withdrew His grace and protection from them. He punished them by taking away the spiritual privileges which they had scorned, and by giving them over to their enemies. He forsook the sanctuary which they had profaned, and abandoned the Jerusalem which they had heathenised. The Holy of Holies was no longer the shrine of the living God who had once revealed Himself on the mercy-seat. The temple on Moriah became a temple of Jupiter Olympius. The high priest himself sent a deputation to the Syrian games in honour of Hercules. The sacred procession of palm-bearers and singers, who once chanted sacred melodies in the streets of Zion at the festival of Tabernacles, was succeeded by bearers of the ivy-tufted thyrsus, who sang lyrical dithyrambs in honour of the Greek Dionysus, whose ivy leaf was branded upon the flesh of his votaries; and the effusion of the waters drawn forth in golden urns from the well of Siloam, and poured out upon the brazen altar of burnt sacrifices in the Temple was superseded by libations from the sacrifices of unclean animals immolated on the altar of Jehovah, surmounted by an idol altar, 'the abomination of desolation.' These desecrations were due, not to the power of the Persecutor, but to the cowardice, ambition, covetousness, mutual jealousy, treachery, and apostasy of the priests."—Wordsworth, *Introd.* p. xvii. To Daniel it was graciously revealed that this desolation should not be permanent, and he was informed that in 2,300 days from its beginning the calamity should be overpast, and the sanctuary should be cleansed. It is no matter of astonishment that, with the knowledge of such evils to befall his Church and nation, "Daniel fainted and was sick certain days." To suit the theories of those who wish to make the fourth beast signify the Grecian monarchy, diligent attempts have been made to identify the little horn of the seventh chapter (that which came up amidst the ten horns of the fourth beast) with that of the eighth (that which grew out of one of the four horns that came up in the place of the great one on the he-goat, which was broken). There is no reason for their identification, but quite the reverse. The horn in each case is the emblem of evils which break out of an organised state, and assume the form of an excrecence. In the eighth chapter the application of the figure to Antiochus Epiphanes is obvious, from what has been already advanced as to the order and reference of the beasts, as well as from the minute exactness of the prediction concerning him; but widely different is the account of that in chapter seven. The duration of the one is to the time when the sanctuary shall be cleansed, of the other "Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." "That which distinguishes it clearly from the other is that it comes out of the middle of the ten horns of the beast without name, while the preceding one comes out of the four horns of the he-goat which represents Javan (8, 9, 22). We should say then, if we would employ the language of the New Testament, that the little horn of the seventh chapter is the Antichrist, the man of sin (Paul), the beast of the Apocalypse. This power, hostile to God and to the Church, is one which will spring from the confederation of European States, issue of the fourth monarchy; while that of the eighth chapter represents Antiochus Epiphanes, issue of the Greek monarchy, and who made an analogous war against the kingdom of God under the Jewish

theocracy. There are then two declared adversaries to the reign of God indicated in the Book of Daniel—the one proceeding from the third monarchy and attacking the people of the Ancient Covenant, and the other coming out of the fourth and making war upon the people of the New. Whoever reads the seventh and eighth chapters of the Book of Daniel from this point of view, will see the difficulties vanish which have led wise men to the forced explanations which we have just refuted.”—Godet, *Études Bibliques*, App. 394. Daniel emerged from his private life again, not only to complete his testimony to the last of the Babylonian princes, but to be ready as a “chosen vessel” for the carrying out of the Divine purpose concerning his people. When the Persian hosts came in to sack the city and to cut down the king, Daniel, though vested in the newly-conferred scarlet and gold, escaped the fearful massacre. One mightier than Cyrus, had decreed concerning him, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” Babylon had fallen, and the walls of Zion were to be rebuilt. To Daniel there was committed no unimportant share in accomplishing the second event as a result of the first. We need not pause to discuss the vexed question as to the internal relations of the two divisions of the Medo-Persian empire. The annotators upon Herodotus and Xenophon may balance the credibility of their records, both avowedly eclectic groups of traditions, and each written several generations after the events. Cyrus, however, left Babylon to the share of his uncle Darius (Cyaxares II.) while he pursued his course of conquest. We get a glimpse of the reorganisation of the empire under 120 satraps, themselves in their turn directed by a council of three, of whom the now aged Daniel was the chief, while there was a purpose in the royal mind to exalt him to yet greater honour. In an Oriental court, where jealousy and intrigue have ever had a stronghold, one of the “children of the captivity of Judah” was not likely to be exempt from envious plottings. His proud and irritated satraps watched with lynx-eyed malice for some ground of charge. The religious creed was of little moment to them; they groaned under the precedence accorded to a foreigner, and he a prisoner of war. The treasury was under his control, and he doubtless had great influence in matters of petition and appeal. Concerning the kingdom, “they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” Then, but only then, did they seek to accuse him concerning the law of his God. The conduct of Darius fully agrees with the character of Cyaxares as given on the pages of other historians. The decree of the monarch, by which he interdicted all worship except that which should be paid to himself, may seem to men of our generation the act of an imbecile or a madman, but it has to be interpreted in the dimness of an age 600 years before there came a “Light to lighten the Gentiles,” and according to the Medo-Persian ideas of religion. The very usage which fettered the prince who arrogated Divine worship, sprang from the claim of his dynasty to be the earthly vicars or human shrines of Ormuzd. We know the snare which was set, but we know who were taken in their own craftiness. As to Daniel, his fidelity to God had not been shaken by the vicissitudes of sixty-five eventful years since he refused the king’s meat. To a timid hesitating Israelite the way would have been open to a variety of compromises. We know the rest—the raging crowd of his enemies pressing in upon him as he prayed—the hasty charge—the discomfiture of the prince taken in his own trap—the triumph of faith in the den of beasts, and the troubled conscience in the palace—the perfect deliverance—the swift retribution—the new decree in the royal name, giving the glory to the God of Daniel. And when we behold the completion of the cycle of Divine interposition, we catch the murmur of the unbelieving throng, “Why was this waste” of miraculous power! We will content ourselves with the Regius Professor’s answer:—“‘Objectless’ they can only seem to those to whom all revelation of God seems to be objectless. I would that they who make the objection could say, what miracle they believed as having an adequate object. Unless they believed that some miracles are not ‘objectless,’ it is mere hypocrisy to object to any particular miracle as ‘objectless.’ For they allege as a special ground against certain miracles, what they hold to be a ground against all miracles; and act the believer in miracles in the abstract, in order to enforce the disbelief in specific miracles. It was a grand theatre. On the one side was the world monarchy, irresistible, conquering, as the heathen thought, the God of the vanquished. On the other, a handful of the worshippers of the one only God, captives, scattered, with no visible centre or unity, without organisation or power to resist, save their indomitable faith, inwardly upheld by God, outwardly strengthened by the very calamities which almost ended their national existence; for they were the fulfilment of His word in Whom they believed. Thrice, during the seventy years, human power had put itself forth against the faith; twice in edicts which would, if obeyed, have extinguished the true faith on earth; once in direct insult to God. Faith, as we know, ‘quenched the violence of

fire, 'stopped the mouths of lions.' In all these cases the assault was signally rolled back; the faith was triumphant in the face of all the representatives of the power and intelligence of the empire; in all, the truth of the one God was proclaimed by those who had assailed it. Unbelief, while it remains such, must deny all true miracles, and all superhuman prophecy. But if honest, it dare not designate as 'objectless,' miracles which decided the cause of truth on such battle-fields."—*Pusey*, p. 454. But the year of his trial was also the season wherein Daniel's soul was strengthened for the test, or blessed for his endurance, by abundant revelations. He had pondered over the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the length of the captivity, and he found that sixty-eight years out of the appointed three score and ten of their exile had elapsed. Moreover, Cyrus, the conqueror and the coming prince, had been named in a "scripture" which would certainly be received where Jeremiah was held as canonical. And while he was "speaking and praying and confessing" his sin and "the sin of his people," praying for the holy mountain of his God, at the time when, if that holy mountain had still been crowned with the beautiful sanctuary, the evening oblation would have been offered, Gabriel came to him with a message of still greater joy than the return to Sion. The seventy years of captivity were all but ended, but seventy prophetic weeks were to count from the edict for the city's restoration to Messiah the Prince, for to close up the transgression, to seal up the sins, to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint a Holy of Holies, i.e. an All Holy One in whom should dwell the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The special purpose of this vision of the seventy weeks to Daniel and his fellow exiles is worthy of attention. To them the deliverance from captivity and the days of Messiah had seemed to coincide in point of time, but now that the first was near at hand they were told that they must wait a long period before the second promise was realised. Weary had seemed to them the three score and ten years during which God has afflicted them in the land of the stranger; but a period far exceeding that, at the ratio of a week for a day, was to elapse before the consummation of the hope of Israel. During that time the political changes and convulsions revealed in the seventh chapter would be in course of accomplishment. But during all these revolutions Israel was to complete its preparation for the coming of its Lord to His Temple. Well would it have been for them if Daniel's revelation of the time of their national training for Messiah's Advent had been discerned and followed. The seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 years (understood as such by a key already furnished in God's revelation to Ezekiel c. iv. 5, 6), form the most distinct epoch ever vouchsafed respecting Messiah's promised Advent. Regarding the Crucifixion as settling the *terminus ad quem*, the paramount question is respecting the *terminus a quo*. Dr. Pusey has discussed in an exhaustive style the respective claims of four periods to this place of chronological honour. 1. The first year of Cyrus, B.C. 536. 2. The third year of Darius Hystaspes, B.C. 518, when the hindrance to the rebuilding of the temple interposed by Pseudo Smerdis (the Artaxerxes of Ezra iv. 7, &c.) were removed. 3. The commission to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, B.C. 457. 4. The commission of Nehemiah in the twentieth year of the same king, B.C. 444. The end of the whole period of 490 years, calculated from these different epochs, would bring us to the years B.C. 461, B.C. 281, A.D. 33, and A.D. 46 respectively. Looking back, from the knowledge we possess of the fulfilment in our redemption, we naturally regard the third epoch with the deepest interest. The second and the fourth epochs were those of decrees which merely confirmed others immediately preceding them, and consequently sink into a secondary position. The interest is apportioned between the first and the third dates. The decree of Cyrus was for the building of the temple, and its fulfilment, described in Ezra i. and ii., is confined to preparation for rebuilding the sanctuary. And the decree of Darius Hystaspes (Ezra vii.), based upon Cyrus's roll discovered in the Median palace, is limited to the same object. Daniel's weeks, however, were to be reckoned from "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," which was precisely the task committed to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes. That the city, as distinguished from the temple, had yet to be "restored" and rebuilt is evident from the graphic account of Nehemiah's night ride round the broken walls of the city, its gateway still destitute of gates and their walls yet black from the Chaldean burning, and the way of the king's pool impassable for his beast by reason of the rubbish from the breach. Nehemiah's commission, therefore, satisfies all the requirements of the prophecy, and comes nearest to the measure of 490 years from the crucifixion. Again, the whole prophetic period is divided into three sections, seven weeks, three score and two weeks, and "after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off," implies a residue of one week to make up the total already given, in the course of which Messiah's excision should take place. This is confirmed by

the prediction immediately following, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The first period of seven weeks or forty-nine years was to be spent in building the "street" and the wall, even in troublous times, with which chronological data found in the book of Nehemiah would substantially agree. The second and longest section was the interval from the completion of the city until the covenant should be "confirmed" in the ministry of Christ. Then one week of seven years, in the midst of which he should be "cut off." Starting from B.C. 457, the first section would bring us to B.C. 408, the second to A.D. 26, and the midst of the last week would exactly coincide with the beginning of A.D. 30, the year of all years in which one was "cut off, but not for Himself," "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." Keil, however, has followed the eschatological interpretation, the germs of which are found in Hippolytus and Apollinaris of Laodicea. He thus regards the seven weeks as defining the interval before the death of Christ, the sixty-two as pointing to the period from the time when redemption was accomplished until the eve of the end, and the last week as indicating the short but severe conflict with Antichrist. But no man having tasted old wine desireth new, for he saith the "old is better." As to the Rationalist attempt to make the seventy weeks terminate with Antiochus Epiphanes, it may fairly be asked whether, if the conditions of the prophecy being the same, and the shorter period had been pleaded for in the interests of orthodoxy, they themselves would not have been found among the foremost opponents of such a computation? But not yet has "the offence of the cross ceased." Daniel's prophecy has its fulfilment in the events of redemption, and from the prophet's pen as from Apostle's lips we learn of a "reconciliation" made for iniquity by One who was "cut off *not for Himself*." Our opponents urge that this passage relates to the murder of the high priest Onias about 170 B.C., accompanied by the slaughter of 4,000 Jews, and the pillage of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, which was followed some three years (the Rationalistic half week) afterwards by the defilement of the sanctuary, the inauguration of the worship of Jupiter Olympius in the house of God, and the abolition of the daily sacrifice. But the cutting off of the Lord's anointed was to be followed by the destruction and not the temporary profanation of the temple. Then the chronology needs a great deal of manipulation to make the end of the weeks coincide with the Maccabean age. Its *terminus a quo* has been fixed not at the date of any royal decree for the return, but at the period of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. xxv.), i.e. 605 B.C. Very like the old maxim of robbing Peter to pay Paul is this unusual tribute of honour to the era of Jeremiah's prediction. Even then, however, there are difficulties remaining to be settled. From B.C. 605 to 170 there are 435 years, just equal to the three score and two weeks which are mentioned in the text of Daniel, as the largest and middle factor of the divided seventy. The last division of one week is manifestly distinct from the rest, as the time of the fulfilment. The former seven, however, have yet to be accounted for. They are not contemporaneous with the earlier portion of the sixty-two; but they were to precede the sixty-two, as the sixty-two were to precede the one in which Messiah should be cut off. To meet this difficulty it has been proposed to consider the seven weeks as belonging to the period before the decree of Cyrus, i.e. from 588 or 586 to 536, during which time the city and temple were desolate, then the 62 weeks from the return from captivity until 175. But 62 and 7 subtracted from 588 would point to B.C. 105, which is too late for the Maccabean theory. The erudite Ewald, however, has a plan to meet the case. Inasmuch as this period was a time of oppression, and the sabbatic idea among the Jews was always associated with joy, he deducts the sabbatic years from the series, and so brings it to the desired haven of B.C. 175. When with him the Messiah was cut off in the person, not of the priestly Onias, but the heathen Seleucus Philopator, who died just as he invaded Judea. Thus the voice of a faithless school of criticism is but the echo of the cry of the unbelieving Passover mob, "Not this man but Barabbas," and a robber is preferred to Christ. Well does Godet ask at the close of his enumeration of these theories, "What shall we say to these exegetical monstrosities?" Once more the "man greatly beloved" was filled with trouble on account of the "abundance of the revelations" given to him. For three full weeks he went mourning, eating neither flesh nor pleasant bread, drinking no wine, neither anointing himself as he was accustomed to do. While residing on the banks of the Hiddekel (Tigris) in the third year of Cyrus, he saw a vision—nearer resembling that vouchsafed to St. John in Patmos than any other granted to the Old Covenant seers. There is the same glorious

appearance of a human form with countenance of transcendent brightness, wearing a priestly robe, girded with a royal belt of gold, having eyes as lamps of fire, arms and feet like to polished brass, and His voice like the voice of a multitude. Like the disciple in the Apocalypse the prophet sank faint and dumb, but, as there, the Angel of the Covenant touched him with His life-imparting touch. The vision was concerning what should befall his people in the latter days. The exact number and succession of the kings of Persia was revealed. The riches and pride of Xerxes were pointed out. His attack of "the realms of Græcia," then for the first and only time to form a "realm" under one "mighty king." The breaking of Alexander's power and the scattering of his dominion to the four winds of heaven are all depicted with minutest accuracy in the vision on the Hiddekel. Then was disclosed the strife between the Egyptian kings of the south and their northern rivals the Seleucid kings of Syria. The marriage and divorce of an Egyptian princess by Antiochus Theos, and the avenging of her wrongs by her brother Ptolemy Euergetes are likewise foretold. But the vision is a "burden" of Israel, as it culminates in the description of a "vile person." Antiochus Epiphanes appeared in the prophet's view again as the oppressor of his people, the persecutor of the Church, and the defiler of the sanctuary. He saw the strength and exploits of the Maccabean patriots, and he beheld the final defeat and ruin of the man whose name is still a sign of execration to all the house of Israel. The vision continued to unfold the strange events of the future. The time of the sanctuary's desolation was sworn by the angel to be limited to "a time, times, and a half," and the mystic 1,260 days had added to them another short period of seventy-five days as the time from the beginning of the persecution until the peaceful enjoyment of religious privileges again under a complete toleration. The blessedness of those who should wait and come to that time of peace was made known to the prophet. But, like another Moses, he only saw what he was not to enter. Though his life lasted through the whole period of the Captivity, and probably the decree of Cyrus for rebuilding of the temple was drawn up under his influence, Daniel never returned to the land of his birth, and which was still known to him in his later days as the "pleasant" or the "beautiful land." He was bidden to go on in his way, so various and yet so Divinely prepared, until the end, when his long life of toil for foreign prince or for most loved Israel should cease, and if he lost the ancestral inheritance in Zion, his promised "lot" was one in the rest of the people of God. In this book we learn how all history has its consecration in contact with the kingdom of God. (*London Quarterly Review*.) *Daniel an Example to Young Men*:—You have been indulging many a fond and anxious dream of success, honour, and greatness in the world. You would like to do something good and noble for yourself, for the race. You are often absorbed with thinking over plans, movements, and methods of operation by which to conciliate the favour of fortune, to reach distinguished positions in life, and to leave behind you some good record when your race is run. If it is not so, I would not give much for your prospects. And as you think, all the warmth and zeal of your young nature kindles at what you propose to accomplish and make of yourself. I find no fault with this. It is all right enough, and what becomes youthful years. I would have you think with all seriousness, make up your plan of life with the deepest fixedness of purpose, and then pursue it unswervingly through thick and thin, never faltering and never surrendering. Your life will come to nothing without this. True and great men, and great and honourable successes never come by accident. And one all conditioning thing in a successful life is deep-rooted and inflexible devotion to correct religious principle. This made the Daniels, the Pauls, the Luthers, and the Washingtons of history. He who leaves out of his plans and purposes an honest and devout regard for his soul, his God, and eternal judgment, leaves out the very seed grain from which all true greatness and all real success grow. With tremendous urgency, and for ever, rings out that unsolved question of the Master of all wisdom: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Better fail a thousand times, and fail in everything else, than attempt to shape for yourself a life without God, without hope in Christ, and without an interest in heaven. No one can afford such an experiment. It will unmake you if you try it. It will turn your life into nothingness and your being into an ever greatingen curse. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*).

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

DANIEL.

CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1-3. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah.—*The Captivity*:—Jehoiakim was the son of one of the best kings that ever sat upon the throne of David. His father, Josiah, was a fearer of the Lord from his youth. In a period of great degeneracy, he was enabled to live a holy and consistent life. Convinced that religion is the true source of national prosperity, and that sin is the procuring cause of national calamity, Josiah exerted his royal influence to promote the revival of godliness among his subjects. The land, however, was ripe for vengeance, and in wrath against it the days of this excellent prince were shortened. He was "taken away from the evil to come." In the flower of his days, he was slain in the battle of Megiddo, while fighting against Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt. After the death of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz was raised to the throne. This appointment being offensive to the king of Egypt, he deposed Jehoahaz, after a reign of three months, and selected, as his successor on the throne of Judah, Eliakim, another son of Josiah, who, on that occasion, had his name changed into Jehoiakim. The exaltation of such a prince to the throne, in so corrupt a state of society, was a token that judgment was nigh. So early as the third year of his reign, the land was overtaken by the first stroke of calamity. The minister of Divine indignation was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. From the days of Manasseh, the land of Judea was tributary to Babylon. But when Pharaoh-Necho conquered Josiah, he obtained the superiority of Judea. Babylon and Egypt were then rival monarchies, struggling with one another for the ascendancy of the world. When, therefore, Nabopolassar king of Babylon heard that Pharaoh had taken Jerusalem and other towns in Palestine, he resolved to make an effort for their recovery. Through age and infirmity, being unable to head such an enterprise in person, he assumed Nebuchadnezzar his son into partnership with him in the empire, and sent him into Syria. Having conquered the Egyptians on the Euphrates, he marched into Judea and took Jerusalem. Secular history is generally written, just as it would have been, if no agent had the least influence on the affairs of the world, besides those who are visible to our senses. It traces the actions of man, as if man was all. It takes no notice, or but little notice, of God. But Scripture history is written on a different plan. It begins with God, as the creator of the world, and throughout, it exhibits him as its governor, everywhere present, and always operating. In an especial manner, it traces all the revolutions that take place in kingdoms—their origin—their progress—their decline and fall—to his sovereign and holy will, as the ultimate cause. "And the Lord gave into his hand Jehoiakim king of Judah,"—a mode of expression which signifies that Divine displeasure was the true and proper cause of this calamity. In a period of defection from God, superstition often usurps the place of religion. When men have ceased to confide in God himself, they often place their confidence in something pertaining to him, and trust in it for protection from danger. To reprove such a spirit, God usually permits that in which they confide to fall into the enemy's hand. But while they had no confidence in God, they placed the most overweening confidence in the temple. They thought, that so long as it remained among them, they was safe. In one of the earlier messages of Jeremiah, God warned them against this delusion (Jer. iv. 4, 12, 13, 14). This threatening God now began to execute. Literally, "judgment began at the house of God." Having entered the temple, Nebuchadnezzar carried away part of the vessels of the Lord's house. These he took into the land of Shinar, the ancient name

of the region in which Babylon was situated, and placed them in the treasure-house of his god. Considering the place from which these vessels had been taken, and to whose service they had been consecrated for ages, they may certainly be regarded as one of the most remarkable trophies that ever a conqueror presented at the shrine of his deity. But victories obtained over God's people, when they are also triumphs over God himself, will in the end be found pregnant with disaster. Thus, when the Philistines took the ark captive, God glorified himself in a very remarkable manner. And, when he summons the nations to the overthrow of Babylon, one reason mentioned is, to take vengeance on her for what she had done to his temple. "Make bright the arrows; gather the shields; the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple." In a subsequent chapter of the Book of Daniel, we shall meet again with these vessels, and see them prostituted, by an impious monarch, to bacchanalian purposes. Jerusalem was taken in the third year of Jehoiakim. We are not, however, to suppose that this was the end of his reign. Having humbled himself, and promised to pay tribute to the king of Babylon, he was restored to his throne, and reigned seven years. Having then rebelled a second time, Jerusalem was again taken, and he bound in chains, to be carried to Babylon, but died by the way. The final overthrow of Jerusalem did not take place till the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, about eighteen years after this period. When we consider that the sins of the Jewish people were so numerous, varied, and aggravated, and that they had been accumulating for ages, it might have been expected, that they would have suffered the seventy years of threatened captivity, from the time when the final stroke of vengeance came upon them, in the reign of Zedekiah. But, "for the sake of the elect, the days were shortened." The seventy years of the Babylonian captivity did not begin when the temple was destroyed, but when the vessels of the temple were taken away—not when the nation was removed, but when Daniel and a few others of noble birth were carried into Babylon. I. Nebuchadnezzar invested Jerusalem, and took it, by the union of his own skill, and the courage of his army, and yet it is here said, "the Lord gave Jehoiakim into his hand." From this, we may learn, that there is a twofold agency concerned in all the events that take place in this world,—the agency of man on the earth, and the agency of God in the heavens. This twofold agency, however, is not co-ordinate. God and man are not possessed of equal efficiency in the production of events. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, but it is *the Lord* who gives Jehoiakim into his hand. Jehovah is the God of gods, and the King of kings, the First Cause of all events, as well as the First Cause of all beings. Men may form their plans, and gratify their passions, with the most entire freedom from all control, and yet they will only do "what God determined before to be done." This is the fundamental truth of religion, whether natural or revealed; the denial of which shows as great a lack of philosophy, as of piety. If the material, or intelligent, creation, was in any respect independent of God, this would sap every rational ground of confidence and composure. I know few duties more necessary to be inculcated, than this, of connecting outward events with the Divine government. Jehovah is, to a great extent, practically deposed from his throne of providence. Even many who profess to believe in his supremacy, "put a reed into his hand for a sceptre." Speculations on the state of the world too generally overlook the influence of God in the affairs that are occurring. In contemplating the world and its affairs, we should beware of looking only to the hand of man. Let us look beyond the creature, to the Creator. II. The political causes, that led to the overthrow of Jerusalem, are apparent to all. These causes are not stated in the Book of Daniel. They are, however, fully developed in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. In mentioning irreligion, as the radical cause of God's controversy with Judea, it is unnecessary to produce proofs of the assertion from Scripture. While the outward forms remained, there was such a want of true godliness, that Jehovah loathed and abhorred his own ordinances. And, when a people cease to fear God, or decline in this, their national character will begin to lower. They will cease to be distinguished for those loftier sentiments, which have their origin in the more strictly spiritual department of human nature, and which, more than anything else, tend to cherish wisdom, courage, genius, and patriotism. When the religious feeling of a country begins to decline, it will be marked by a growing disregard for God's holy day. Sabbath desecration is placed prominently among the causes of God's wrath against Judah. Religion is the parent and the nurse of all genuine morality. As might have been expected, from the low state of religion, we find the prevalence of immorality stated as one cause of this calamity that came upon Judea. "Run ye," said God to Jeremiah, "to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth;

and I will pardon it" (Jer. v. 1—8). Zephaniah in like manner represents the corruption of manners as extending to all classes. "Her princes within her," says he, "are roaring lions, her judges are ravaging wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary and done violence to the law." There are some sins particularized by all the prophets. Among these none is mentioned more frequently than deceit. With the prevalence of this the prophet Jeremiah was so affected, that at the beginning of the ninth chapter of his book, he breaks forth in these heart-rending strains, "O that mine head were waters," etc. (Jer. ix. 1—8). Covetousness is specified as another sin (Jer. vi. 12, 13). Covetousness is represented as producing fraudulent dealing, and corrupting the sources of justice, because of which the Lord was displeased (Mic. vi. 10, 11). Pride and luxury are also mentioned (Isa. iii. 16—24). The prevalence of immorality, and particularly, the prevalence of deceit, covetousness, and luxury, may, generally, be considered as symptomatic of the last stage of nations. These operate disastrously in two ways. First, They expose to danger, because they are offensive to God. Secondly, They operate, naturally, to produce a dissolution of the social body. Luxury has the same influence on the social health, that an Asiatic climate has upon an European frame; it enervates and debilitates, and causes premature decay, and death. And deceit is like a secret poison, pent up within the bowels of the empire, and gliding fatally, yet imperceptibly, through its veins. And covetousness is like a vulture preying on a diseased and disabled victim, while its blood is still warm, and its breath has not gone forth. And general immorality is like begun mortification, a disease that has no successor in the list of maladies. Irreligion and immorality, when combined, never fail to produce a bitter and malignant aversion to the cause of holiness and truth, and to their adherents. Before the overthrow of Jerusalem, the spirit of irreligion did not exist in a state of apathy. It was roused to great fierceness; it stood forth in the form of malignant contumacy, and defiance against the Lord. His warnings were rejected, his denunciations were scorned, his prophets were persecuted. III. We shall only mention two things illustrative of the circumstances in which the captivity came. 1. The overthrow of the Jewish state came gradually. Manasseh was first carried captive, then Josiah was slain in battle, Jerusalem was then taken four times by the enemy, twice in the days of Jehoiakim, again in the days of his son, and finally in the reign of Zedekiah. From this we may learn, that national destruction is sometimes a gradual thing. It comes in successive shocks, some at a greater interval, and others at a lesser interval. We are not to suppose, because the sins mentioned prevail in any land, that it shall be instantly overthrown. It is with nations as with individuals,—the impenitent person shall perish, but God may spare him to a good old age. Caution is, therefore, necessary, lest we should commit the honour of Christianity, as good men have often done, by denouncing judgment as certainly at hand. Sin will assuredly bring it; but the times and the seasons are in the Father's hands. 2. A second thing very observable is, that before each of these successive shocks of national disaster, God made use of means to promote the reformation of the country. Before the calamities that came upon the land, in the days of Manasseh, godly Hezekiah, had endeavoured, during a lifetime, to promote a revival of true religion. The reign of Josiah immediately preceded this disaster in the days of Jehoiakim. In the interval between the death of Josiah and the destruction of the temple, they were warned by divinely-commissioned prophets. Among others, God employed Jeremiah, a man in whose character, zeal for God was finely united with tenderness to man. And it has been God's ordinary way, to use means for reforming nations, before their overthrow. The flood came and swept away the ungodly world, but did not God give them warning? Nineveh was not overthrown till she was called to repentance by the ministry of Jonah. If God's government be a moral government, then moral evil must be the cause of all physical sufferings, and of all political difficulties. Moral evil is the crime, the political evil is the punishment. Moral evil is the disease, political evil is but the symptom. (*William White.*) *The Judean Captives*.—I. INTRODUCTORY. Nebuchadnezzar is called king, but he was not yet the reigning sovereign of Babylon. He shared the throne in conjunction with his father Nabopolassar. His accession to the sole sovereignty was some two or three years later (compare chapter i., verse 5, with verse 18, and chapter ii., verse 1). This captivity is here said to have taken place during the *third* year of Jehoiakim, while Jeremiah (xxv. 1) places it in the *fourth*. Both statements are true. Daniel reckons the three completed years: Jeremiah the fourth upon which Jehoiakim had just entered. There were three deportations of the Jews in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; this—the first—in 606 B.C., a second in 598 B.C., and the third when Jerusalem was destroyed in 588 B.C. This captivity appears to consist of nothing more than a number of hostages carried to Babylon, among whom wa

Daniel and his three friends, whose history, more particularly of the first, is given in this book. II. **THE CAPTIVES** 1. They were of noble birth. They were selected of the king's seed and of the princes. Daniel himself was probably of the blood-royal, as we learn in I. Chronicles iii. 1, that David had a son of that name. Josephus says he was the son of Zedekiah. It was a sad day at Jerusalem when the most promising of the young nobility, in whom the hopes of the nation were centred, were carried away captive to Babylon. 2. They were distinguished by personal beauty. The orientals connected a handsome form with mental power. This, alas! is not always true. Neither spirituality nor intellect appears to be partial to beautiful tenements; but sometimes the purest gem is found in the commonest setting. "When Socrates, now an elderly man, becomes acquainted with Charmides, the loveliest youth in Athens, he is so deeply touched by the charms of this paragon that at first he knows not what to say. Recovering his self-possession, however, the sage speaks worthily of himself, telling Charmides that the fairest form needs one addition to make the man perfect—a noble soul. History makes it more than doubtful whether the Grecian did not fail here; but about the Jewish youth there is no doubt whatever." (John Taylor.) The Jewish traditions represent Daniel as a tall, spare man, with a beautiful expression. 3. They were intelligent and well instructed. They are represented as "skilful in wisdom," "cunning in knowledge," and "understanding science": by which is probably meant that they had been well taught in the knowledge of their day and had discovered an aptitude for deep studies. The Babylonian king designed to induct them into all the lore of the Chaldeans, in order to wean them away from the worship of God and make them subverters of Israel's national faith. If, therefore, they should be the future prophets of heathenism to their own people, it was necessary that they should be skilful and wise; and if he, indeed, had any such ulterior designs, it must be confessed he chose his instruments well. But there was an element in their previous training which he either overlooked or held too cheaply. If a Jewish youth was taught in science and earthly knowledge, he was yet far better instructed in the truths of his religion. Nebuchadnezzar will find it difficult to eradicate this deeply-planted faith; and the issue will show that, with four of them at least, he makes lamentable failure. 4. They were very young. But God can strengthen the hearts of the young and make the mouths of babes and sucklings to render him praise. Doubtless many a mother, parting with her offspring and sending them forth into life, or to the temptations of collegiate halls, can find comfort in this reflection. III. **THE PROSPECTS OF THESE CAPTIVES.** Considered from a world-standpoint there were two sides to their future. There were elements of deep sorrow, and elements which might be regarded by some as mitigations of their lot. 1. They were exiles. This word is enough to excite our sympathies. So long as the sentiment of patriotism remains, exile will be among the saddest of words. But chiefly to the Jew was exile a bitter misfortune. Not only patriotic sentiments, but religious, contributed to darken the life of one who was borne away from his loved Jerusalem, where stood that Holy Temple in its glorious beauty the visible centre of the worship of Jehovah. Some of the psalms of the captivity reveal the depth of this great sorrow to a Jew, particularly that beautiful song: "By the rivers of Babylon" (Psalms cxxxvii). 2. They were cut off from hope of posterity. They were significantly given into the care of the "prince of the eunuchs," and the ordinary practice of oriental courts leaves us little doubt of their fate. This, moreover, had been prophesied (II. Kings xx. 18). 3. They were to be taught all the wisdom of the Chaldeans. No doubt much of the Chaldaic learning was valueless, but it is undeniable that they cultivated many useful arts and sciences. Daniel and his friends would learn new languages unfolding to them new literature. They would be trained in arts of divination by which they could obtain power over kings, and princes, and the common people. They would be taught the science of astronomy, which at that day the Chaldeans had carried beyond any people. They would be educated in the science of politics, rendering them necessary to rulers as advisers. All this knowledge would of itself give them caste among this new people, would elevate them to position and power. 4. They were to occupy honourable positions in the court of the king. This opens up many prospects which might fire the ambitions of youth. We can well imagine, then, that if these had been godless youths this prospect of power, stimulating their ambitions, might have sufficed to offset the horrors of exile; yet we may be sure that there was not one of them who would not have given all the wealth and splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's court for one brief day on the hills of Judea, among the comrades of their childhood. IV. **A LESSON.** The prince, their keeper, shall endeavour to make of these Jewish captives, Chaldean sages, and he begins this endeavour by changing their names. These four are named for the four chief deities of Babylon. Bel—the Chief-god, the Sun-god, the Earth-god, and the Fire-god. To render this change of character and

religion complete all their external relations are correspondingly changed, and a whole new set of influences are brought to bear upon them. And yet, change what they would, they could not reach the heart. It is beyond man's power to do that. How powerless man stands before the spirit of his fellows! (*The Southern Pulpit, Affairs in Judea*:—From II. Kings xxiii. 34—36, we learn that Jehoiakim was raised to the throne of Judah by Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt. He continued tributary to Egypt three years, but in his fourth year, which was the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, a great battle was fought near the Euphrates between the Egyptian and Babylonian kings, and the Egyptian army was defeated. This victory placed all Syria under the Chaldean government; and thus Jehoiakim, who had been tributary to Egypt, now became a vassal of the King of Babylon. (Jer. xxv. 1, and xli. 2; II. Kings xxiv. 1). After three years, the King of Judah rebelled against the King of Babylon, who came against Jerusalem, and besieged and took it, as soon as his engagements with other wars allowed him to direct his attention to Jewish affairs. The land of Shinar was the ancient name of Babylon. (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. Children in whom was no blemish.—*Piety at Court*:—I. THE HISTORY OF DANIEL'S FIRST APPEARANCE.—1. It is evident that this lad had come in with the others when Nebuchadnezzar led home his captives from the smoking ruins of Jerusalem. 2. Suddenly comes a summons for this young Hebrew to take a position at court (vers. 3—5). Nebuchadnezzar appears to have determined to bring forward into his service some of this captive race. Quite likely his reasons were these: (1.) He desired to gain the advantage of outside talent; the long siege had taught him the stubbornness, gifts, and availability of the Jewish character. (2.) He planned to propitiate the whole race by choosing some of their number for high office; while so strong an element of his population was in a sort of sullen opposition to his government, there was always danger around the throne. (3.) He wished to add the strange power of their divine inspiration to such forces of magic as he held under his control now (ver. 20). 3. The group of companions thus strangely thrown together has enough of picturesqueness in it, if nothing else, to attract attention. Only three besides Daniel are mentioned by name, but there were others associated in the transaction. It is always a serious moment when any young man is summoned to come to the front. Good men are often found in the unlikely places, even in our day. II. THE DESCRIPTION OF DANIEL'S PERSONAL ENDOWMENTS (ver. 4). 1. For one thing, he was finely fashioned in figure and stature. This makes us think how the Israelites once admired Saul, the son of Kish, when he came to the throne; and how the same wayward people afterwards went into rebellion with Absalom, won by his height and his hair. 2. He was nobly born. These all were to be "of the king's seed, and of the princes," when the selection was made. Some say that Daniel was a descendant of Hezekiah, concerning whose sons it was once predicted that they should reign in Babylon. We need not reason much concerning birth or rank, for God's choice of us is all we can wish. 3. He was liberally educated. That counts grandly in the career of each young man; for knowledge is power. The Israelites were not an intellectual race, as a whole; most of the people were farmers, and had flocks and fields; it was an agricultural nation, rather than a scientific. But Daniel had been taught to study, and had learned to think. 4. He was religiously trained. Those old Jews made thorough and honest work of this part of their duty. Here our golden text comes in with all its power: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." 5. He was studious in taste. There is an expression in the narrative which is very significant (ver. 20). We are told that when in consultation with these Hebrew advisors, the king found them ten times better than his magicians and astrologers; the original word is "hands"; they were ten hands above them in wisdom and understanding; they were, hand over hand, superior to them in common-sense and intelligence. 6. He was eminent in the Divine favour (ver. 17.) The Lord even then was giving help from heaven to this young man for his calling. III. THE TEMPTATION TO WHICH DANIEL WAS SUBJECTED (vers. 5—7). 1. The king's plan was this: he designed to swerve these men out from the straight lines of traditional fidelity and belief, and commit them to the orthodox religion of his own country. (1.) He adroitly caused their Hebrew names to be changed; from suggesting Jehovah's worship and service, they suggested the following of false gods and profane policies. (2.) He proposed a distinct political aggrandizement; these captive slaves were to be admitted at court as the peers of the realm. (3.) He offered them free education; they were to be instructed in the Chaldean language and lore. (4.) He furnished them full support gratis; he actually descended into details; he "appointed" the portion of provisions, and of the wine he himself was accustomed to drink. 2. But the implied condition

was this: the whole thing was an adroit ruse and a snare. It made at least four distinct pledges for an alienation of all that these young Hebrews cherished. (1.) They should surrender their religion; (2.) They should drift away from their national speech, history, and hope; (3.) They should take part with the traditional oppressors of their fathers; (4.) Worst and fattest of all, they should enter upon the service of a religion of idolatry. IV. THE EXPEDIENT OF ESCAPE WHICH DANIEL PROPOSED. (vers. 8—14). 1. Observe carefully what Daniel did not do. He did not decline the chance given him for conspicuous service. He only avoided the embarrassing conditions attached to it. He was willing to be useful, if so splendid an opportunity was offered him; but he would not peril his convictions, nor sacrifice his principles. No young man has any right to refuse an opening in life that is advantageous; he must just accept the gift which in the providence of God comes to him, and then consecrate it to the service of God and his fellow-man. 2. Observe the devoutness and trust of the piety these young Hebrews exhibited. 3. Finally, observe the superb success these young men achieved. The ten days passed; they were "fairer and fatter." But there were now three years more before they should come before the king; and still they trusted God. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Bible Biography*.—1. The narrative of striking facts and the delineation of celebrated characters, is perhaps, of all methods of instruction, the most effective. No one is ignorant of the power of example both for good and evil. Such is man's nature, that he is more guided by the practice of others than by his own reason. A child writes more easily after a copy than by rule. Men are prone to imitate whatever they see done, be it good or bad, emulating the one and aping the other. 2. Examples inform and impress the mind in a manner more compendious, easy, and pleasant than precepts or any other instrument or way of discipline. Precepts are abstract, naked, powerless—without a hold on either the fancy, sense, or memory; like the shadows of a passing cloud, too subtle to make any great impression, or leave any remarkable footprints. But example comes home with irresistible power and strikes out its likeness. Precept is the man chiselled out, standing mute in the awful majesty of a statue of Praxiteles; example is the man with the life-speaking eye, the grace of living motion, and the lips parted with instructive lessons. The most successful professors of arts and sciences explain, illustrate, and confirm their general rules and precepts by particular examples. Mathematicians demonstrate their theorems by schemes and diagrams; orators back their enthymemes with inductions; philosophers urge the reason and nature of things, and then throw themselves aback on the practice of Socrates, Zeno, and such like personages. Politics are more easily and clearly drawn out of veritable history than out of books *De Republica*. Artificers describe models, and set patterns before their learners with greater success than if they merely delivered accurate rules and precepts to them. Nor is the case at all different when these principles are applied to morals. Seneca says "that the crowd of philosophers which followed Socrates derived more of their ethics from his manners than his words." It is said of Origen, the most learned man of his age, the author of a *Hexapla*—a man that employed seven amanuenses at once—"that he recommended religion more by his example than by all he wrote." One good example may represent more fully and clearly the nature of virtue than a thousand eloquent descriptions of it. Is it faith we have to acquire? Then we have but to look at Abraham. Is it wisdom, constancy, humility, and resolution? Behold Moses. Is it zeal, patience, perseverance, and piety? Then look at Peter, Paul, and John. 3. Good examples are powerful, because they persuade and incline us to follow them by plausible authority. In a word, examples incite our passions and impel us to duty. It is by reading and studying the lives of those who have distinguished themselves above the rest of mankind, that we may both amuse and instruct ourselves. History has, therefore, done well in immortalizing those men who have, by their talents or genius, or by their enterprise and benevolence, done much for the well-being of their fellow-men. Two important particulars are worthy of being mentioned here and remembered; namely, that the field is open to all, and that special Divine energy is promised to all that will trust in God, and walk in the way of his commandments. Circumstances aid great men, but do not make them. On the contrary, great men make circumstances. (W. A. Scott, D.D.) *True Nobility*.—I. WHAT DO WE KNOW OF THE PERSONALITIES OF THESE YOUNG MEN? 1. They appear to have been nobly born. At all events, if the instructions which Ashpenaz received were literally carried out, that must have been the case. Birth, however, is nothing if it be a man's sole claim upon the esteem of his fellows. 2. But Daniel and his friends were both noble and good, not only of the king's seed, but children of the living God. When one thinks of the temptations to which those of high rank are exposed, it would almost appear that a pious prince is one of the most

admirable of men. Of old, man, for his sin, was doomed to labour for his bread in the sweat of his brow. But the curse has proved, in the good providence of God, the greatest boon which fallen man could have bestowed upon him. Let us think with prayerful sympathy of those perils of a life of leisure and temptation to which some by their birth are exposed, while we thank God for our own humbler, and, it may be, safer lot.

3. Then, further, we may gather from the text that the personal appearance of these four young nobles was attractive. They were "children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured" (Josephus, "Ant.," x., 10, 1). The body, it is true, is only the house which the spirit inhabits. But while the tenant is of infinitely more importance than his dwelling, we have no right to despise either a goodly home or a comely body. If the whole man belongs to God, physical beauty is a gift which the fortunate possessor of it may use for the glory of Him who bestowed it. 4. But the beauty of these young Hebrews was not that of those who have only their faces and forms to recommend them. The powers of their minds were of no mean order (verse 17). Observe here that their knowledge and skill, their learning and wisdom, are directly traced to the hand of the Giver of all good. How apt we are, if we excel our fellows in the matter of intellectual ability, to become proud of our superiority! Ours! It is not ours; it is God's. Did you ever reflect that the mental ability with which a sceptic argues out his conclusions, with which even an atheist seeks to disprove the existence of God, is the glorious gift of God Himself, prostituted to ignoble uses, and turned in defiance against its Maker and Giver? How sure and immovable the truth must be, and how certain, if I may use the expression, must God be of its ultimate triumph, when he allows men to go on year after year using the precious endowments which He has given, and could in a moment take away, for the purpose of endeavouring to overthrow His dominion over the minds and hearts of their fellows! 5. Once more, here, the story of these comely and accomplished youths touches our deepest sympathies when we read that they were involuntary exiles from their native land. We cannot but think that they loved their country. Who shall say what sorrows pierced the heart of this young prince, thus, with his companions, doomed to mourn, in the land and at the court of a heathen conqueror, not only his own sad fate, but still more grievously the appalling desolation which had befallen the land of his birth? II. OF COURSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE BUT THAT THESE YOUNG EXILES SHOULD HAVE THEIR FAITH SORELY TRIED. The king, with that lavish and somewhat indelicate kindness so often associated with despotic power, doubtless meant them well. He had not, it is true, consulted their feelings in tearing them away from the land of their birth, but in his rough way he desired to treat them kindly. Yet to partake of the food and drink thus provided was just what they could not do. It was not wine as wine, any more than it was meat as meat, that they refused. Times are changed with us now, and our difficulties are not of the precise nature either of these captive Hebrews, or of the early Christians (I. Cor. viii.). But though customs change and ceremonial observances vanish away, *principles* abide unchanged for evermore. One of the favourite texts in the unwritten and unholy Bible of the world is, "When you are in Rome you must do as Rome does." Few of us dare to be singular. And yet to be right we must often be singular, not in phraseology, or tone, or look, or garb, but in character and conduct. What would some of us have said if we had been placed in the circumstances described in the text? On the one hand, there was food of the daintiest, wine of the richest; on the other, danger of displeasing the king, and perhaps being cast into an Oriental dungeon. Would it have been a thing to be wondered at if Daniel had reasoned thus; "What does it matter? The notions of our father are antiquated. Moses was well enough in his day, but that day is a long time since. Other times, other manners. It's our policy now to please the king." He would have had his meat and drink, but he would have lost his God, turned his back upon his early faith, forgotten his country, become a Babylonian idolater, and his life, unwritten and unsung, would have sunk into the oblivion which his time-serving cowardice deserved. (*J. R. Bailey.*)

Excellence in Youth:—"Children in whom was no blemish." Such as were Joseph, David, Artaxerxes Longimanus, Germanicus, and others, in whom beauty proved to be the "flower of virtue" as Chrysippus called it. Of Galba the Emperor once said, that his good wit dwelt in an ill house, like an excellent instrument in a bad case; whereas Vatinus the Roman was not more misshapen in body than in mind. The heathens also advise us to beware of those whom nature hath set a mark upon. (*J. Trapp.*)

The Four Hebrew Children:—I. THE BODY.—As they were princes they were chosen to be pages of the king of Babylon. They were to be fed for three years with all the royal dainties. Most boys would have blest their good fortune, and taken their fill of all that was going in the palace. But these Jewish boys refused the king's meat and wine, lest they should eat anything forbidden by their religion. And they grew fairer

and fatter than all the children in the palace. Like them, you should religiously think about what you eat and drink. The children who are content with plain food become the healthiest and fairest men and women. You will smile with suspicion when I tell you what is the healthiest place in all Scotland, and perhaps in the world. Sir Robert Christison proves that it is Perth Prison. For every man who dies inside it, about ten men of the same age die outside. Many of the prisoners have uneasy minds, and their lives have been wild, but no matter: they have by necessity what our four boys had by choice,—water, and the plainest food, and splendid health. Their food costs fourpence a day. I was in Richmond, Virginia, shortly after the great war. Nearly the whole city was a mass of blackened ruins. Two things, they said, astonished them during the siege: first, that they could live on so very little; and secondly, that fewer people died in days of starvation, than in days of abundance. They made the same discovery during the cotton famine in Lancashire. Plenty, it seems, harms more by its excesses than poverty by its privations. Your eating and drinking help greatly to form your character; for your diet influences the soul as well as the body. That Turk was much mistaken, who, when about to drink wine, warned his soul to quit the body for a little, lest it should be harmed. How many evils have sprung from luxurious living? It destroyed Rome, after Rome had conquered the whole world. How safe and noble is the spirit of these boys! They did not despise the body, as monks do: in the spirit of the Bible they honoured it as the handmaid of the soul. They were not as those who live to eat, but who eat to live. By keeping under their bodies they escaped being castaways. II. THE MIND.—They were young thinkers, quickwitted, and eager to learn. Well-favoured and without blemish, they had minds to match their bodies. Your mind is nobler far than your body, and nobler than all the things your eyes behold. The powers of mind are more valued than powers of body by all but savages and stupid people. Often the body is the grave of the spirit; and many value the mind as the minister of the body: they would use it as a sort of chief cook or confectioner for the body. Yet he hardly lives at all, whose mind is not thoughtful. When the mind is not trained or used, man sinks toward the level of the sheep feeding in the pastures, and of the oxen fattening in the stall. His history is made up of nothings. For life without thought is death to all but the body. With many boys and girls the powers of the mind are roused at first as by a kind of sudden conversion. A book, or a conversation, or a lesson, or even a problem in arithmetic—I have known such cases—deeply stirs the mind and makes the youth conscious of new powers. From that day he tastes the sweets of thinking, and burns with the love of knowledge. William Arnot tells that the first time he read a book of his own accord, he was half-intoxicated with the new-found pleasure. Many a writer has used with real affection the words, “my master,” as remembering how much he owes to his teacher. Thus also students long ago called their university, “Alma Mater,” that is, Bountiful Mother. Their university cherished them into mental health and joy, even as a kind mother cherishes her dear children. Because the powers of the mind are so great you should be careful to read only healthy books. If the books of your boyhood are bad, you will regret the reading of them as long as you live. III. THE SOUL.—As the mind is nobler than the body, so the soul is nobler than the mind. The soul is the man, the mind is the soul’s servant, and the body is the servant’s servant. As thought is the life of the mind, so true Christian life is the grandeur of the soul. Their state of body and mind was most helpful to their soul. Their minds were not dulled by over-feeding, nor were their souls clogged with stupid minds. We wonder at their holy lives in such a wicked palace, and at their perfect boldness. The poets speak of a river that preserves the sweetness of its waters amid the bitterness of the sea, and of an animal that lives in the midst of the fire; and such-like were their lives. There is a little insect that gathers around itself a viewless coat of air, and goes down clad in it to the bottom of the sea. The little diver moves about at its ease, unhurt amid the stagnant waters. The grace of God wove such a garment of Heaven’s air around these children, that they passed unhurt through the poisoned atmosphere of Babylon. It made them the children of Heaven, and gave them a nobility of nature more than nature can give. (*J. Wells, M.A.*) *Education and training of youth*.—Those raw country lads with the hulking, slouching gait which gives such a look of clumsiness and stupidity just need training. They are the rough material of which a vast deal may be made. You have in them the water-worn pebble which will yet take on a beautiful polish. Take him and send him to a college for four years; let him then become a tutor in a good family, and before long you find him with the quiet, self-possessed air and easy address of the gentleman who has seen the world. Remember this and look with respect on the diamond that only needs to be polished, the people of whom more might have been made. (*H. O. Mackey*).

Daniel's Education.—From the beginning of next chapter, it appears, that astrology was a principal branch of learning among the Chaldeans. As Daniel was afterwards appointed master of the magicians, we see no reason to doubt that he was taught this, and the other occult sciences of Babylon. We are warranted, from Daniel's tenderness of conscience, to conclude that he neither believed in astrology, nor practised it; but we see no sin in his becoming acquainted with it, just as we see no sin in a Christian being taught the mythology of Greece and Rome, or in a missionary studying the superstitions of the Hindoos. (*J. White.*) *A wise royal policy*.—The instructions, which Nebuchadnezzar gave respecting the education of these young men, show that he had the talents of a statesman, as well as of a general, and that he had an enlargement of view worthy of him who was to be the golden-head in the image of empire. It would have been well for the world if he, and all kings and emperors had always showed as much wisdom in the selection, and care about the education, of those who were to rule under them. (*Ibid.*) *The College Student*.—1. Young men may be carried into captivity by their enemies. There is a captivity more galling than the one into which Daniel was transported, it is the captivity of evil habit. Men do not go into that wittingly. Slyly and imperceptibly are the chains forged upon them, and one day they wake up to find themselves away down in Babylon. Men talk of evil habits as though they were light and trivial; but they are scorpion whips that tear the flesh; they make a road of spikes more bloody than the path of a Brahmin; they are the poisonous robe of Nessus; they are the sepulchre in which millions are buried alive. The young are in more peril because they are unsuspecting. 2. Early impressions are almost ineffaceable. Daniel had a religious bringing up. From the good meaning of his name I know he had a pious parentage. When I find what Daniel is in Jerusalem I am not surprised to find what he is in Babylon. The father plans the character of the child, and its destiny for time and eternity; then the son completes the structure. 3. The beauty of Christian sobriety. The meat and the wine that were to come to Daniel's table were to come from the King's table. Daniel had no right to take that food. He chose pulse. It was a miracle that he did not dwindle away. When God for his self-denial puts upon him this benediction he puts a benediction upon all Christian sobriety. 4. The beauty of youthful character remaining incorrupt away from home. If Daniel had plunged into every wickedness of the city of Babylon, the old folks at home would never have heard of it. But Daniel knew that God's eye was on him. That was enough. There are young men not so good away from home as at home. God forbid that any of us, through our misconduct, should bring disgrace upon a father's name, or prove recreant to the love of a mother. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Men's qualifications for public service*.—It was like the proud spirit of the King to surround himself with all splendour of talent that should throw additional glory on himself and on his throne. Accordingly directions to select candidates for the public service were given to Aspenaz, the chief of the eunuchs. Of him we know nothing more than is stated in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel. He belonged to a class always existing in Oriental courts, often high in royal favour, of large influence, authority and power. This individual appears to have been marked by much wisdom, considerate care, a gracious bearing, and courtly courtesy. That he regarded Daniel with "favour and tender love," should be his passport to our esteem. The King prescribed the qualifications of the candidates. 1. Some of these were physical. Vigour and beauty were required. Probably Daniel was tall, strong, well-built, handsome. 2. The King required knowledge. "Skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science." They were to be generally intelligent, and in particular, acquainted with the science of their country, namely—music, architecture, natural history, agriculture, morals, theology, and prophecy. There is reason to believe that in many of these departments the Hebrews were in advance of the Babylonians. The King proposed to turn their superiority to account. He was evidently a broad-minded and sagacious man. 3. The next requirement was what we understand by "capacity." "Such as had ability in them to stand in the King's palace." "Ability" is here the Hebrew word for strength, power, resource of almost any kind. The King required general capacity, not overlooking moral qualifications. 4. They were to be teachable. Without that spirit, these tall, handsome men would be but as ornamental logs of wood in the palace of the King. Present attainment in knowledge and in moral culture is as nothing compared with the capacity of receiving more, and power to do more in the future. (*H. T. Robinson, B.A.*)

Ver. 4. *The Learning and Tongue of the Chaldeans*.—*Facility in acquiring languages*.—It is amazing what pains some saintly people have taken in order to win souls for Christ! When John Wesley was crossing the seas on his way to Georgia, he

found on board a number of German emigrants who were also crossing to the Western lands. He was seized by a passionate desire to speak to them about the love of the Saviour, but he was hampered by the hindrance of an unknown tongue. He did not know German, and so an intimate communion was impossible. There and then he set himself to learn the language. For many hours every day he laboriously pursued the study, until, long before the journey ended, he was able to tell his German brothers the uplifting story of the Christ of God. Keith Falconer was once in great need of information which would enormously help him in his sacred work. He found, however, that the information was buried in the Dutch language, which was altogether unknown to him. There and then he set himself to learn Dutch, and mastered it in order that he might gain the hidden treasure. (*Hartley Aspen*). *The Study of Science*.—From one point of view religion and science are altogether separate spheres, with different methods. Physical science consists in the observation, description, and classification of the phenomena of the material universe. But the physicist mistakes when he applies the same principle of investigation to the phenomena of the human mind, and especially to theological and cosmological questions. On the other hand, you cannot learn the laws of matter from the necessary conditions of the operations of mind. You cannot teach science by the exposition of the Bible. In scientific studies you may be profoundly religious. A certain enthusiasm of heart and a deep moral purpose are as needful for true advance in science as the clear light of the understanding itself. May the study of science afford illustrations, enforcements, helps to a religious life? Yes. Religion and science both rest upon truth. It is truth that religion recognises. It is truth that science seeks. They cannot be irreconcilable, and finally they must be one. It must be remembered, that no finality has been reached in either sphere. Dogmatism is as impertinent as it is unphilosophical. The very principles of some of our sciences have been reversed within a few years. And in religion, men's conceptions are ever changing, growing in their sweetness, in their scope. Is the study of science to be pursued without any religious thoughts being associated with it? Certainly not. Both religion and morality aid scientific investigation. The man of science will not gain his highest purpose unless he seek in the subject of his learning, to find the supreme God. Two points. The first relates to the care which the scientific student must observe when he transfers his attention from the objects of his proper pursuit to other occupations. And be careful that you do not forget in science that you have human duties. All knowledge is but the means to that nobility of living which we gather up in the word "service." (*Llewellyn D. Bevan, L.L.B.*) *The Chaldeans*.—They were to be taught "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." The name "Chaldeans" is used by the Old Testament writers in a double sense. Sometimes it is used instead of "Babylonian," and applies to the whole nation of which indeed it was the ancient name. Sometimes it refers to a certain order or sect within the nation, the "wise men of Babylon," as they are called throughout the Book of Daniel. To speak of the Chaldean order as a "priestly caste" would be misleading. They were not a caste, since foreigners might be numbered among them, as Daniel afterwards was. Neither were they priestly, in the sense of their functions being confined solely to religion, and their studies to mythology. (Niebuhr compares them to the Brahmins). The Chaldeans were the most influential class in the nation, and derived their power from a remote antiquity. They had a monopoly of the national learning, secular and sacred, and members of their order took a leading part in the affairs of state. Their president stood next to the king; in the event of an interregnum, the government devolved on him; as, for example, after the death of Nabopolassar, when the throne was kept vacant for his son. The wise men of Babylon formed a class which is without precise analogy in the history of any other nation. Religion, politics, science, education—all were in their hands. It would be hard to over-estimate the importance of such an order in an empire like the Babylonian, founded on military conquest, and made up of a congeries of different races. They were the civilisers of the empire; they gave continually to the national life, and conserved the national traditions; to them it was owing that mental progress in any measure kept pace with the material. (*P. H. Hunter*.) *Enlarged Mental Outlook*.—Among those chosen for the royal service were some whose hearts God had specially touched. Young as they were, the troubles through which they had passed had wrought upon them both for moral and spiritual good. But how strange are the workings of God's providence! Up to this time they had been trained in that noble learning, which, from the time of Sennacherib, had been the glory of the prophetic schools. Now they were to be trained in that strange heathen learning, so wonderfully disintegrated in our days. Magic, and the interpretation of dreams and omens, formed an important part of this knowledge; and there were besides, liturgies, hymns, and histories. Up to this time the documents

discovered at Babylon have been mostly of a religious character, while among those found at Nineveh and other Assyrian cities have been historical documents of priceless value. To Jewish youths much of this heathen literature must have been repulsive; it must have offended their religious ideas, and often shocked their moral sense. It had nevertheless a good side. It taught them how large the world is, and that God's empire extendeth over all, and that all are objects of his care. Possibly coming before them with the charm of novelty, it may have made them pursue their studies with the same eagerness and zeal and curiosity which have spurred on scholars to recover the interpretation of the Sanscrit language, and to decipher these very cuneiform inscriptions in which Daniel and his friends were to have their training. And in thus enlarging their mental vision, God was preparing them to do service for His Church at a time when it was no longer hidden away among the mountains of Judah, but in danger of being trampled under foot in the highway of the nations. (*Dean Payne Smith, D.D.*)

Revelation from a new standpoint:—The new revelation which the people of God required for the period beginning with the Babylonian captivity, was to teach them how to regard the powers of the world which they were to obey, to teach them their nature and purpose, and to show them the relation in which the work of salvation which was to begin in Israel, stood to them. A new subject was thus given to prophecy, which, in the nature of things, could not have been given before the captivity, but which now forced itself, as it were, by an internal necessity. But if, according to God's intention, a revelation was to be given concerning the powers of the world and their development, the prophet must needs take a different standpoint from his predecessors; for the Divine word has always a historical starting point, and thus its organ is made fit to receive the Divine revelation. Revelation does not fall from heaven like a written book, which one has but to take into his hands and read; but a man must first receive it into his living spirit, and afterwards write it down, so that it may be adapted to the necessities of the horizon of men. And to qualify him for this work, his historical position must be such that the word from above is not altogether strange to him, such that his whole situation may be, so to say, the human question to which revelation proclaims the divine answer. As the subject of revelation now was no longer as it had been in the time of the earlier prophets, Israel in its relation to the powers of the world, but the powers of the world in their relation to Israel, so the man of God who was chosen to prophecy of this, could not have lived among his own people, but necessarily, at the very centre of the heathen world-power. For only there could he gain such a clear insight into its nature and development, as would fit him for receiving the revelation from on high. (*Carl August Auberlen.*)

Ver. 5. A daily provision of the King's meat.—*The Unnamed Captive Royal Children:*—1. That we should abstain from the least appearance of evil. Daniel and his three companions, alone of the royal children, refrained from partaking of the meat that probably had been offered to idols. They would avoid the least appearance of evil. They would model their conduct so that, placed as they were in a conspicuous position, their public profession and public acts should be such as were calculated to incite in the hearts of their humbler captive fellow countrymen, a spirit of patriotism and a spirit of reverence. They determined to take their stand at the very outset on the side of the right, instead of on the side of the expedient, and to resist the very first appearance of evil, however plausible and outwardly harmless these appearances may be. The first step in the path of sin or crime, the first wandering from the 'path of righteousness, must be carefully guarded against, lest, inadvertently and heedlessly, if not wilfully—we do violence to the dictates of our own conscience, or cause in any way a weak brother to offend. 2. That the road to eminence is through the gate of self-denial. "Their countenance appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the King's meat." So in religious matters as well as secular, it is eternally true. 3. That it is not what we receive, but what we assimilate, that enriches us. It is not what we eat, but what we digest, that nourishes the body. It is not what we read, but what we apprehend, that strengthens the mind. It is not what we profess but what we believe, that edifies the soul. Spirituality is not composed of doctrinal accuracy, or of ceremonial observances, but of practical Christian morality, and of unsullied Christian faith. 4. That the issues of events are in the hands of God. Through God's blessing the pulse and water were rendered more powerfully nutritious than the diet provided by the king. God's ways are not as man's ways. 5. That the education of these royal captives is typical of the course of human life. We are sent into this world as into a training school, by the King of kings, that we may be fitly taught the heavenly knowledge, and the celestial language we need to make us ably and duly to appreciate the beauties and to join in the hallelujahs of the strange land wherein

hereafter we are destined to abide. Our great King, too, of His bounty, gives us each our daily bread for body, mind, and soul, and pours out for us freely the wine from the true vine. This heavenly food some grossly abuse, some foolishly neglect, some ascetically reject, simply from human ignorance or conceit. Asceticism in itself, any more than worldly-mindedness in itself, or sensualism in itself, cannot render anyone fit for the presence of the heavenly King. A proud, a vain, an envious, a jealous, an uncharitable heart may beat as well under the hair shirt of the self-torturing flagellant as under the purple robe of the monarch; and Antony in his dreary cell, and Simon Stylites on his lonely pillar may have been as far from the kingdom of heaven as the sensual Belshazzar at his luxurious banquet, or the worldly-minded Pilate in his tesselated hall. (*R. Young.*) *Wine wisely avoided*:—Charles Lamb, who made all the world laugh at his humour, and then afterward made all the world weep at his fate, who outwitted everybody, and was at last outwitted of his own appetites, wrote thus: "The waters have gone over me; but out of the depths, could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth to whom the flavour of the first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of his life, or the entering upon some newly-discovered paradise—could he look into my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will; to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, yet feel it all the way emanating from himself; to see all godliness empty out of him, and yet not able to forget the time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own ruin—could he see my feverish eye, feverish with last night's drinking, and feverishly looking for to-night's repetition of that folly—could he but feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feeble outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The Early Life of Daniel*:—In the first instance there was a religious difficulty. Daniel had been brought up in the Mosaic institutions, and therefore he had been trained to abjure all meat that had been offered to idols, and all drink that had been laid on the altar of forbidden gods. He was a religious man from home! He was a man who took the commandments into captivity with him! Alas! there are some of us who can throw off our old selves, and do in Rome as the Romans do with a vengeance. Daniel, driven into captivity, took his religion with him. When we are thrown into difficult circumstances, do we take our religious faith with us? When we go to other countries, do we take the old home training? Do we repeat the commandments as they were thundered from Sinai, and do we re-pronounce the oath we took when we gave ourselves to the Saviour, as He hung upon the cross, and welcomed us to His love, and kingdom, and service? That is a poor religion which can be put off like a garment we are tired of for the time being, and can be put on again to serve occasion. How independent man is who has risen above the point of the merely animal life! Temperance all the world over is independence. Moderation means mastery. There are some men in the world who will not be pampered; Daniel was one of them; his compeers belonged to the same class. In order to hold yourselves masters of your appetites, begin early. It is no use a man of forty-five years of age beginning to say he is going to turn over a new leaf; the leaves won't be turned then. . . . You cannot go anywhere where discipline will be a disadvantage to you, and where the power of saying "no" to appetites and tastes will go against you. To the young I am a severe disciplinarian. See how right doing is always willing to be proved. Daniel was willing to take a space of ten days for the proof of the proposition which he submitted to the men who had charge of him and his companions. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Life in Babylon*:—The opening chapter of the Book of the Prophet Daniel contains the key and clue to all that follows, for it tells us of what stuff that man was made who gives his name to the book. The policy of Nebuchadnezzar must be admitted to have been admirable. He clearly wished to avail himself in the interest of his own kingdom, of the best talent and capability of the kingdom he had conquered. He first of all chose out the best material and then proceeded (as he hoped) to subject it to the habits and discipline which should naturalise it in its new country. As he had poured the treasure taken from the Temple of the God of Israel into the Temple of his own god, so he hoped to adapt the human treasure he had acquired to the purposes of his religion and its institutions. He thought they might be cured, not only of all homesickness, as ordinarily understood—the wasting regret and longing for Zion, and the God of Zion, but of those home ideas and affections which are at the root of all patriotism worthy of the name. And among other means which the sagacity of their royal master devised for the accomplishment of this purpose, was that they should be fed, as well as taught, after a fashion to which they were not born. Nominally, the

motive assigned for this special treatment of his prisoners was that they should grow physically strong and well-liking: that they should be well-nourished as befitted the attendants of a court. But can we doubt that the wily king was not regarding only the bodily condition of his pupils, but knew well enough that if he could but once acclimatise them in this respect also—if he could once foster a liking, an appetite for these flesh-pots of Babylon, and make these things, at first luxuries, to become in time necessities, he would have gained a still closer hold upon the future services of his young counsellors and administrators? And he had no suspicion that the body and the mind, or whatever he held to be the seat and origin of wisdom, needed any separate treatment and regimen. Doubtless he honestly believed that body, soul and spirit would thrive alike, and together, upon this more generous diet. But he little knew the man with whom he was dealing. The young student in the wisdom and learning of the Chaldeans may well have felt the temptations of his novel position, for the brain is not independent of the rest of the animal economy, and the stimulant and support of the "king's meat" might have seemed even necessary and allowable to sustain him in the ardent pursuit of this new learning. But he had a past experience to which he could appeal. He had laboured and striven thus far upon simpler fare, and he would make no change. Daniel, the young and wise and spiritual, was in training to be a Prophet of the Most High; and his story shows, only with more detail and circumstance, what we had already gathered from the whole prophetic class before him, that to be a prophet—in that wide sense in which the prophet is a model to the least able and cultivated, the most common-place person among us—the man must be trained upon a food, and in surroundings, which are not those of the reigning influences of the land on which he is to leave his mark. The Prophets of Israel and Judah were no doubt exceptional persons—exceptional in the greatness of their intellectual gifts, as well as moral excellencies. The very mention of a prophet suggests to us one set apart from his brethren because of his superior endowments to teach and guide his fellows. But is not the truer representation of the prophet one who, because he has lived and walked with God, and has not lived the life of the world, has grown up in that wisdom and insight which form three parts of the prophetic faculty? Not chosen to be a prophet because of his eloquence and intellectual force, but because the training of his heart and conscience had fitted him to teach, and to influence by example, the men of his day and habitation. It is the prophet, nourished and growing daily in wisdom and in moral power on his homely porridge, that is the precious image and model of the life that is in a fit state and position for hearing the voice and doing the will of God. Not in the occasional pang and spur of total abstinence, but in the daily moderation; not in the excitement of a ceremonial observance, but in the habitual self-discipline, is the condition of daily growth. But I have said that this history is for us an allegory. The "king's house" and the "king's meat" have a wide-reaching moral and meaning. The very name of Babylon itself has already, in the vivid imagination of men, been seized upon to express certain modern parallels. The great metropolis was long ago nick-named the "modern Babylon," and in its wealth and splendour, in the height to which the arts and resources of human capacity have been cultivated, the parallel is ingenious and happy. But the parallel has another side to it than that of wealth and the cultivation of the "liberal arts." We shall miss altogether the deeper lessons of the story of Daniel, unless we recognise strongly that Babylon, for us, is not a city, or a place at all, but a Spirit, the Spirit of our habitual surroundings. The ideals, the habits, the standards, the hopes and fears, among which we are content to live; the atmosphere of which we are content to breathe; these constitute for us, whether we are young men, just arrived like Daniel from purer, wholesomer surroundings, into the glare and glitter, the luxury and beauty, the stimulating food, and the stimulating culture and ideas, of some new centre of life and action; or whether we are living and travelling elsewhere (for we change our climate but not ourselves, for all the seas we cross), these constitute for us our Babylon. There may be no defined and concrete head and king of this country, no one building that can be called the king's house; no one diet that can be called the "king's meat." Yet there is a governing power which we may be living in subjection to, though we do not see anywhere set down its rules and codes. To live in Babylon, and yet to be the true citizen of a far different country; to be "in the world," yet not "of it"; this is for us the translation of Daniel's action with regard to the king's meat. The very object and design of supporting him from the king's table was to wean him from the food of his native land. He would live apart, with the nourishment and the associations that were bound up with the service of a very different master; lest in this new world of his exile he should forget the "imperial palace whence he came." The resolve of Daniel and his companions was just this: "Though we are in the country and the policy and the religion of Nabuchadnezzar, we

will not have this man to reign over us." And in order that they might preserve their faith in their own God, they would not live a life that was organically bound up with the god of Nebuchadnezzar. So subtle, so intangible, is this hold over us, this Babylonian sovereignty, that many a man is first awakened to a suspicion that he is in slavery to it, by discovering that his allegiance to another master once prayed to and believed in, is slipping from him. How many a young man coming from afar to live in the Babylon of London, or the Babylon of a University, has come after longer or shorter time to be aware that convictions which he had once hoped never to part with are becoming weaker, without obvious and apparent reason. Before the glitter and the enchantment of Babylon, before the interest and fascination of the new learning of the Chaldeans, the old duties and worship of the faith of his fathers seem to pale their ineffectual fires. Without apparent cause, the arguments for the truth of the old Gospel of Jesus Christ seem less valid than before. Why is this? Why is it so difficult to preserve the faiths and standards of Zion in the streets of Babylon? The answer surely is because it is so difficult for a strength that is merely human, to live in the streets of Babylon and not to imbibe the spirit of Babylon, even though the avowed philosophies and worship of Babylon are not yet by name accepted. So difficult to resist the contagion of its example, its habits, its easy toleration of things evil and debased; so difficult not to ascribe our changed relations to the faith of Christ to the cogent power of anti-religious argument, rather than to the corroding influences of the world, which do their work silently but surely, even as the noble stonework of some city cathedral crumbles beneath the acids of the mere city's breath. There are many Babylons in which it may fall to our lot to take up our abode, and make choice of our life's gods. There are the Babylons of great cities where boundless wealth and luxury are found, and boundless pleasure for eye and ear and fancy. There are the Babylons of great centres of education, where the god of the country takes a fairer and loftier shape—the god of knowledge—the Nebo—the "god of the learning of the Chaldeans." It is not the grosser idolatries—the rites of Baal and Ashtaroth—that the nobler and better spirits among us have to guard against, but the more specious idolatry of things in themselves justly beautiful and engaging—the ever developing knowledge and culture of a still growing civilisation. Difficult it is—we know it—in any strength of our own to live in Babylon, and not to be of Babylon. So difficult, unless we set ourselves, with the ever-shadowing might of a power not our own, to walk with God. To traverse the common ways of men, and eat temperately of their common meat, and to do the duties and pursue the studies that are the immediate purpose of our being here, and yet to be strengthened by another food that the world knows not of—this is to live as Daniel lived. (*Canon Ainger.*)

The Saintly Captive.—Realising Daniel's captivity, we gather three familiar elemental and important lessons:—I. THAT SEVERE TROUBLES BEFALL THE GOOD. All that Daniel had to endure was in strange reversal of what we might have thought the blameless, noble, devout character of a man so "well-beloved," deserved or needed. This fact may well be a voice to all of us.—1. Teaching us not to regard the present state of things as final. The social wrongs of this life involve the need of a future life as a justification of a Righteous Governor of the Universe. Daniel was a captive. His coronation is to come. 2. Teaching us not to judge men's character by their circumstances. We may never conclude, because a man is healthy, affluent, famous, that he is, as a cause of all this, unselfish, humble, devout. Nor must we conclude, because a man is wasting with disease, sunk in poverty, obscure amongst even the meanest, that he is therefore false, ungenerous, Christless. You find Daniels among the captives. 3. Teaching us not to be surprised when, notwithstanding our conscious integrity, adversity befalls us. "Think it not strange," etc. II. THAT STRENGTH OF CHARACTER CAN OVERCOME THE EVIL OF CIRCUMSTANCE. He, though a youth in a pagan and profligate court, was not overborne by its evil influences. There seem in him to have been four sources of strength. 1. His incorruptible conscience. This manifested its present vigour, and prophesied its victorious manhood, when, in his youth, it led him to refuse the king's meats. He who has and obeys a robust conscience, is before a contending world as David was before Goliath. 2. His chosen companions. The three Hebrew youths, fellows in misfortune, were evidently also his companions for counsel and prayer. Men are energized for battle with half a world by the true words, the hallowing influence of but two or three choice souls. The friends of the true heroes of history are amongst the most beautiful clusters of human lives. 3. His direct communications from heaven. "A dream is from God." Daniel's dreams opened another world above him, around him, before him, and under its power he became mighty to do, or to dare, or to bear. 4. His habitual prayers. Some are recorded. It is implied that it was his life-long custom to pray three times a day. Such devotion clothed him as in asbestos garments that no temptation could burn. III. THE ADVERSE EXPERIENCES

OF ONE PERIOD OF LIFE QUALIFY FOR RIGHT USE OF A SUCCEEDING PERIOD. The ways in which Daniel was, in his youthful captivity, being prepared for successive stages of his life, were very like the ways in which all may be prepared by any adverse days or years for some usefuller, and it may be happier lot in coming times. Such a life as that of Daniel's youth was an apprenticeship for the work of the Statesman, the Dreamer, the man he afterward became. To us this ought to be clearer than to the men of the prophetic age: for have we not read of Jesus, that he was made "perfect through suffering." (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 6, 7.—The Prince of the Eunuchs gave names.—*Names*:—The highest import of names arises from their association with the highest of all beings. Among Jews and Christians a name gathers round it a halo of beauty, strength, and sanctity, by reason of its relations with the divine. In pagan climes a name becomes significant and revered in proportion to its connection with some idol deity. Daniel and his three companions had received from their fathers names divinely significant. In Babylon they are called upon to assume the names of the idol-gods belonging to the land of their captivity. They were dedicated to the four leading gods Bel, the chief god; the Sun-god; the Earth-god; and the Fire-god. What the "prince of the Eunuchs" did with these young and heroic Hebrews, the "prince of the power of the air" seeks to effect with the children of faith everywhere. His great effort is to merge the divine in the human; the spiritual in the material; and to convert the Church to the world. 1. Daniel. His name may be rendered "God my judge." Instead, he was called Belshazzar, derived from Bel. Daniel's estimate of this change may be inferred from the small use he made of it. He appears to have regarded it as no compliment. Thrice happy are they who, like Daniel, have God for their judge. Whenever they are falsely judged, the just Judge can "bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day." 2. Hananiah. This name signifies, "the grace and favour of God." Shadrach, for which it was changed, denotes the same thing in an idolatrous sense—"the favour, or illumination, or inspiration, of the Sun-god." A contrast is thus illustrated between the divine complacency, and the favour and applause of the world. "The God of this world" is worshipped with as much devotion as the Babylonians coveted the shining rays of their great Sun-god. The world's smiles, her caresses, honours, wealth, and pleasures, are the inspirations of the eager devotion of the multitude. In these things consist their sunshine. Contrasted with this is the true light, revealing by its clear and steady rays all dangerous passes, pitfalls, and precipices, whereby so many perish through the glare of sin. And this favour is a light that shines always. 3. Mishael. This name is composed of two Hebrew words which may be rendered "comparable to God," or resemblance to God." The substituted name retains a part of the word, displacing the last syllable, which is the name of Jehovah, by the name "Shak," the chief goddess of Babylon, the goddess of beauty and pleasure. Meshach, therefore, signifies a votary to the chief goddess of beauty and pleasure, who smiles upon all who bear her name. Babylon's goddess still rules with successful sway. Men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Too often is the temptation yielded to by God's spiritual Israel. 4. Azariah. This name may be rendered "God my help." "Abednego" means "servant of the shining light," or "servant of Lucifer." The two names furnish illustrations of the contrasted characters of the servants of righteousness and those of sin. The service of sin is the service of grief. In a course of evil pleasure and pain are twin companions. Light is attractive, and so is sin; but the light is the effect of fire, and fire burns; so does sin—like the glaring taper alluring to slay the bewildered moth. (*Anon.*) *Names changed for reasons of religion*:—Their very names were a witness not only to their nationality, but to their religion. Daniel means "God is my judge," Hananiah "Jehovah is gracious," Mishael (perhaps) "Who is equal to God?" Azariah "God is a helper." It is hardly likely that the Chaldeans would have tolerated the use of such names among the young pupils, since every repetition of them would have sounded like a challenge to the supremacy of Bel-Merodach and Nebo. It was a common thing to change names in heathen courts, as the name of Joseph had been changed by the Egyptians to Zaphnathpaneah (Gen. xli. 45), and the Assyrians changed the name of Psammetichus II. into Nebo-serib-ani. "Nebo Save me." They therefore made the names of the boys into the names of the Babylonian deities. (*F. W. Farrar.*)

Verse 8.—But Daniel purposed in his heart.—*A Sermon to Young Men*:—The scene of this heroic resolution was Babylon. The circumstances add lustre to the moral grandeur of the brave purpose. To appreciate the splendid courage of this purpose, you must imagine yourself placed in Daniel's position. A captive boy, selected by

command of the king, for special supervision in mental, physical, and social discipline, he suddenly found himself in the line of such promotion as might well fire the ambition and dazzle the imagination of a less ardent nature. But an inconvenient difficulty looms up at the very threshold of this brilliant career. The thing we call "conscience" whispered, "You cannot, you must not!" and the hero within answered, "I will not!" Can you find a grander exhibition of moral courage in all history? Shall he do it? that is the question. "And he purposed in his heart that he would not." They tell us that Babylon, with walls, palaces, temples, hanging gardens, wonderful commerce, mighty Euphrates, marvellous culture, and boundless wealth—that Babylon was great; they tell us that the genius of "the mighty king" was greater still; but I tell you that greater than Nebuchadnezzar, greater than Babylon, or aught that Babylon afforded, was that young, heroic nature, when, planted upon the eternal adamant of moral integrity, and breasting appalling odds, he calmly resolved, "I will not!" Such a purpose, under such circumstances, would deserve to be pronounced the rashness of a madman, were it not for one fact. A fact which, alas! does not always enter into our disposition of life's great emergencies—a fact in comparison with which all other facts are trivial—the central sun in the system of facts! I mean that stupendous, supreme fact: there is a God! Better be on God's side than on the side of Babylon and the king. Believe me, it is the highest wisdom, the noblest policy. The sequel shows that young Daniel did the best thing for himself when he purposed in his heart that he would not. "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." "Natural law," somebody whispers. Yes, but read further in the record: "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Daniel and the magicians! He was master of the situation, because the present lays hold upon the past. The life, whose foundation was laid in the heroic resolution of the boy, grew up into secret sympathy with God, and in the help of the Divine found the hidings of its power. I repeat, better be on God's side! But God is immaterial, impalpable—who ever *saw* God?—and Babylon is so splendidly present to the senses! God is abstract, and Babylon so gloriously concrete. But the spiritual is greater than the material, and the abstract imparts beauty and value to the concrete. (*H. W. Battle D.D.*) *Dare to be a Daniel.*—Very much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days. I like a remark of Mr. Ruskin's. He says, "People often say, 'We excuse the thoughtlessness of youth,'" but he says, "No, it never ought to be excused. I had far rather hear of thoughtless old age, when a man has done his work; but what excuse can be found for a thoughtless youth? The time for thought is at the beginning of life, and there is no period which so much demands, or so much necessitates, thoughtfulness as our early days." I would that all young men would think so. If there is any time when the farmer should think, it is surely in the early stages of the ploughing and the sowing. If he does not think then, it will be of small avail for him to think afterwards. Daniel was a young man, and he did think. It was his glory that he so thought that he came to a purpose, and he purposed, not with a kind of superficial "I will," but he "purposed in his heart," and gave his whole self to a certain definite purpose which he deliberately formed. But, though they might change Daniel's name, they could not change his nature, nor would he give up anything that he believed to be right. Captive as he was, he had a right royal soul; and he was as free in Babylon as he had been at Jerusalem, and he determined to keep himself so, for he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Now, it was because Daniel, while yet a youth, a captive, a student, was so decided in what he did, that his after-life became so bright. God help you, who are beginning life; for, if God begins with you, and you begin with God, your life will be one of happy usefulness, which will have a truly blessed end!

I. THERE ARE TEMPTATIONS TO BE RESISTED.—There never was a man yet who had faith, and who had not trials. Wherever there is faith in God, it will be tested at some time or other; it must be so. It cannot be that the house shall be builded, even on the rock, without the rains descending, and the floods coming, and the winds beating upon that house. Now, first, look at Daniel's temptations. (1) In his case, the temptation was very specious. He was bidden to eat the portion of food that, every day, came from the king's table. Could he want any better? He might have fared like a prince. Could he have any objection to that? He had no objection except this, that it would defile him. There were certain foods used by the Babylonians, such as the flesh of swine, the flesh of the hare, and of certain fish, that were unclean, and when these came from the king's table, if Daniel ate them, he would be breaking the law of Moses as given in the Book of Leviticus, and thus he would be defiled. Remember that the food which was allowed to Israel was to be killed in a certain way. The blood must be

effectually drained from the flesh, for he that ate the blood defiled himself thereby. Now, the Babylonians did not kill their beasts in that way, and the eating of flesh which had not been killed according to the law would have defiled Daniel. More than that, usually such a king as Nebuchadnezzar, before he ate food, dedicated it to his god. Bel-Morodach was greatly venerated by Nebuchadnezzar as god, so that a libation of wine was poured out to Merodach, and a certain portion of food was put aside, so that, in fact, it was offered to idols; and Daniel felt that he would be defiled if he ate of meat which might be unclean, and which was certain to be offered to idols; it would be breaking the law of God, so Daniel would not eat it. But the temptation to do so must have been very strong, for somebody would say, "Why, what difference can it make what you eat, or what you drink?" Others would say, "Why is Daniel so particular? There have been other Jews here who have unhesitatingly eaten the king's meat." (2) Then, the temptation seemed the road to honour. They would say to Daniel, "Surely, if you begin by objecting to what the monarch sends you from his table, you will never get on at Court. People with a conscience should not go to Court." Somebody would whisper in Daniel's ear, "It is the law of the land." Yes, but whatever the law may be, and whatever custom may be, the servants of God serve a higher King, and they have but one rule, and one custom, "We ought to obey God rather than man." In Daniel's case, if he had done what it was proposed to him to do, it would have been giving up the separated life. This is the temptation of the present day. Profess to be a Christian, but float along the common current of the world. Take the name of a Christian, and go to your place of worship, and go through your ceremonies; but do not bring your religion into your business. Act as other people do. This is the temptation of the time. Now, in our own case, what are the particular temptations to which we, as believing men and believing women, are exposed? I cannot go into the question of individuals; but I can imagine some one here who is in a position where he is asked to do what it is not right for him to do. But he says, "I shall be discharged if I refuse to do it. I know others do it, and I must do it." My dear young fellow, allow me to put before you Daniel, who purposed in his heart that he would not eat the king's meat. Sometimes you will find that to be out and out for the right will be the making of you. Any man who speaks the truth will find it the best thing in the long run. So to-day, again, there is the temptation of love for intellectual novelty. And, besides this, we have, nowadays, the temptation to general laxity. People do, even Christian people do, what Christian people should not do; and they excuse themselves by quoting the example of other Christians, or by saying, "We are not so precise as our fathers were." Has God changed? Christians have meat to eat of which the world knoweth not.

II. THERE ARE EIGHT METHODS OF RESISTING TEMPTATION. 1. And the first is that the heart must be set. "Daniel purposed in his heart." He looked the matter up and down, and he settled it in his heart. Before he asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego anything about it, he had made up his own mind. Oh, for a made-up mind! Oh, for the man who knows how to look at his compass, and to steer his vessel whither he ought to go! The grace of God is a great heart-settler. 2. The next thing is, that the life must be winning. Daniel was helped in carrying out his resolution by his own personal character. God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Whenever a man is brought into favour and tender love, and is a good man, there is something about him that has commended itself. There are some who have carried firmness into obstinacy, and determination into bigotry, which is a thing to be shunned. Yield everything that may be yielded; give up mere personal whims and oddities; but as for the things of God, stand as firm as a rock about them. 3. Then observe that the protest must be courteously borne. While Daniel was very decided, he was very courteous in his protests. Firmness of purpose should be adorned with gentleness of manner in carrying it out. 4. Next to that, self-denial must be sought. If you will be out and out for God, you must expect self-denial, and you will have to habituate yourself to it. Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for loss of friendships. 5. And then the test must be boldly put. Daniel showed his faith when he said to Melzar, "Feed me and my three companions on this common fare; give us nothing else." I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried; he should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. III. THERE ARE CERTAIN POINTS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE PROVED BY EXPERIENCE. I speak now to you Christian people who hold fast by the old doctrines of the gospel, and will not be led astray by modern temptations. Now what have you to prove? 1. Well, I think that you have to prove that the old faith gives you a bright and cheerful spirit. 2. Another point that we shall have to prove, is that the old faith promotes holiness of life. There are some who say, "Those people cry down good works." Do we? If you bring them as a price to purchase salvation, we do cry them down. God help us to

prove that we are more truthful and more godly than those who have not like precious faith! 3. The next thing is that we must prove that the old faith produces much love of our fellow-men. 4. And then let us prove that the old faith enables us to have great patience in trial. He who believes the doctrines of grace is the man who can suffer. 5. What is wanted is that we who hold the old faith should be in a better state of spiritual health. May every grace be developed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Daniel and his Companions.—Daniel, even though he was in Babylon during the captivity of his people, was not a part of them, but was a great and high officer in the government of the king of Babylon. In this respect he differed in position from Ezekiel, who was the resident prophet of Israel while in captivity, a captive with them. Ezekiel was much older than Daniel, and, humanly speaking, might have been jealous of Daniel's position as a high and favourite official with the king, whose captives were the older prophet and all his people. Besides, he might have accused Daniel of fawning on the enemies of his people and being untrue to them, in that he took place and emoluments from their enemies while his brethren were suffering a bondage little better than that of Egypt. Yet he never did so reproach Daniel. On the other hand, he twice distinguishes Daniel as one of the greatest of men, classifying him with Noah and Job. (Ez. xiv. 14, 20.) This should teach us a lesson to the effect that we cannot always judge of one man's actions by that of another. Nor, on the contrary, with the examples of Joseph and Daniel, occupying similar positions in Egypt and Babylon, must we be hasty in judging the possible rightness of taking and continuing in the employment of the enemies of God. The question really is not in whose employ we are engaged, but whether in that employment we are keeping a conscience void of offence, and are using our place, while faithful to our employer, for the glory of God. This certainly did both Daniel and Joseph. There is a striking comparison between the history of Daniel and Joseph. Joseph was the first distinguished man of his house, and we may say that Daniel was the last man of great eminence. In their youth they were both captives, and both true to God and their consciences in circumstances that were very trying. Both obtained favour with their kings, and reached places of great honour and power in the kingdom whither in the providence of God they had been sent as prisoners. It is surprising to note how often young men have played great parts in the world's history; and this is especially true of the history of God's kingdom on the earth. Moses and Joshua were comparatively young men for the age in which they lived; David and Solomon were young men when they were called to assume the greatest responsibilities. John the Baptist and Jesus were young men when they began their ministry, Jesus himself being a mere child of twelve years when he first undertook his Father's business. Saul of Tarsus was a young man when Jesus met, converted, and commissioned him to be the great apostle to the Gentiles. Timothy was a mere lad when Paul chose him for his companion, and adopted him as his son. What encouragement is here for young men, and even lads, to enter at once on the work and into the personal service of God! I. DANIEL UNDER TEMPTATION.—Whether it was a part of the deliberate policy of the king of Babylon to corrupt these young men by feeding them from his own table with the meat and drink which had been offered to idols, and so to wean them away from the religion of their fathers, or whether this circumstance was the providential occasion of developing the faith and character of Daniel and his friends is not a question of great moment. Daniel was, from the very beginning of his career, a true witness for the truth. His temptation was all the more severe from the following circumstances: 1. Because of his youth.—It would not have been so remarkable that he declined to compromise his conscience, had he been a full-grown man, with religious principles and character strong by reason of maturity and long habit of righteousness. Youth is, indeed, purer than manhood, but then, as a rule, it is weaker and more easily led by those under whose power and influence it was brought. Had Daniel yielded here to the first temptation, he would hardly have recovered his faith at a later time. If we win in the first fight with the tempter, we may assure ourselves of victory all through life. 2. Because he was away from home.—One of the worst situations for a young man to find himself in, is to be away from home and home influences, in a strange city, especially when surrounded by those who have no sympathy with the religious training and principles of his home life. In this situation Daniel was placed. What had become of his father and mother, his brethren and kindred, we are not told. Possibly they had been killed in the siege or carried away captive to some other province. 3. Because of his helplessness.—He was not only in a strange land and among strangers, but he was a captive, and wholly at the mercy of the king and his servants. He might have said to himself, and not without some show of reason: "I am not responsible for the things which I do under the command of the king, whose prisoner I am." We have heard young men, who

justified themselves for wrong-doing because they were only carrying out the orders of their employers. 4. Because of the subtlety of the temptation.—It was a matter of great self-gratulation to Daniel that he has been selected to fill a high place in the service of the king, and that the king had complimented him by directing that he should be fed with meat and drink from his own table. This high distinction would be recognised both by the other prisoners and by the king's officers themselves. To refuse this peculiar mark of the king's favour would have been both ungracious and impertinent on Daniel's part. There is no surer approach to the citadel of man's moral nature than by the gateway of vanity and with the instruments of flattery, especially of the agents be the rich and great. What we might refuse from our inferiors, or even our equals, is not so easily declined if it is offered by our betters. 5. Because of the peril of his position.—Sometimes we can brave the sneer of the ungodly and the arched eyebrows of the less conscientious, where we should not be willing to stand up under peril of life itself. Yet this was Daniel's danger. The favour of God was more to him than life. We do not wonder after this, that, at a later period of his life, he calmly went on praying with his face towards Jerusalem, even though the den of lions was to be his portion for so doing. II. *Standing by a purpose true.*—1. He was true to a godly education.—Perhaps the low state of religion in his own land had served to increase in him the sense of responsibility for an absolutely true course in the matter now before him. No lad would have stood this test if he had not been thoroughly well taught; not in the external virtues of religion, but in its very essence and power. If we parents wish to be absolutely sure of the course our sons will take, when the time comes to send them forth into the world to fight life's battle for themselves, let us be sure that they go out from us rooted and grounded in the truth, and established in the faith of God and his Christ. 2. He was true to his conscience.—It was not only loyalty to home-training, but loyalty to conscience, that stood Daniel in good stead in the hour of trial. In leaving home we leave home influences, but if we have a conscience that has been trained in the fear of God, we shall always take that with us. Home-training will keep us a little while, but a sensitive conscience is a never-failing guide. He is a happy boy or man, whether rich or poor, prince or peasant, who has a conscience like Daniel's. It will stand by and strengthen him in many an hour of trial. 3. He was true to the word of God.—By taking heed to the word of God, a young man will not only cleanse himself from evil ways, but will be able to do something better: even to keep himself safe from being defiled. 4. He was true to his brethren.—Daniel seems to have been the spokesman for the other three young princes, as he was undoubtedly by nature, and perhaps by rank, their leader. Should he give way, his brethren would hardly stand, and so they would be defiled. If he stood fast, they, encouraged by his example, would stand by his side. Daniel was therefore jealous of his influence as of his own soul's peace. He must be a true witness for the sake of others. 5. He was true to God.—A true Christian may always appeal to the results of a Christian walk for its justification. Daniel only asked a trial of ten days. He believed that God would vindicate his course, and show to the eunuch that in every way it was better to serve God than worship or be compromised with the worship of idols. We may always be sure that God will in the end honour those who honour him. III. *DANIEL VINDICATED AND REWARDED.*—God stood by Daniel, his young servant, in this matter, as he had stood by Joseph in Egypt, and even more promptly vindicated his faith. God's favour was shown in three things. 1. In the favour he gave Daniel with the eunuch.—He had already brought him "into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." God does not wait till the end of our faith to come to our help, but even if there be a purpose in our hearts to be true to him, he gives us preliminary vindication. The early Christians being true to God, won for themselves favour with the people. 2. By giving them greater physical beauty.—At the end of the ten days' trial, "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." In the long run, the man who lives on simple fare will show more physical beauty than he who fares sumptuously every day on dainty food. Chrysostom says of these four young men who stood to their purpose, that "they had better health for their spare diet; and their good conscience and merry heart was a continual feast unto them. They had also God's blessing on their coarser fare, which was the main matter that made the difference." 3. By their superior intellectual ability.—At the end of the three years which had been assigned for their special education, they were brought before the king, and he found them "ten times better in all matters of wisdom and understanding than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." There is hardly a doubt that, if the facts were known and could be tabulated, it would appear that the intellectual life of Christian people is far in advance of those men of the world who reject God and his counsels.

both as to the spiritual life and the general state of the body, promoted by a temperate use of the good things of life. Certainly a wide generalization shows marked superiority in favour of those nations commonly known as Christian, over those which are guided by the superstitions and excesses of heathenism. The general and well-known superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race is due most of all, and first of all, to the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has trained that race for the civilization and the evangelization of the whole world. (*G. F. Pentecost.*) *A stand for temperance:—* We have here a picture of a youth of fourteen making a stand for temperance and piety against temptations and inducements which might well shake the purpose of strong men. The lad did not parley with his resolution, making it contingent upon the success or failure of a first trial. There was no contingency about it; he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the King's meat or drink. It might cost him, not only serious inconvenience and additional reproach, but even his life. He considered these possibilities, and resolved at all hazards to obey first his conscience and his God, and then to regard that only as his duty which happened to agree with this obedience. But Daniel was not only a captive accessible to motives of fear, but he was a youth accessible to the invitations of sin. The obscurity that invests his childhood prevents us from learning how his first years were passed. Although it was at a time when the morals of the Jews were depressed to the brink of national apostasy, when Jerusalem was as ungodly and impure as Babylon herself, Daniel was probably educated with a careful discipline, and his heart had been the early possession of the Great Spirit, who enters the tiny soul of a child, and, as it were, makes Himself another child to accommodate His presence to the undeveloped faculties and free fancies of childhood. Yet he was not insensible to the temptations incident to boyish life. He was born a prince and had tasted the luxuries of rank before his captivity; and in the presence of the dainty viands of the king's table, to school his inclinations into submission, to make the flesh bend to the authority of the spirit, discovered singular ripeness of virtue in one whose years had scarcely surpassed boyhood. 1. Daniel's act was an indirect avowal of his Hebrew faith. That faith forbade him to eat the food of the Gentiles. But this law was not mainly on account of the food itself. If the bread and wine of Babylon had been as simple in their preparation as the temperate provisions of a pious Jewish home, the Jew might not touch them. It was idolatry that brought a taint upon Gentile food. The blessing of wicked deities, lying vanities, was invoked upon the grain and the grape which the bounty of God had ripened; and to partake of food so contaminated was to the Jew like eating and drinking a lie and a curse. In primitive times eating and drinking represented a man's religion. He ate and drank to the praise of the deity whose providence was supposed to have furnished his table; and all who ate with him were partakers alike of his food and his faith. In refusing the king's meat, Daniel proclaimed himself the follower of another religion. Nebuchadnezzar imagined that a slave had no mind of his own; that his will, his conscience, his person, belonging to his Master and Owner, he must follow whatever religion that Master chose to impose. The poor lad could not resist his exile; he had no power over his own person; but young as he was, no one could touch his will, and no one should force him to violate his conscience. Such is the inalienable prerogative of the mind even of a child. But this law of the Hebrews which forbade them the hospitality of other nations was not a matter of faith only, but of morality. Although many Gentiles were distinguished for the severity of their virtues, yet as nations they were profoundly corrupt. They conceived that the gods who gave them food were exalted by the licence of appetite. The worship of some of these idols consisted in gluttony and drunkenness, of others in the gratification of more shameful lusts. Idolatry is, in its effects, the elevation of the animal in man, and the depression of the intellectual. In avowing his faith to the God of Israel, Daniel upheld in his own conduct the morality of that faith. Not in abstinence only, but in all his conduct he was pure; and the effect of his behaviour upon the distinguished men who were placed over him was a beautiful illustration of our Lord's lesson, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." (Matt. v. 16). Ashpenaz was a man of high rank in Babylon; his position implied culture, wealth, and authority; his eye fell upon the young captive; his shrewd penetration discerned at once a mind and character of singular originality; and, judging by one expression in the history, he must have been charmed even to fascination by the endowments, the grace, and the beauty of Daniel's spirit. Here was a godly youth in the presence of an eminent statesman—a man whose opportunities commanded a wide field in the study of character, who had been mixed up with the splendid licentiousness of a court, with the intrigues of a State, and with the subtle involutions of priestly sorcery, and this veteran of the world was awed by the purity and courage of a youth

and a foreigner. The Scriptures attribute this impression to the grace of God: "God brought Daniel into tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." The same is affirmed of the influence of Joseph over Potiphar and Pharaoh. "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and his Master saw that the Lord was with him; and the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake;" and again, Pharaoh said unto his courtiers, "Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Both Joseph and Daniel were beautiful in person and character, and gifted in mind; but these in themselves do not necessarily conciliate and charm observers. I have known persons who possessed them and yet were unable to gain the love and confidence of others; not because they wanted piety and integrity, but for the lack of graciousness, courtesy, gentleness; in one word, *sympathy* with those with whom they had intercourse. It is not enough to be good in principle if we are harsh, uncouth, and unlovely in the expression of it. Some people seem proud of the tartness of their manners; they will never be proud of the number or quality of their friends. We must have our *medium* from God as well as our light; and the medium of a kindly and sympathetic manner is the best reflector for giving a mild and grateful lustre to the light of truth. "Even so let your light shine before men." 2. Daniel's act was a practical affirmation of the benefits and blessings of Temperance. Some of Daniel's fellow captives, students in the Eunuchs' College, ate of the king's meat and drank of the king's wine. It was, and is still, the custom of Oriental courts to pamper young men of this class, to provide their mess with such food as is supposed likely to bring out the ruddiness and beauty of their complexions and to sharpen their minds. There are two things which all monarchs like in their immediate attendants—beauty and intelligence. The education intended to draw out the former is curiously elaborate in Asiatic courts. You will see that this kind of preparation may make a court exquisite, but can never make a man. It is true that the understanding is not neglected: sumptuous dining is considered to be compatible with the most strenuous intellectual exertions. But in the end, when the boys become men, and the motives of competition cease to be the spur of study, indolent and luxurious habits generally take possession of the character, and like the thorns of the parable, they strangle the natural growth of the man. But more than this: the youths trained for the service of Nebuchadnezzar were not intended to be mere court favourites, but wise men; in other words, *Magi*, a comprehensive appellation including statesmen, councillors, astrologers, and soothsayers: men appointed at the monarch's call to interpret a dream, to construe an omen, to read a sign, to register events and observations, to negotiate treaties, to plan festivals, and to direct enchantments. Let me say that stimulants are the snare and not the friends of the intellect. Our greatest works were written by temperate men, or by men in their temperate days. Some of the brightest lights of genius and learning were quenched in intemperance that covered them like the shadows of death. I lift up before you, young people, the example of Daniel; for the hope of the country rests upon you. (E. K. Jenkins, M.A.) *The Young Hebrews an Example*:—What, then, did they do which you may imitate? 1. They scrupulously maintained the moral and religious principles that had been imparted to them in their earlier education. They made a supreme regard for the will of God their rule of conduct, even in little things. But when tried, they were found to be pure gold; and their triumph proves that a pious education is one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed upon youth. If you, young men, have received such an education, be profoundly thankful for it. Nor were they over righteous in this firm but courteous refusal. Nor were they narrow and bigoted sectarians. They were liberal Christians, but not latitudinarians. The Bible and the very nature of the human mind command us to be liberal, but forbid us to be latitudinarian. True liberality of sentiment and largeness of soul are the attributes of strength and conviction of one's own mind. But latitudinarianism gives up essential foundation principles, and says there is no difference between right and wrong—that it is equally a matter of indifference what a man believes, or whether he believes anything at all. Duty is not a thing of latitude and longitude. It is the same thing everywhere. Conscience and God are the same in Paris or Constantinople, as in your New England or Scottish homes. Polar snows or tropical flowers cannot change the eternal principles of rectitude. God's laws, the will of the Supreme Creator, is the only standard of duty. It was not the mere concession of a prejudice, not the mere giving up of some little matters of denominational detail, but the surrender of principle, compromise of truth, apostasy from the true religion, that they were required to submit to. And the lesson taught us is of vast importance. It is that we must not sacrifice conscience, with its awful requirements, to any temporary or worldly convenience. It is better to die of starvation than gain a valuable living by the sacrifice of the soul. Without stern integrity in little things, there is a want of confidence which is fatal to success. A most pernicious delusion

prevails with many good people. They are waiting until they can do some great thing, and think that if a great crisis were to come, they would then have nerve to meet it, and do something triumphant. They cannot find, at present, a place large enough for the discharge of their duties. Instead of quietly laying one brick upon the earth, they are constantly building castles in the air; instead of discharging the plain everyday duty which they owe to God and their fellow men, they pass life in looking for some grand occasion for the display of their virtues. The little things that are usually the turning-points of character, they have not apprehended. They have not learned that events which seem at first frivolous and unimportant, may become the "Thermopylae of a Christian's conflict, the Marathon of a nation's being, or the turning-point of everlasting life or of everlasting death." The point with Daniel was to follow his conscience or his appetite; to cease to be an Israelite, or cease to be a favourite of the great King of Babylon. And his determination was soon made to make everything give way to his religion. He would not let his religion bow to the world, but made the world bow to his religion. 2. The next lesson which the Euphrates sends to the Mississippi, and reads to us from the early life of Babylon's vizier or prime minister and his friends is, that a man is no loser for maintaining right principles. The examination of the four Hebrews presents a noble example of the success of prudence, temperance, and a steady regard to religion. These young men did not think, because they were well born and liberally educated, that they might therefore indulge their appetites without control. On the contrary, with heroic steadfastness they made the will of God, even in little things, their rule of conduct. And what was the result? Did Daniel lose any good thing by his firm adherence to principle? Not at all. The very reverse was the result. Daniel's faithfulness to his conscience, his allegiance to his God, his courteous but firm refusal to do what was sinful, was turned to his advantage, even in this world. Them that honour God, He honours. The result of their faithfulness to God was their promotion in the palace, and the favour of the king. What, then, is the true principle of expediency for young men? We answer, True principle is true expediency. Duty is the way of peace and promotion. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you. It is reasonable for young men to ask God for help in mental as well as in spiritual efforts. He is the father of the spirit as well as the maker of the body. In the toil and business of life, and amid all its perplexing difficulties, cast yourself, therefore, upon the Lord's protection, and look to Him for counsel and guidance. It is easy for Him to "illumine what in you is dark." It is an old saying, that to pray earnestly is to study well. (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*) *Daniel*.—There are some names, let us thank God not a few, that the world will not willingly let die, and that live on for ever in the charmed memory of mankind—names that have been identified with some noble thought, with some lofty purpose, or with some great and glorious deed; names of men who have struck a blow for freedom or who have helped forward the great chariot of human progress, or of men who in their own person have stemmed the rushing tide of falsehood and of error. The name of freedom, the struggle for liberty, stands in this land for ever identified with our great national heroes, the heroes of our history of independence; and the names of William Wallace and Robert Bruce live on. And with them, in the minds of the world, are associated such names as William Tell, of Switzerland, and George Washington, of America. Martin Luther and John Knox are names which stand for ever identified with glorious struggles for the right. And just one more illustration; wherever the thought of self-sacrificing labour and toil for the sake of others, for the sick and the dying and the wounded—wherever that idea is felt to be a power to quicken the pulses and stir the generous emotions of mankind, there the name of Florence Nightingale will be tenderly enshrined. Now I wish to speak for a little on one of those imperishable names, the name of one who is still remembered and still spoken of when children, older and younger, are inspired to deeds of noble daring. 1. The first thing I wish you to notice—is **THE ASPECT IN WHICH DANIEL THINKS AND SPEAKS OF WRONG-DOING, OF WHAT TO HIM AND HIS CONSCIENCE WOULD BE SIN.** He does not speak of it as disobedience to God, though he felt it to be that. He does not speak of it as disobedience to his parents, as breaking away from the traditions of his fathers and going over to the customs and religion of another country and people; but he speaks of it as defiling himself. He would not defile himself. And I would like to ask you this: do you realise that every wrong thought, every wrong feeling, every wrong word, every wrong deed is not only wrong because it displeases God, but it is a wrong against your own nature, it is inflicting a mischief upon yourself, upon your own being? A stain we plant there which no human alchemy can remove. I have seen in our police-courts, and I have seen on the streets of the city, the forms and features of men so bruised and blackened and bloated that their very personality seemed to be obscured. One almost imagines that their

every feature tells a tale of sin and suffering, and the hardship which sin inevitably brings. Slowly, slowly through the long years have those features been changing from the sweet, pure, clean, healthy flesh of a little child; but the strong years have done it, the strong years passed in the practice of sin, in the act and life and thought and feeling. And what is written on the outward features of men and women who have thus indulged in sin is written as indelibly, though you cannot see it, on the inner nature, the soul and spirit. The German poet Goethe sings of "spirit ears," and he speaks of these ears hearing the thunder of the sunrise, as if the sun rose with a great crash, which the ears of the spirit could hear; but if we had spirit eyes which could see what is going on in the spirit world, and see our own veritable beings as Gyl sees it, then we would recognise how all those unhallowed indulgences in thought and feeling and desire, not to speak even of word and act, how all this illicit thought and feeling has written upon our inner nature its own dread and direful mark, and put a stain there which can only be washed out in the "Fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins," and we thank God that "Sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." Sin indulged in, even though it be in secret, even though it be only in thought and feeling, sin thus works its inevitable and irretrievable work, and brings about that frightful change which produces such repulsiveness.

II. HOW WAS IT THAT DANIEL ACCOMPLISHED HIS SUCCESS, OVERCAME HIS TEMPTATION, mastered it and trampled it under foot? Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself, that he would not weave across his vision that web which would hide from himself the joy, the peace, the holiness, the triumph, and success which come from communion with the unseen, but really present Jehovah. Daniel purposed in his heart. The greatest danger to which, in my mind, the young men of to-day are exposed, is not that they deliberately walk into temptation or into sin; but because they do not deliberately determine not to do it. It is because they begin their life without any purpose at all, but drift, drift, drift without rudder or compass, without any strong, resolute determination which they have made as in the sight of God, and which they have resolved by God's help to keep, that whatever others do, for them they will not defile themselves. There is no sadder sight to be seen than the number of young men and women who, without any intention or idea that they are going wrong, in their simplicity, which, however, is not guileless simplicity, for they might and ought to know better, but who in their criminal simplicity permit themselves to be ensnared and led into company where they know their ears and eyes and their whole nature will be assailed with that which will defile. It is too late to purpose in your heart not to do it after it is done. It is too late to make a good resolution not to fall after you have fallen. The time to purpose in one's heart not to defile oneself is before the defilement has been produced; when you are sitting at your own fireside in your own room, or on your knees, there and then is the time. It is too late to deliberate when you are face to face with temptation: the excitement is too strong, the power of companionship is too great. (One word more: there is no use making a resolution unless it is to be kept. The greatest loss that I can think of in this city, is not the loss of money which men spend on that which is not bread, not the loss of labour spent on that which satisfieth not; it is not the loss of life, even, that might be saved if only men and women would act aright—the greatest loss in this city is the loss of mental and spiritual force which is allowed to degenerate into mere drivel, by yielding to the temptations which sap all the mental, intellectual and moral stamina out of the character of our youth. Oh, to see the bright young fellows, the pride of their father, the joy and hope of their mother, who go and throw away the talents God has given them, throw away the noble aspirations of youth, by entangling themselves in scenes and circumstances and aspirations which drag them down; and they become altogether incapable of realising their own aspirations, their own possibilities, because they have allowed themselves to be defiled. This resolution of which I speak must be followed out to be of any service. It is not in resolutions repeated, repeated only to be broken, that you build up a character of force, and strength and power; but it is in solemnly looking at the problems of life, solemnly looking at the circumstances and situations in which you are placed, solemnly confronting the possibilities and temptations that lie before you, and deliberately making up your mind, as in God's sight, as to what your duty is, and then purposing, determining, resolving in your heart that you will not be defiled. You will find in that resolution a strength, a help in the hour of temptation. (Sir Samuel Chisholm.) *The Power of Purpose*.—It may help us to appreciate Daniel's purpose and the power it exercised over him if we remember first that he was living in bad times. He and his fellow countrymen were in captivity; they were the slaves of a heathen king. Their country had been laid waste, their holy city and the sacred temple in it reduced to a heap of blackened ruins. I mention this because such experiences often have the effect of breaking down a man's

purpose and spirit. When blow after blow comes, when disappointment follows disappointment, when defeat succeeds defeat, hope is apt to be lost and purpose to give way. And, as a matter of fact, we know that captivity had this effect on many of the Jews; they lost their faith in Jehovah; they gave themselves up to sheer worldliness. But that was not the way with them all. Daniel was a brilliant exception.^f No longer able to worship Jehovah through the medium of the temple ordinances, nevertheless he did not abandon all worship as many of his countrymen did, but he rose instead to truer conceptions of what real worship meant. Though in Babylon he remained a good Jew, a diligent worshipper of the Lord God of his fathers, and observed all the forms he was able to observe in the circumstances. The bad times in which he lived only brought out more clearly the purpose in his heart not to forget his God. Evil days did not break his purpose; they only strengthened it. Another thing that may help us to appreciate his purpose is that he was living not only in bad times but in a bad place. Babylon was a city and centre of wickedness. It was the home of luxury and profligacy; it was the capital of one of those ancient empires that ate their hearts out by the wanton dissoluteness of their people. This, too, shows the power of Daniel's purpose—that in the midst of evil he would not defile himself. It is easier for some than for others not to go astray. Some are better looked after than others; their lives are surrounded by good influences; they have every advantage on the side of good. But often bad surroundings ruin good men. What is the explanation? It is this: some are animated by a purpose in their hearts that they will not defile themselves, and some are not. It is not that these last are evilly inclined more than the others; it is not that they are worse or more tempted; but it is this—they have never put before themselves a solemn purpose; they have never thought out the question of what their aim and object in life should be; they have never made up their minds what thing it is in life which is worth living for and worth dying for; they have never said with Paul, "One thing I do." There is another explanation which is sometimes given of how men go wrong, as we say, an explanation with which, I confess, I have little sympathy and which is, to my mind, as false as it is dangerous. It is said weakly that we are "the creatures of circumstance," and that if a man's surroundings bring him daily, hourly, into contact with evil, the man himself is not so much to blame as his circumstances. The strength of his passions overcomes his will and so frees him from moral responsibility, it is urged. That is an excuse which Robert Burns gave, you remember, when he wrote the lines addressed to God:—

Thou knowest that Thou hast formed me

With passions wild and strong;

And list'ning to their witching voice

Has often led me wrong.

That still expresses the mind of many, and one hears it frequently just now, all sorts of excuses being pleaded for sin. The scientist has no doubt truth on his side, but he has not all the truth. Heredity is not fate. What we have received from our parents does not weave around us a web from which we can never escape, through which we can never break. If it be true that we belong to God as well as to them, the sins of our fathers are only ours when we make them our own by our own will. The mistake of Burns and all who, like him, listen to the "witching voice" is in listening. He should have put his fingers in his ears. Some of you young men here to-night are, perhaps, in places of employment or in circumstances otherwise far from favourable to your leading godly lives. You are brought into contact with roughness, with profanity, with those who make light of God's name and Christ's religion. And I grant you at once that it is not easy to keep straight and do the right thing and bear the right testimony always in the right way. It needs Daniel's purpose in your heart; it needs a heart set on the doing of God's will; it needs the new heart and the right spirit; it needs the power of the grace of God that cometh down from above. We have seen, then, that Daniel's purpose asserted itself over the crushing effects of misfortune and calamity, and over the subtle ensnaring power of evil surroundings. Let us now see, thirdly, how—and this was the greatest test of it—how it made itself felt in the very smallest details of his life. Now most men would have yielded, as most men in similar circumstances do yield, to the influences thus brought to bear on these four youths; they would have been so enamoured of the king's favour and the luxury of their new position that they would have been only too glad to have accepted it and thought themselves exceedingly well off. But now and again there would be found one of sterner stuff who would not be as mere wax in the conqueror's hands. And such were found in Daniel and his three companions. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Daniel had religious scruples about his eating and drinking. And the meaning for us of the stand he made is this—that religious principle should regulate the smallest details of our life. It is not narrow-

ness; it is not faddism; it is not over scrupulousness; but it is fidelity to the highest duty, it is fidelity to God, when you set down your foot about a small matter, as it may seem to others, and say, No, I dare not do it, little as it is and pleasant as it might be, because thereby I should be mixed up in a practical denial of God. "So did not I because of the fear of God," is a motto which will require from many of you here abstinence from many things which it might be much easier to accept. It is the worst kind of weakness to sink below the level of what we know we ought to be. It invariably brings that loss which is the worst of all losses, the loss of respect for self. President Garfield once said, "I do not think of what others may say or think about me; but there is one man's opinion about me which I very much value, and that is the opinion of James Garfield. Others I need not think about; I can get away from them; but I have to be with him all the time. He is with me when I rise up and when I lie down, when I go out and when I come in. It makes a great difference to me whether he thinks well of me or not." Some would have said Daniel should have been thankful for his mercies. But Daniel saw it in another light. He had to preserve his good opinion of himself, his self-respect, his fidelity to God, which he saw he would have destroyed had he used the food and wine. You see, then, what religious principle can do for a man. You see how it can preserve him, how it can make him bold as a lion, how it can steady his life and make it consistent all through, one great harmony. My brother, you are not right till you can reduce the whole of your life to this one principle of the fear of God, till you are able to bring every action to this great touchstone. Then your path becomes straight as an arrow, no longer wavering, crooked, trembling, zigzag, now this way now that, but straight. It is the man without purpose that goes on a different tack according as the wind blows from one quarter or another. He is a boat without a rudder, tossed about by the storm, buffeted, driven helplessly on to the rocks. He is a horseman without a bridle, carried by the animal in him whither it will. He is a wanderer over a tangled moorland, without a guide, where path crosses path and roads diverge in endless confusion, and yawning deep black ditches come at every step. One of the greatest discoveries of modern times is the reign of law. It has been found that in the world of Nature nothing happens by chance; everything obeys fixed laws, moves on under definite calculable arrangement. That is a great discovery. It enables us to reckon with Nature when we can place this thing and the next in their right places, and attribute each to its uniform cause. When everything is thus fixed by law it cannot be moved, nothing can go wrong, everything moves on towards its accomplishment, doing its work, filling its place, never losing its way. It is like a river bound for the ocean. That is a great discovery, and it is a parable of what every life should be. But what a contrast is presented when you think of the world of outside Nature and the world of human nature! On the one hand you have everything moving on, working in perfect harmony and in eloquent silence—never a jarring note heard, never a momentary pause in the ceaseless movement: one great vast harmony in praise of the Creator. On the other hand, when you turn to human nature, what a contrast! What a jumbled, jarring, discordant, disjointed world God looks down upon in His human creatures! And yet we were made to be a harmony too, only giving back sweeter music to the Creator. My brother, if your life is to be a true harmony and no longer false, if it is to be conformed not to the law of sin and death but to the law of God, you must have such purpose in your heart as Daniel's, and let it rule you. That is the greatest thing in the world—a heart that purposes always to serve God. That is the one thing needful. There is no other principle that takes account of all the facts. Some of them may be good enough for this world, but they are no use for that which is to come. The grand thing about Daniel's principle is that it is profitable for the present and it is life eternal for the future. That it is profitable in the present is strikingly seen in the course of this history. Do not any of you be afraid of the consequences of being faithful to God. The last thing I shall ask you to notice in connection with this incident is the great influence which Daniel exerted. That is seen, first of all, in the influence which he exerted upon his superior officers. In accordance with the Old Testament way of putting things, that good influence is said to have been brought about in this way, that God gave Daniel great favour in the sight of the officers. That is only the Old Testament way of saying that Daniel's consistent, godly, upright life proved a great power on those who were over him. But more than his influence on his officers was the influence on his companions. That is seen in the spell which his strong character cast over them so that they were ready to stand by him and to strengthen him. (*D. Fairweather, M.A.*) *The Judean Captives in the Court of the Babylonian King*:—We must now follow the fortunes of these noble youths, as in the retinue of the victorious monarch they are carried away captive to Babylon. Their young eyes look on new scenes. They pass through countries where the ruins of antiquity contrast strangely with present magnificence and splendour. They pass

through Syria, the old hereditary enemy of Israel, but whose power is now broken as it had broken before the power of Israel. They pass through the fertile plains of the Euphrates, and doubtless, here and there, on their melancholy journey, they meet remnants of the lost tribes, scattered by former captivities. They pass on into the dread East, to the Jew almost a *terra incognita*, a land of which but little was known, save that out of it came forth the grim-visaged men of war whose coming brought terror and desolation to Judea. They pass on to Babylon, at that time the most splendid city of the world, with its palaces, and defences, and gardens, its luxuriance, and magnificence, and wealth. We may imagine these youths duly installed in the palace of the Chaldean priests, and engaged in that curriculum of study which was to result in making them wise and learned in all the arts and sciences then known and cultivated. How much to dazzle the imagination! What new philosophies! What wisdom! What new customs and habits of life! And we can well understand that they could not long remain in this altered condition of things before something would arise which would put their principles to the proof. Certainly we may expect that Babylonian customs will not long run smoothly with Jewish principles. He who has principles in this life has not long to wait before those principles will run counter to something, and put the man to the test, whether he will cleave to his principles or not. I. THE FACTS GIVEN IN THE HISTORY. II. THE TEMPTATION TO WHICH THEY WERE SUBJECTED. This temptation was manifold in its character. 1. There was the temptation of fear. We must suppose them courageous youths, indeed, if they were not accessible to the sentiment of fear. Their master was a tyrant and a despot, accustomed to have his slightest whim obeyed as law. He could ill brook conscientious scruples he could scarcely understand; and the slightest provocation would suffice to awaken in his bosom a wrath that knew no pity, and that delighted, when aroused, to trample upon human life. The prince of the eunuchs, although he was high in favour and authority, knew how to tremble before the wrath of his monarch, and expresses a just estimation of it when he answers Daniel, "Ye make me endanger my head to the king." 2. There was the temptation of isolation. Hitherto they had been surrounded by restraints, which made it comparatively easy to be true to the law. Then all the external circumstances of their life fortified them in their religious observances. But now how changed is all this. Suddenly they find themselves standing alone. All the props upon which they had hitherto leaned are taken away. The assistances of virtue are removed. They have none to depend upon but themselves and their God. They have no trusted adviser, no learned and astute rabbi to whom they may apply for a solution of this ethical problem. They must take counsel of their own heart. "Everybody else does it" is a formula of vindication sufficiently familiar. 3. There was the temptation of gratitude. It is true they were captives, but, barring this, a son could hardly have been more generously treated than were they. Food from the king's table was a distinguished mark of honour. No doubt everything was done that could mitigate the evils of captivity. Future distinction was to be conferred upon them. Present advantages were liberally bestowed. No prince of the realm could have had better opportunities for improvement and prospective advancement. It is a property of noble minds to yield to the suggestions of gratitude. When the world makes onslaught on our virtue there is an instinct of opposition in us that arouses us to fight; but when the world comes coaxing, and overwhelming us with kindness, we are cheated into thinking it base ingratitude not to yield to its suggestions. 4. There was the temptation that comes from conscious inferiority. We have the force of this temptation exemplified in the conduct of Cranmer. When we behold that good and great man (as he truly was, notwithstanding his sad fall) hesitating to commit that act of recantation, which is so dark a stain upon his character, the poet makes him exclaim: "What am I, Cranmer, against whole ages?" He is plied with countless authorities; his tempters make it appear that all the world is against him. "Who am I, then, that I should oppose the world?" marks the submission of an independent soul. Better had he learned with Luther, "One with God is a majority." This temptation was also doubtless felt by Daniel. The wisdom, vast learning, and intellectual greatness of the sages of Chaldea must have made a deep impression on his young mind, and we can readily imagine him, "Who am I, a beardless child, to oppose my convictions to the wisdom of all these?" And how often in life do we find young men forsaking their religion and giving themselves to scepticism, because an honoured professor in their college is an unbeliever, or because some man whom they highly esteem for learning, or wisdom, or intellect, flouts the Bible! 5. There was the temptation of self-interest. How easy is it to stifle conscience with the sophistries of Satan! Assuredly, then, we can measure the dynamic force of this temptation to which Daniel was subjected by our observation of the conduct of men. III. THEIR INCORRUPTIBILITY. It is a grand sight to see a man cleaving to principle, abiding by what he believes right, even though he should stand alone, when influences seductive and influences coercive bear strongly

upon him. Fear strives to overmaster him, but he scorns fear and answers: "I fear none but God." Temptation then comes in new guise, puts on softer attire, poses in the character of virtue, and urges the claims of gratitude; but his just spirit detects the false under the true, and replies: "My God is first." Then the cloak of modesty is borrowed, and self-depreciation is lauded up, and the man is asked if he thinks himself greater than the great, wiser than the wise, more learned than the sages; but his answer is prompt, "I am nothing: these principles are God's, not mine." Then temptation identifies itself with self, and pleads the man's cause against himself, until the man begins to think he is arrayed not only against all others, but also against himself, his own being divided; but I say it is glorious when he can declare, "I sacrifice myself; dearer to me are the laws of God than my own worldly interests." Such a spectacle of moral heroism does Daniel afford. Our admiration of his conduct is heightened by two considerations: 1. His youth. To find these qualities in a beardless boy is astonishing, and lends a heightened charm to the spectacle. 2. His moderation and temperate conduct. We hardly know which to admire most in his conduct, the *fortiter in re*, or the *suaviter in modo*. He "purposed in his heart," but sought by winning persuasion to effect his purpose. IV. SOME LESSONS. Among other things we may learn here: 1. The advantages of early training. We sometimes doubt its efficacy; but we see here that under God's blessing a child may exhibit steadfast and notable piety. 2. The power of influence. Observe the effect of Daniel's influence upon his three friends. It is a blessed thing when the influence of a youth among his comrades is thrown on the side of virtue. 3. That God blesses the faithful. (Ver. 17.) Fidelity to principle, or, what is the same thing, fidelity to the laws of God, may bring even temporal rewards. 4. The advantages of temperance. (Ver. 15.) Observe that the steward feared, lest a temperate diet would result in unhealthiness. How completely was he mistaken! Daniel and his friends thrive all the better for pulse and water. (*The Southern Pulpit*.) Purpose:—A magnificent man was Daniel. Among all the Old-Testament saints he towers colossal. Many of the foremost of them were guilty of sins which the Bible holds up to severest reprobation, but no such stain is on Daniel's escutcheon. No doubt he had his faults, for he was only human, but in so far as the record goes he stands forth as one of the most superb specimens of manhood that the world has ever seen. Some men escape reproach because of the obscurity that envelops their lives. Daniel walked in the fierce white light that beats popular impression that a crop of wild oats is a proper preparation for a crop of wheat, upon a throne. Others continue comparatively pure because so situated that they are never specially exposed to the fiery ordeal of temptation. Daniel, however, walked upon the high places of the earth where the going is always perilous, and spent his life in the encompassment of the soft seductions and perilous intrigues of an Oriental court. He was a man of broadest culture, versed in all the learning of his times, and there was no small learning in his times, and yet he never lost his head nor allowed himself to be lured away from the simple faith of his pious fathers. He lived a hundred years, during seventy of which he overtopped all the men of his time. Such a record as was made by this man is perhaps without a parallel in all the history of the human race. His is "one of the few, the immortal names, that were not born to die." And how came it to pass that he distanced all competitors and forged to the front, and in spite of all the machinations of men and devils stayed there so long, governing governors and swaying a royal sceptre over mighty empires? One word tells the story, and that one word is: Purpose. It distinguished him in early youth, for at the time to which my text refers he was still so young as to be called a child. I would discourage no greybeard who, having long played the fool, resolves to lead a nobler life, but the time to begin is at the beginning. The idea that one can afford to give to inanities and frivolities and vices all one's earlier years before beginning to gird one's loins for life's proper work, is a mischievous delusion of the devil. Far be it from me to inveigh against such innocent diversions as furnish recreation for both mind and body. God hath given us all things richly to enjoy, and amusement has its place and use. But amusement etymologically means "turning away from the Muses," who were supposed to preside over life's noblest intellectual pursuits; but what becomes of the Muses when a man's whole life is a turning away from them? Ay, and what becomes of the life itself? There may be generous aspirations, but they never eventuate in heroic action, for the lack of determined will and persistent purpose. Brains count for something, but most men fail, not for the want of brains, but for want of purpose. Opportunity counts for something, but it is the man with a purpose that sees and seizes the opportunity, and is the creator rather than the creation of his circumstances. Education counts for something, and any young man is a fool who in such an age as ours neglects to avail himself of the splendid equipment which may so easily be his. But education is not everything. How many college graduates are only genteel loafers—too genteel to soil their dainty hands with any sort of honest work. Patience,

pluck, persistence, those are the things that win. A foolish thing it is for a man to curse his fate and blame his "unlucky stars," or gnash his teeth and shake his fist behind the back or in the face of the hated plutocrat; to arraign the laws of the land, and, like Samson, in his blind fury, seek to tear down the pillars on which rests the whole fabric of society. Possibly there may be something the matter with society, but in all probability there is very much more the matter with him. Doubtless there are degenerates and incompetents who are lacking in ability to bring things to pass, but most men have facilities enough to win victories if only their faculties were brought into the field under the marshalship of a single, central, and imperial purpose. Hitherto I have spoken only of the material and intellectual achievements that relate to life upon this little planet. Yet this is not the whole of life, but only its beginning. How brief the glory of mere earthly triumphs! A mighty purpose nerved the arm and guided the destiny of the masterful man who wrote: "I came, I saw, I conquered." Here's the splendid mansion of a multi-millionaire. He was born in the manger poverty, but he purposed to be rich. He girded his loins and set his teeth, and dug and delved and denied himself, and sacrificed everything, including, it may be, honour and life's sweetest charities. It was gold that he was after, and he got it—heaps of it—and he died with his hands full of it, but death broke his grip, and he left it to his hungry heirs. A great thing is it to have an aim in life, but "he aims too low who aims below the stars." But what a thing it is to have an aim above the stars! Such was Daniel's. His eye was fixed upon the highest goal of being, and so beginning with his earliest youth and persevering to his latest breath he "purposed that he would not defile himself." And no man can be a Christian without entering into sympathy with that heroic spirit. For, mark you, Christianity is not something just let down from Heaven, like the sheet which Peter saw in a vision. It is not a something with which the inert soul is mysteriously dowered. I grant that the grace of salvation is the gift of God, but no man ever yet was saved against his will or without his will being roused to supreme activity. The crisis of destiny was reached and passed by the prodigal son when he said, "I will arise and go to my father." If there is anything on earth that requires heroic purpose it is to humiliate oneself by the acknowledgment of wrong-doing. To bow the knee and humbly cry "Peccavi" is the hardest thing that ever mortal undertook, and it requires the courage of a Daniel to do it. And to right about face in all life's plans and pleasures and pursuits is not by any means an easy task. To become a Christian means something more than the acceptance of salvation at the hand of mercy—that is a cheap sort of salvation, that costs nothing, and is actually worth no more than it costs. To be a real Christian means the loyal and loving surrender of one's whole being for time and eternity into the hands of a gracious and Almighty Sovereign, not only for salvation, but for service. We have dwelt ordinarily quite too much upon the rest and too little on the yoke, and so we have belittled and belied religion and brought it into contempt by eliminating from it all that appeals to the heroic element in human nature. Let the truth be frankly and fearlessly told, and let all men know that while it is easy enough to be a mere professor of religion, yet to be a real Christian, to follow hard after the Captain of Salvation in the fight for the truth and the right, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, requires as sternly heroic a purpose as that which girded Paul and Daniel when they had to confront the lions. Think you that the lions are all dead, or that they have lost their teeth and claws? The devil's minions are everywhere abroad, and he that would be a Christian must be willing to endure hardship as a good soldier, for from start to finish it is a fight with principalities and powers, and the rulers of this world's darkness; and he who would win the victory and be crowned with glory will need all that the grace of God can do for him and the girding of a high and holy religious purpose. Let all heroic souls who are willing to enlist upon such conditions fall into line beneath the banner of the cross. (P. S. Henson.) *Daniel in Babylon*.—The first chapter of Daniel is one of the very best sermons possible on the subject of temperance. It goes not merely to the question of the use of intoxicating drinks, but to the further question of unhealthy food. It covers not merely the matter of wine and beer and brandy, but also pastry and pound-cake and confections. In olden times victorious nations had three ways of dealing with those nations they had conquered. One was to carry the inhabitants out of the land, as the Jews were finally carried into Babylon. This was the severest mode, and was only adopted after repeated rebellions. Another was to take away all the leaders and skilled workmen. This crippled them in case they tried to throw off the yoke. This was also tried by Nebuchadnezzar in the second deportation, as will be seen in II. Kings x. 16. The other or mildest form had first been tried by the Babylonian king. This consisted in levying tribute. Very often certain choice young persons were selected and taken back by the victorious general as specimens of the people he had overthrown. Daniel and his three companions, who are mentioned in this and the third chapter, were on this principle

taken back to Babylon. People often foolishly say in contempt of education that God does not need man's learning. But the intimation of the divine record confirms the famous reply, that "Even if God does not need man's learning, still less does he need man's ignorance." When God was about to lead his enslaved people out of Egypt, by his providence he sent Moses into Pharaoh's household to learn everything that Egypt knew. When the New-Testament Church was to be organized and spread all over the great empire, he sent Saul, a free-born Roman citizen, out of intelligent Tarsus up to Jerusalem, that at the feet of Gamaliel he might learn what he would need to know when he should be transformed into the apostle Paul. So here are these four taken to the Babylonian capital that they might have the best instruction the nation could afford. The Babylonian king compares wonderfully well with a vast number of modern parents and government officers. To him two things were needful to make up an acceptable civil officer—namely, a healthy body and an educated mind. He would furnish his own provisions and his own teachers, and then no boy could complain of bad food or poor opportunities. This was genuine civil-service reform. Was the ambition of these boys stirred by the chance thus given them? Where are the boys of fifteen whose hopes would not quicken them to do their very best in these circumstances? It must have been with some such thoughts as these that Daniel and his boyish companions first confronted the question of eating the king's meat and drinking the king's wine. The average boy would have gone ahead and never cared. The average man or woman would have said, "What difference does it make?" The average politician would have said, "It will never do to offend the king's officer." But thoughtlessness is a sin. Boys and girls, as well as young gentlemen and ladies, are bound to think. As we shall see, success came of thinking. When a boy first tries to shoot birds on the wing he usually fires too quickly. He must learn to stop an instant and steady himself before he fires. So it is in all life. It may be but a moment for thought, but that moment of self-possessing, reassuring thought may be of infinite value. As for these four young men, they foresaw what was coming and made up their minds about it. Our hero seems to have been a born leader, and he led here. With him it was not an open question. He "purposed in his heart"—not with the stubbornness of self-will, but with the resolution of deep conviction. His three companions stood by him. Whether with God or not, certain it is that with man politeness pays. It gave this open-hearted boy the "favour and tender love" of Melzar, his present master. That same trait of character, coupled with his integrity and ability, held for him the confidence of King Nebuchadnezzar in after years when God made Daniel his mouthpiece to reprove the king's iniquities and pride. Iniquity and insolence may seem to prosper for a time, and the lions' den open for Daniel's feet; but at last the hungry lions make a meal of the good man's foes. When Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself with the king's meat, it was purely a question of principle. He did not then know that his course was wise. It seemed utterly foolish. King Nebuchadnezzar and Melzar both believed that the popular opinion of the day was all right in saying that wine and fat meat were necessary for a clear complexion and a quick brain. The same false notion is widely held now about lager beer and tonics. Is it true? Ask the health records. You will find cholera, yellow fever, diphtheria and the rest give explicit answer that they can much more easily carry off the tipplers and toppers than those who have not burnt out their constitutions with these slow fires. The poor envy the rich the food on their table, and the rich envy the poor the food that is digested. Boys think it is big to smoke cigarettes, but the doctors say it stunts their growth and poisons their blood. You may not wish to obey Nature's health laws, but you cannot defy them and escape. The health and brain-power of the Jews would teach the Gentiles a lesson if the Gentiles were not so heedless. Many will doubt this statement and stubbornly stick to Melzar's notion, that if they restrict themselves to Daniel's diet they will soon become worse-looking than others which are "of their set." Well, why not take Daniel's way of settling it? Just try it. But be sure and have Melzar's honesty, and when the experiment proves you are mistaken give it up. I have a most profound respect for honest old Melzar. It is not an easy thing to give up to a boy when the boy is right and you are wrong. It was specially risky with Melzar, for if he blundered his head was the forfeit. No pride of his own opinion controlled him. We must not forget, however, in our enthusiasm over Daniel's triumph in physical beauty and his splendid victory in intellectual learning, that he knew nothing of all this when he made his decision. With our knowledge of the outcome any of us could have the courage to insist on vegetables instead of the king's idol-polluted meat and wine. We must remember, however, that with this youth, of twelve to twenty at the outside, it was wholly a matter of duty. As no shame or pain is so deep as a mother's humiliation over wayward, wicked children, so no joy is sweeter than that which mothers feel when their children, on their own responsibility and out of their own force of character, choose the right and do it. Boys

and girls, suppose your mothers knew you as well as you know yourselves, would they weep for joy, or shame? At last the day of decision came. It always does—a day of final judicial inspection, when the uses to which opportunities have been put are revealed, and the estimate is to be made up of all past conduct. Daniel was to stand before the king, and be not only inspected but examined by the king. These Hebrew young men, of now sixteen or twenty, were found ten times better than their best. Here was the foreshadowing of what Daniel was hereafter to do. They had boasted of their soothing insight into dreams until "Chaldean" had become synonymous with "wise man." When, then, the king, as is related in the next chapter and ninth verse, put to them a crucial test of their powers by which he could certainly know the value of their interpretation, they were all at fault. Their gods were proven utterly ignorant. Daniel's humility is as beautiful as his faith and greatness. (*G. P. Hays, D.D.*) *Daniel an Example to Young Men*.—I. DANIEL'S PRINCIPLE. "I am a child of God, and as such I belong to God in my entire being." (II. Tim. ii. 21.) Such was Daniel's principle—it was faith in the testimony of God; the certainty of being one of His children; and it was thereby he triumphed. And it is here, at the very commencement, that the religion of Daniel, of a soul sealed by the Holy Spirit, differs essentially from that of those fearful and double-minded disciples who, believing only part of the testimony of God, dare scarcely hope for salvation, and place the certainty of it only after a long course of labours and of sacrifices. How am I to believe, cries out such a disciple, that I am already in grace and that God has made me His child! Let me be purer, more cut off from the world, and then shall I be able to presume that I belong to Him, and believe in His grace. But that disciple, so far as he shall continue to hold to that course of human righteousness, will never be anything more than a slave of the law. Will you render to God those filial acts of obedience of which you speak if you are not first sealed with the Spirit of adoption which produces them? Must not the sap of the tree be celestial before the fruits of Heaven can be gathered on it? "So also," St. John says, "you will never render to God what love alone can render Him, so long as fear and its torments are found in you." (I. John iv. 18.) Raise them, to employ that figure still, raise the pyramid of your obedience on the broad and solid base of your adoption of Jesus. Such was the assurance of Daniel, such was the principle of his obedience. Happy and holy liberty of grace, glorious privilege with which the Spirit of adoption enriches the believer, through communion with his Saviour! (Ps. cxix. 32.) He will be called, perhaps, presumptuous; it will be said that he is wanting in sobriety, prudence, and the humble trust which every sinner ought to have, and he will be told again and again that he exposes himself to serious falls. Daniel and the other children of God will answer together and without fear: "Ye err, not knowing what the grace of God is." (I. Cor. vi. 20.) II. DANIEL'S COURAGE. There was fidelity, and there was the courage which it demanded of him. For let us not think that it was very easy for Daniel and his companions to make up their minds to what they resolved on. It may have been a comparatively trifling matter to renounce exquisite dishes and to choose the most simple ones; but it was not a trifling matter to them to free themselves from the order of a jealous king, whose slaves they were, seeing that by this course they endangered their lives. Of this they were not ignorant, for the chief of the eunuchs had made them aware of it (i. 10). What the tower was to cost was therefore well calculated by them before they commenced to build; and they did not put their hands to the plough till they had well seen and well measured the length of the furrows in the field. (Luke xiv. 28; ix. 62.) How many times must they have spoken among themselves of their duty and of its consequences? How many times did not the excuses and the pretexts of the flesh, the weaknesses of their heart, the promises and the threatenings of the world, and the love of life come, either to obscure their minds or shake their constancy? How many times were they not wont mutually to exhort one another to be faithful. No, it was not inconsiderately that Daniel advanced to the combat, and it was no longer in his own strength. It was in his heart that he resolved on it, it was from the Word and Spirit of the Lord that he drew his courage and his perseverance. "My son, give me thy heart," says eternal wisdom to him whom it teaches. (Prov. xxiii. 26.) "Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart," the Lord repeats to His children. (Deut. x. 12.) (Ps. cxix. 69.) (Deut. v. 29.) (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) Weigh then all your anchors, O disciples who wish to set sail! Detach your hearts from the impure shores of earth, and, if it is necessary, pluck them away, and that without delay and without pity; if it is true, at least, that you have resolved to surrender yourselves to the heavenly breezes, to the always equable and always favourable breath of the Holy Spirit. What do you fear? Is it not the wind of the grace of God which will never separate you from this world except to bring you near Heaven? Daniel resolved in his heart not to defile himself, and Daniel succeeded therein, because, having first given his heart to his God, it was also from his God that he drew his strength and his courage. With what? you perhaps ask. What are those dishes and that forbidden wine

to us; or when indeed are we seen to take them? Ah, shall I answer you; it is not that the table of the prince of this world is unknown or poorly furnished! It is erected, it is uncovered before the eyes of the world and of all peoples, for all desires and for all lusts and hungerings, even the most irregular: meat and beverages are lavished there, to draw to it, to nourish and satiate at it, all passions and all inclinations. It is there that sensuality, voluptuousness, and luxury; it is there that drunkenness, gluttony, and dissoluteness; it is there that cupidity, avarice, and egotism; it is there that ambition, ostentation, pride, and arrogance; it is there that vanity, with its falsehoods, its ruses, and its hypocrisy; it is there, in a word, that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are invited, in the name of pleasure and of glory, to gratify all their appetites, all their inclinations, all their folly! III. ISSUE OF DANIEL'S FIDELITY. It did not result in shame, but in the favour and good pleasure of God—in the most confirmed prosperity. Oh! what perfect peace, what profound rest, what sweet and serene assurance, is shed abroad in the soul of the faithful, since he honours his God, by trusting in Him! There is the goodwill of the Lord to calm every trouble, to drive away and scatter every disquietude. There is the testimony and the seal of Thy Spirit, O mighty Saviour! who says to Thy child that Thou art with him and that Thou dost guard him! Such were the sentiments and such was the joy of Daniel and his brethren. They saw all their prayers heard, all their desires accomplished; but, above all, they saw the name of their God honoured and magnified in presence of His enemies. What, indeed, did these servants of the Most High seek? Certainly, it was not to gain their cause before unbelievers. What value could they have set on the esteem or admiration of those who did not fear the Lord! Neither was it of being virtuous before the world, and hence taking so much the more delight in themselves. Never did that impure thought enter hearts which the Holy Spirit ruled. But what concerned them was that their God, that good Father, was feared, was obeyed, was loved; it was that the homage of their faith should be ascribed to Him without reserve; it was that in the light of His truth, their filial love should render to Him the reverence due to His majesty, and the sacrifice of their entire being. Such an offering was pleasing to the Lord. "Go then;" shall I say to you, "in the name of our Lord, go and do as Daniel did." Like him, you are here below in a noviciate, in a time of probation, preparing to appear before the King of Zion. Let your principle also be faith, let your strength also be the Word and the Spirit of your God, let your expectation also be the deliverance of the Lord! Let your hand, therefore, go forth and overturn, as Daniel's did, the cup which sin presents. No delay, friends of the Saviour! No concealed compounding with evil, no treachery, no duplicity of heart towards Him who loved you perfectly, who is perfectly holy, and who will have no offering but that which the freest will presents Him. Is not the thought of what He has done here below for your soul, and of all that He will yet do in eternity, enough to bind your whole heart and all your desires in obedience to Him? Will greater benefits be needed to gain for Him your affections, to make Him deserving of all your gratitude, and thereby of all your self-devotion? Had Daniel a God more beneficent, or a Saviour more worthy of being loved, than He whom you adore? I know well that, in the judgment of the flesh, these vegetables, with which Daniel was content, are a mean and contemptible food. What dishes were such herbs! What foolish abstinence was such a sobriety! What health, what strength can he pretend to have who condemns himself to them? So will the "pulse" of the Gospel ever be despised and dishonoured—that nourishment which grows in the garden of the Lord, and which His Spirit presents by His Word to the happy children of His house. But the result, O mocking world! If you do not know, I am going to tell you, and it will be by facts. See these faithful Hebrew youths, stronger and fresher than all the others. See also, now, those sincere Christians, those disciples whom the Lord Jesus calls "His friends" (John xv. 14), because they do everything which He commands them, because they touch no dishes of the world, because they are content with the "pulse" of wisdom and of holiness, and judge of their state. Do they appear to you feeble, sad, unhappy? or rather, do they not in some sort publish by their peace, their joy, their habitual sweetness; by the equality of their character, the purity of their manners, and the sweetness of their deportment; by their sustained piety; by their charity unfeigned; by their firm and glorious hope; and their patience and their humility, that their souls are full of life, and that their vigour is certainly that which comes from God; whilst those of their brethren who eat at the table of the world, know neither the vigour of faith, nor the health of peace, nor the serenity of hope? It will not be long that you will have to renounce the dishes of the world and its beverages. Think, oh! think seriously, my brethren; think with affection, what will be those years of renunciation of the world, and of attachment to what the Holy Spirit points out and commands you, when you shall have no more time, no more years, nor days—when you shall have ended this short voyage, and eternity shall have commenced to your soul? Yes, think of that, and see if it is not just to God, and good to yourselves.

in every way, even for this world but especially for eternity, that, having to go before your Saviour and King, you should, while you are still here below, purpose in your heart not to defile yourselves with the meats nor with the wine of this world, and, like Daniel, honour your Lord, by being subject to him! (C. Malan.) *Daniel and his Companions*:—The scene is the city of Babylon, the most magnificent of all the cities of antiquity. "Far as the horizon itself extended the circuit of the great capital of the then known world. It stretched out over an area of two hundred square miles, and the whole territory was enclosed within vast walls, one hundred feet higher than Bunker Hill Monument, and along their summit ran a vast terrace which admitted of the turning of chariots with four horses, and which may, therefore, well have been more than eighty feet broad." As one approached the city from a distance, these walls extended along the horizon like lines of towering hills. The space within the walls was divided off by streets or roads running at right angles. "Forests, parks, gardens were intermingled with the houses so as to present the appearance of the suburbs of a great metropolis rather than the metropolis itself." The great palace of the kings was itself a city within a city—seven miles round, compared to which the Temple of Solomon was insignificant. The houses of the city were made of pale brown brick, and were set in gardens of luxuriant trees and flowering shrubs. A carpet of variegated and brilliant flowers covered the unoccupied spaces between the streets, producing an enchanting spectacle. Elegance and luxury characterized the habits of the people. Gorgeous splendour of dress and dwelling and equipage met the eye at every turn. Gold and silver and ivory adorned the houses, and everything was on a scale of Oriental magnificence. The people were given to a voluptuous life, and worldliness in its most attractive forms abounded on every side. Into these unusual surroundings four young lads from Judea were carried captive, and confined within the palace of the king. The contrast to their former manner of life was most marked, and it is easy to see that in mingling in the worldliness they have arrived at a most critical point in their lives. Their manner of meeting that test is very suggestive, and contains a striking lesson for the youth of modern times. I. Daniel and his three friends illustrate the **POWER OF PRINCIPLE**. It would be safe to prophesy concerning these four lads that when they entered that heathen city they would soon fall into the ways of the people and yield to the circumstances, and become like their captors. For it was a kind of life that appealed to sensibilities of youth. Physical enjoyments of every kind presented themselves before these inexperienced young men. Moral restraints were absent. Public sentiment was against all such restraints, and they could indulge in whatever they desired without fear of offending social customs. We are agreeably disappointed, therefore, when Daniel and his friends take a decided stand on a matter of conscience. They refused to eat the meat and wine set before them by the eunuch having them in charge. They knew that meat and wine were used in idol worship, and they had been brought to abhor idolatry. They knew also that the food of the king's table was not the most wholesome. In view of these two facts they agreed to refuse the king's food. It was a daring thing for them to make their stand against the rules of a king's palace, but principle was at stake, and they dared all for principle. Many may think it was a small matter upon which to raise an issue, but a great principle often lies concealed within a trifle. It is a comparatively insignificant thing for any one of us to stamp a piece of silver with the die of the United States, but it is an act involving the whole question of treason to one's government, and treason is no trifle. Daniel knew that if he quieted his conscience on this small matter he would yield all the way through. — Principles are to be declared at once. It is sometimes half the battle. The young man just beginning his mercantile career had best let his scruples be known at once to his fellow clerks, and it will save him many temptations. They will not be likely to want him to become a companion in evil. The commentator tells us that Daniel was only fourteen years old when he was carried away to Babylon. If this is so, it only proves conscientiousness is not a matter of years. Parents may trust their children amid the most perilous influences, provided they have been thoroughly trained and are acquainted with moral distinctions. We can give our children no more valuable gift than correct principles. Money, education, social standing, are nothing in comparison with them. II. We remark next this experience of Daniel is a **PLEA FOR SIMPLICITY OF LIFE**. Daniel was satisfied to eat the plain food to which he had been accustomed at home. Rich and delicate viands were partaken of by all within the royal palace; he was content with a few plain vegetables. He was thus a constant rebuke to the gluttons and epicures who made a god of their food, for he proved that health and physical comfort did not depend on the variety and costliness of that which was eaten. We cannot estimate the value of his example in that luxurious, extravagant court. How it must have opened the eyes of the young courtiers whose lives were given over to the gratification of bodily desires! Daniel speaks no less forcibly to the young people of to-day, for they are in danger of spending too much thought and money on

artificial wants. Too large a part of the earnings of our young men and women is spent upon non-essentials. Neither utility nor comfort demands them. It requires grit to live in an unostentatious manner, to cut down expenses, to cast aside the yoke of unnecessary wants; but it is a great relief when once the freedom has been gained. III. This narrative also shows THAT YOUNG MEN CAN SERVE THEIR GOD BY SERVING THE STATE. Daniel consecrated his skill and ability to the securing of good laws and to the guidance of their administration. The making and administering of law is noble work, and when so much depends on legislation as in our country there is need that young men consecrate their powers to this important service. Politics must be rescued from the unworthy and self-seeking, and lifted to the high place where they belong. All of God's early lawmakers and rulers were able and good men,—Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Daniel,—men of breadth of view, integrity, and faith. The idea that the conduct of government can best be served by selfish and cunning men is totally false. Men are beginning to realise the wide opportunity for serving God afforded by a political calling. IV. This lesson also suggests the PRESERVING POWER OF RELIGION. Daniel carried his religion into all the departments of his life. He glorified God in his daily life and commended his religion to the heathen king by manliness and fidelity. He was a faithful servant of the king because of his religious belief. His religion gave him self-control and practical wisdom. Young men should not hesitate to subject their whole plan of life to God's scrutiny—to ask His blessing on their business, their professional duty, and their social obligations. The professional, commercial, artistic, literary world needs men who know how to pray in connection with their work. May Daniel teach us how to do it! (*E. S. Tead.*) *Daniel in Babylon*:—A nation's most splendid characters appear in its darkest hours. This is especially true of the chosen people with whom God made a covenant, and it made it certain that he would never leave them wholly in the power of their enemies. Hence we see, all along the Old Testament history, great deliverers raised up when all seemed lost. They purified religion. They broke the oppressor's yoke. They told of the coming Saviour. A wonderful group of great men was seen during the very night of the nation's history when for seventy years it was in captivity among a heathen people. During most of this time Jerusalem was a heap of ruins, and there was no altar of sacrifice. One of the greatest characters of human history arose like a star at this time in Daniel. Among the first captives Nebuchadnezzar carried over to Babylon, there was a company of royal children who were exceptionally attractive, educated and fit for public service. The conqueror determined to use their abilities for his own profit. We should remember that Daniel began life with high natural qualifications for his great work, and that he was attractive and beautiful, and capable to wield great affairs. So God uses natural abilities for his service. Great goodness requires great ability. At this time Daniel was about fourteen years old. He and the company with him had rich food and wine furnished them from the royal tables. How wonderful that a boy of that age, when one is usually so heedless and self-indulgent, should put himself upon a course of simple diet and abstinence from wine! Observe it was not a question with the boy Daniel whether meat itself was suitable human food, but whether meat defiled in heathenish modes of preparation was fit for a servant of God. It was a religious as well as a sanitary measure which he undertook when he respectfully requested his master to allow him a plain vegetable diet. It was an act of faith. But, besides this, he rejected wine, which was not forbidden by the law. Priests at certain times, and those under Nazarite vows, drank no wine; but the mere drinking of wine in itself was not looked upon in the law with favour or disfavour. It did not ceremonially defile one to drink, as it did to eat meat that had been killed in the heathen way, and served up with offerings to the false gods. The wine was unnecessary and tempting. Both were rejected by one who had in him the stirrings of the prophetic instinct, and who felt called of God to a spiritual service. Now, the greatness of Daniel, shown at this early date, was the cause of his vows of abstinence. These vows were not the cause of his greatness. Others, and tens of thousands of our youth, grow up strangers to wine and to "king's meat," without becoming famous leaders of God's people. High spiritual aims, communion with God, capacity to understand mysteries and discern the signs of the times, seem naturally to call for a plain and severe sort of living. We think of the Nazarites, like Samuel, who never touched wine. Elijah lived roughly. John the Baptist had locusts and wild honey for his food when he prepared the way of the Lord; and, while Jesus came eating and drinking, we must remember that his ineffable purity left him free to use what we easily abuse. If the pure in heart see God, surely the pure in body are fitted to be the organs of the Spirit, are free to obey his voice, and more quick to hear what he says. We should remember, too, that this course was adopted on religious grounds. We must also believe that it was maintained through a long life by religious faith. It was Christian temperance. Of course, it was all very singular in a king's palace. The higher one goes in the social world the more rigid the rules of etiquette and fashion are; and in the palaces of kings

one might say they amount to a law that cannot be broken with safety. It showed a great soul in Daniel to dare resist the mighty current around him, and live simply. Many a weak young man falls into intemperance, taking his first glass at a woman's hands, because he is afraid to show ignorance of social customs, or a scrupulousness that attracts notice. The regimen was used for three years with great success. During this time the boys were learning the Chaldean language, quite unlike their own Hebrew, so that they could speak with the king and the court. They also studied whatever of science there was to be learned, as Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. We read that God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. What the four youths gained at their books was so clarified by prayer, by dependence on God, by pure actions, and by plain living, that they rapidly advanced. God helped them. Over the gate of one of the colleges at Oxford is the motto, "The Lord is my Light." Luther said, "To pray well is to study well." The mind that is unclogged by rich food and wine is strong to grapple with hard problems. The Great Light sends down kind and quickening rays. When the three years were passed, all the selected youths went up to the king for examination. He talked with each one of them, with the result that Daniel, and his three friends who had joined him in his vows, were selected to stand before the throne and give advice upon all matters of wisdom and understanding. It was essential to the great part he was to play as prime minister and God's representative that he should meet the astrologers on their own ground, and surpass them all, just as Moses had done in the Court of Pharaoh. This greatness of soul, shown by the abstinence of the boy Daniel, was attested and exhibited through a long and illustrious career. Some lessons may be emphasized in the study of this very early part of Daniel's life in Babylon.

1. Saints may be found in kings' houses. If we had been looking through the world in ancient days to find men of faith and prayer, we should never have dreamed of finding any such in the luxurious pagan palace of the Pharaoh at Memphis. Yet Joseph was there, praying and working for his God, surrounded by the pride of life, but untouched by it. So one would have passed by the court of Babylon as the last place where true piety could be nurtured, and yet there were men of God in highest station. The monarchs they served worshipped idols. There was feasting and revelry. There were sights from which the angels turned away. And yet in the heart of it all there was faith in God, humble living in His sight, and abstinence from wine and strong drink. So, I imagine, if we should search to-day for the brightest examples of piety, we should feel that it was quite in vain to look in the houses of the millionaires of our land, or of the titled rich of other lands, or in the courts of kings. God has His hidden ones, and often they are hidden in the blaze of the world's prosperity.
2. Godliness is profitable for all things. It carries power with it which nothing else can give. Men instinctively reverence the self-denying spirit which young Daniel and his companions showed at court. Those who live altogether under the powers of this world feel reverence for those under the powers of the world to come. Those who command themselves, command others.
3. But we see, above all other truths, how God exalts his servants. We may well draw useful lessons in temperance, uprightness, courtesy, purity, and studiousness from the boyhood of Daniel. But we see the mighty hand of God in guiding the king to place him among the chosen youths, in permitting him to live unlike the rest, in giving him favour with his master and skill in his studies, in causing him to be selected for wisdom and exalted to the chief place in the gates. It is all of God. Even the noble purpose not to be defiled by the king's meat found its place in the boy's heart through grace from on high, and it was kept alive there by the same power. And, therefore, we may well take up Daniel's own words, and say, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." (*Sermons by Monday Club*)

Conscientiousness (with Chap. vi. ver. 16):—From the historical portion of the book which goes under the name of Daniel, I choose the first and the last scenes, desiring to call your attention to the close connection which subsists between them. In the first of these scenes we see the holy character of the prophet presumed, and in the second we observe it bearing its ripe fruit. It is not always, you know, that the early years of a man's life give promise of what the latter ones are. Daniel's career was consistent throughout. We trace in the commencement of it the principles which actuated and supported him to the end. He had religious scruples with reference to the provision of the king's meat and wine. But all objections might have been escaped, and the food innocently partaken of. He was not bound to inquire what the prescribed diet was, and how treated before it was placed on the table. Daniel, however, not only acted on the law of God, but he loved it, and because he loved it he was resolved to be on the safe side, and was desirous rather to leave a margin beyond the legal restriction than risk the violation of it. Be it

observed, in forming a judgment of his conduct, that his main scruple in all probability turned upon a point of conscience. St. Paul was required to settle the question for the primitive Christians. He says the conscientious scruples of weak Christians, while they existed, were bound to be respected; but at the same time he admits that the scruples were weak. "An idol is nothing in the world;" it has no real existence, and that therefore none of God's good creatures can take any defilement from meat being offered to an idol. That sufficiently proves that in the question itself there was no absolute right or wrong. I need scarcely say that the light of the New Testament dispensation had not then shone, and Daniel had not seen at that early period any relaxation of the Jewish ceremonial law. Such is the first record of the life of Daniel. If it stood alone, if we knew no more of it than this, though it might lead us to greatly respect him as a conscientious man, I don't know that that would necessarily prove him to be a saint of God, or even amount to a high principle. Scrupulosity as to little points in externals is, strange to say, very often found in some character who practically sets God at defiance and the moral law. The Pharisees "strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel," paying tithe of mint and anise and cummin with great exactitude, but omitting the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith. But Daniel's scrupulosity was of a totally different order from theirs, and sprang from motives to which they were strangers, which may be gathered from the last recorded passage of his history. This passage contains the well-known account of his being thrown into the lions' den and miraculously preserved there. The crime which was punished with this savage barbarity was offering prayer three times a day in defiance of the law which the first princes had induced Darius to make. Now, we see Daniel, who had begun by making a brave stand on a religious scruple, ending by making a still more brave stand on one of the "weightier matters of the law"—a question of principle if ever there was one. Command the servant of God to live without prayer for thirty days! You might as reasonably command the body to live without air as a devout soul without prayer. Communion with God is the element in which the soul of a righteous man "lives and moves and has its being." As the life of the body consists of respiration and aspiration in repeated acts, taking in air and throwing it out, so the life of the soul consists in repairing unto God by the thought of His presence, and in going out towards Him in the fervent desire of prayer. This is the essential teaching of religion. Come what might of his disobedience to the ungodly statute, Daniel must make his protest, even though the dread lions must be faced. Now, when we read of the sufferings to which the martyrs were subjected we are apt to ask ourselves whether we should have endured under them, whether we should have resisted, as they did, unto blood, striving against sin. Perhaps some light of a practical and edifying character may be thrown on the question by observing in what the course which ends with martyrdom began. That was consistent conscientiousness. Daniel, who set at defiance the ungodly statute, is the same Daniel who, in his early youth, preferred death to risk the violation of the ceremonial law of God. The stuff of which martyrs are made is consistent adherence to principle, even when principle involves personal risk, pain, inconvenience, or martyrdom. Let it be observed, it is quite possible for a man who is steadfast in his attendance to duty to take a mistaken view of what his duty is. Show me the young person who observes the restrictions of God's law conscientiously, and I will show you one who gives promise of that faith which endures unto death. From the principle upon how we should act under circumstances of risk, or ridicule, or inconvenience, we may form some judgment as to whether we should be found steadfast in the martyr's hour if God should call us to it. Only be thou faithful in that which is least, and then thou shalt be faithful also in much; yea, thou shalt be faithful unto death, and Christ shall give thee the crown of life. (*Dean Goulbourn.*) *The Power of a Temperate Life*:—Among the ancients much was made of temperance as a virtue. Moderation or self-control in all things was insisted upon to an extent hardly understood in the present day. No one reading the *Ethics* of Aristotle, for instance, can fail to be struck with the thoroughness of the educational methods therein enjoined and set forth. It was thought, above all things, necessary for true manhood that a person should have acquired the habit of self-mastery in such a way that he should enjoy the good things of life without becoming their slave. Their acquaintance with human nature taught Greeks and Romans the value of this practice. Young people were trained to avoid excesses of any kind, bodily or mental. No doubt much of this was due to the idea of the State. Everything was sacrificed to the good of the community, as, for example, in Sparta, where the laws made little of the suffering of the individual, and sought, above all things, the glory of the State. When Christianity came into the world the same thought received a new emphasis. Not merely a moral or material, but a spiritual value was put upon it. The spiritual man was recognised as one who, while regarding the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, retained full control of his physical powers, believing

that the desires of the flesh, left to themselves, were dangerous. Excesses of every kind were forbidden on the ground that spiritual life did not consist in the gratification of the senses, but in their moderate and careful use. A new ideal replaced that of Greek or Roman citizenship, namely, that man was meant to be a citizen of a heavenly rather than an earthly kingdom. The virtue of temperance was seen to be a necessity for its development, but in a grander and nobler sense than had been foreseen by Aristotle and Lycurgus. Before long asceticism came in with its dangerous and exaggerated emphasis of the duty of "keeping under the body, and bringing it into subjection." Much harm was wrought by such devotees as St. Simeon Stylites, who sank far below the idea of the old pagan world in advocating self-torture in the place of self-control. In modern times Christianity has righted itself. We are all familiar nowadays with exhortations to manly Christianity and the worth of clean, wholesome, natural living, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. We cannot too earnestly insist upon the value of temperance in all departments of human life. To be a Christian is to be master of oneself, to keep a rein upon the passions, to be able to move securely in the midst of exercises and enjoyments, over-indulgence in which would prove fatal both to nobleness and godliness. We use the word temperance in a somewhat restricted sense because of one of the greatest of our national sins—drunkenness; but I feel keenly that there are other kinds of intemperance than over-indulgence in alcoholic liquors. Over-eating is as much a sin against God as over-drinking. It is abuse of the creatures and abuse of the body we seek to pamper. In the search for exhilaration and in the abounding delight of vigorous life many promising careers are ruined by the loss of self-control. And then let us be aware that only he who has learned this lesson is fitted to guide or rescue others. There is no man but has his battle with temptation, yet, if he prevails, his experience and his strength come to the help of others. The power of a temperate life is a grand thing, not for its own sake simply, but for the sake of others. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Daniel in Babylon*:—Judah had fallen utterly before the power of Babylon. The holy city was burnt, its walls broken down, the Temple destroyed, and its sacred vessels devoted to the service of the heathen gods. Those that escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon. Amongst these was Daniel, evidently of princely birth and noble appearance. He, a youth probably of some seventeen years, together with three of his companions, was reserved for the highest service of the State. Far happier were they than most of their countrymen. The king had seen his children slain, and then, his eyes put out, he was led, blinded and bereaved, in chains to Babylon. Most of the captives would be made slaves. The historians tell us that every Babylonian brick in the British Museum represents the anguish of some slave. It is needful for us to remember that this was at best the fate that awaited Daniel and his companions if they offended those who were set over them or if they refused in any way to fulfil the purposes of the king. To him and his companions are given new names indicating their consecration to the gods of Babylon. To the Hebrew a name was much more than a convenient distinction. It was sacred; there was in it a Divine meaning. And he was to be trained in all the learning and science of the Chaldeans. This training was not only of the mind, but of the body too, and secured for these students the luxury of daily supplies from the king's own table. Let us stay to look at the captive, to look at the circumstances, and to look at the authority that was over him. His action in the matter could be so easily misunderstood, was indeed so difficult to explain. Object to food that came from the king's own table! There is nothing that we are more touchy about than a complaint of the food that we provide for others, especially if we think it good enough for ourselves. Who is this youth, who cannot conscientiously taste of the food that is good enough for Nebuchadnezzar himself? Very well, take him where most of his countrymen are. Let him share their fare for awhile. They are not troubled with costly meats and dainty drinks. See if that will suit him. And if Daniel complained that his objection was a religious one, that made the matter worse. What, refuse, reject, despise the meat that is sanctified to the gods of Babylon! Where, indeed, was the God of Israel now? The Temple burned, the golden vessels adorning the service of the gods that made Nineveh great! This were an insult past forgiveness. Such an offence were enough to provoke the wrath of these outraged deities. Let the young man pay the penalty that the gods themselves might well exact. Such were the perils that threatened him. And there was Nebuchadnezzar, proud conqueror of the nations. All the forces of that vast nation waited to fulfil his bidding, whose word was law. Daniel, a lad of seventeen, purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. All within him, his devotion to his God, the influence of his house, the hopes and memories of his nation, became a great resolution and refusal. He could not, would not, dared not—cost what it may. Daniel purposed in his heart. How grand a thing is that majesty of the will, that knitting of the man as master of his fate more than circumstances! You

have seen the driftwood flung along the coast, hither and thither, swept by the changeful tides, chased by the waves. But fronting the great seas has stood the rock, firm whilst thundering billows break on it in thunder and dashed their spray to the heavens. So is the man who is rooted and grounded in right, as if he were become part of the solid earth, one with the round world itself. The man who stands for goodness stands in God. He who sets himself for the right has God at his back. Let the world laugh, or sneer, or smile, right is might. The purpose of the heart is the beginning of life. There is the helm; nay, it is the hand of the helm. Fools wish; men will. Wishing never got a man out of a difficulty, but a right will would have kept him out. And do not think of this will as a matter of nature only. Do not begin to be cast down because that is just what you lack. Do not turn away saying, "Alas! I am foolish, fickle, cowardly; this is no example for me." Honestly ask yourself, What is the good of preaching, of the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, what is the good of God Himself, unless somehow or other there can come into us a right will? Is not this the promise ever set before us—a new heart? And what is a new heart but a new will, a new purpose? Take hold of these words: It is God that worketh in us to will and to do. Think of some old warrior who takes the lad and puts upon those slender fingers his own sinewy hands. And thus they bend the bow together, and thus they hold the feathered arrow on the string. And the man with keen sight and unerring aim lets fly the string, whilst the lad with parted lips watches it strike the centre of the target. So is it that there comes upon us the might of God with purpose resolute, and strength unailing, to make us more than conquerors, strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. We are apt to think about the will of God as something outside us to which we must be conformed. God's will is apt to be only that which He has spoken in His word. But the will of God is that which upholds the universe. God's will is God's might. It is a long way from this youth in Babylon to the Apostle Paul, but this makes them one. He declares himself an apostle by the will of God. He had opened his heart to the mighty force, had let himself go under its constraint. I can do all things through Him which strengtheneth me. Daniel himself gives us the secret of his power. The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. (xi. 32.) Turn to the story again for another lesson. "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." His way was greatly smoothed for him because his ways were so winsome. He was so likeable, so loveable. A man who calls himself a Christian has no business to be as prickly as a hedgehog or as ugly to touch as a stinging nettle. A man may be resolute without being as stubborn as a mule or an ass. The ugliest thing in the world is an ugly religion—that kind of assumption of superiority that suspects everything, that carries its head as if sniffing heresy, that looks its condemnation at everybody and everything. We are to please men with edification. Strength is much, but it is not all. God's graces go in pairs, and strength is to be wedded to beauty. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Do not forget that the Bible teaches us to pray that God would make us beautiful. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Because Daniel could not go all the way that those about him wanted him to he would go all the more gladly where he could. They may not have liked his religion, but they could not help liking him. It is a poor religion that acts like a thunderstorm, and turns the milk of human kindness sour wherever it goes. As true as steel, yet out of steel men do not fashion only swords, but things as delicate as the hair-spring of a watch. Be gentle, be courteous, be ready to help, be quick to do anybody anywhere a good turn, and make that as much part of your religion as it is to be honest. Then turn for a moment from Daniel to think of his companions. I do not mean in the least to reflect upon these brave youths when I say that it is certainly possible that we might never have heard of them if it had not been for Daniel. His bold stand made it easy for them to follow where he led. We are responsible for our influence, and that we can never measure, never know. If you will be true to your God and be true to your better self there are many about you who will take a stand because you do. And note the prudence of his proceeding. He requested the prince that he and his companions might have simple fare, just pulse to eat and water to drink—porridge you may call it if you will. It was a courteous request and courteously received. But the prince of the eunuchs feared to grant it. "What will the king say when he sees your faces so much more woe-begone than those about you?" "Well," said Daniel, "let us put the matter to the test. For ten days let us have this simple fare, and you shall see for yourself as to our looks and see if we are sadder than those about us." So it was settled. And at the end of the time they were found fairer and fatter than those about them. One is reminded of what Dr. Johnson said in Scotland. Said Boswell, "Men here eat what we give horses in England." "Yes," replied Johnson, "and where will you find such men or such horses?" "Nature," says old Matthew Henry, "is content with little, grace with less, but sin with nothing." Nobody will

believe in a religion that makes people sadder than those who are without it. The sunshine of God's favour must shine forth from the face if men would bless the world. A cheery face preaches a sermon seven days long, and nobody tires of it. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. So let us listen to the words of the grand old Book that here find a living picture: "My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments. For length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee. So shalt thou find good understanding and favour in the sight of God and man." (*M. G. Pearce.*) *Readings in Daniel*:—At the first epoch of the captivity of Judah, when Jehoiakim was King in Jerusalem, a goodly number of the scions, or younger branches, of the royal family, and of the Jewish nobility, were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Of the handsomest and cleverest of these, a selection was made by the conqueror's orders to serve in his palace as chamberlains or attendants. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord, spoken by Isaiah fully a hundred years previously to Hezekiah, that the descendants of his own body should be led away captive, and become eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon (*II. Kings* xx. 18). Of the noble captives thus chosen to serve as attendants upon Nebuchadnezzar, four are specially named—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel was perhaps the handsomest, and certainly he had the greatest natural talents of the whole, besides being their leader in all that was amiable and pious. The first manifestation of their earnest desire to obey the laws of Jehovah was in regard to the food appointed for them. Rather would they have poorer food by far, if thus they kept the commandments of their Creator, than indulge in dainties without having the blessing of heaven. Not only on the bodily condition of the young men did the blessing of heaven descend, but Jehovah smiled upon their mental powers, and endowed them with knowledge and ability beyond all their contemporaries. No doubt the simplicity of their style of living would help rather than hinder their studies. Plain diet and abstinence from wine would leave their perceptive faculties unclouded. They would know nothing of the miseries of indigestion, or of the lassitude that follows indulgence in intoxicating beverages. For more than seventy years afterwards Daniel lived in Chaldea, an honoured servant of Jehovah. Let us consider some practical lessons deducible from the brief portion already surveyed.

I. "MAN'S GOINGS ARE OF THE LORD;" AND HIS OVER-RULING IS ALWAYS GOOD. Was it so in the case of Daniel and his three friends of royal and noble blood? To be dragged far away from their dear native land, and held captive amidst idolaters, surely such an experience could not be good? Without doubt it was for the glory of God, and the eternal benefit of these pious young men, that their lot was cast in Babylon. The life-work of a flower is to blossom and shed its perfume, wherever its Maker may plant it, whether in a lovely garden or in a desolate wilderness. Its sweetness is never wasted, though no eye but that of its Creator look upon it. And so with the children of heaven. At home or abroad, in congenial company or amid the prejudiced and the scoffing, in crowded city or in solitude, their eyes are turned to their Father's face, and they must ever be about their Father's business. Was the Divine over-ruling good for that poor black boy whom the Lord permitted to be snatched from his wild but free home on the Gold Coast of Africa, and sold as a slave in Jamaica? Oh! the bitter tears he shed for many days, the curses he poured upon the head of his purchaser, and invoked on the cruel task-master that drove him daily to work on the sugar plantation! By-and-bye, however, he found his way to a chapel where negroes worshipped. There he heard of One who, though God over all, was, nevertheless, in human form, scourged as a slave, and crucified as a malefactor, that He might make our peace with offended Deity. The love that sent the Saviour to ransom lost sinners, the love that led the Redeemer to endure the wrath due to our transgressions, filled the poor black boy's heart. Peace that passeth understanding, from that hour, kept his mind night and day, and he "felt like singing all the time." It was easy for him then to work, for he had a rest remaining for him above; and even in the midst of his toils he was as happy as man can be on earth. So far from fretting thereafter against the Providence that had permitted his being sold into slavery, he thanked God for it every day of his life; and continually did he pray that his father and mother, too, might be brought as slaves to Jamaica, there to learn about the love of Jesus. Let us delight ourselves in the Lord and in His will. Let us sweetly submit ourselves to His disposal, and seek only how to walk worthy of Him in the path he chooses for us.

II. WE SHOULD DARE TO BE SINGULAR WHEN GOD CALLS US TO BE SO. For quiet and comfort most people have occasionally to conform to customs that do not meet their own taste. Singularity is often the characteristic of a weak or erratic mind, and sometimes the result of mere self-conceit. Where no moral principle is involved, and where deviation from the fashion would only occasion gossip about us, it is generally best in some measure to follow the crowd. But when the following of the customs of our place and time leads to questionable doings, or to positive transgressions

of God's laws, there comes into operation our Master's general order, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Yes! it is a cross we are called to carry, but we bear it in worthy company. Balaam prophesied of the children of Israel that they should dwell as a people alone, and should not be reckoned among the nations. To promote this separation from the idolaters who surrounded them was one special object of the ceremonial law. Mingling with the heathen, they learned only evil. "Israel shall dwell in safety alone," said Moses, in his farewell words to the much-loved tribes that sprang from Jacob. Daniel and his friends, even when placed by Providence in the very midst of idolaters, forgot not where their safety lay. They therefore stood aloof from everything which was in opposition to God's law. Happy the man who faithfully follows their example! (II. Cor. vi. 17, 18). III. MAN LIVETH NOT BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD. It is not the abundance of our dainties that sustains life, but God's blessing. If we would but taste and see that God is good, if we would but accept His love freely offered in Jesus, and let Him make us altogether His own, ah! then, plain food and humble circumstances would render us happier far than the rich and great who know Him not. On ourselves, and on all we have, His blessing would evermore abide; and "life in His favour lies." (*Original Secession Magazine.*) *Happiness Despite Circumstances*:—By way of pre-eminence modern science emphasises two laws—the law of heredity, and the law of environment. With these laws as with keys, our scholars unlock the mysteries of vegetable and animal life, and also the life of man. This first law, heredity, deals with the fixed elements in the soul's career. It unveils the man's birth-gifts, and shows us from what sources these gifts of mind and body came. But this ancestral element is fixed and unchanging. No man, by tugging at his heartstrings, can change the sanguine temperament of birth to the phlegmatic or the melancholic. The beginning of happiness and usefulness is an instant and absolute acceptance of the task and temperament that God and our fathers have appointed. But when heredity has given us the fixed element in character, and the "source" from which the life moves forth, then comes in the second great law of environment that deals with shifting and variable influences and makes life flexible, makes the future uncertain, and clothes the to-morrows with wonder and mystery. This, therefore, is the problem of the great biographer. Given the youth clothed with certain ancestral qualities of strength and manliness, then, through environment, wealth or poverty, ambition, jealousy, hatred, passion, self-sacrifice are introduced. When the old birth-gifts and the new forces of environment unite, unexpected qualities and unlooked-for crises appear. And it is this unknown element that lends fascination to the great hours of life. For be it confessed that, if the acorn must remain an acorn to the end, its environment will modify the oak that springs therefrom. Planted upon a southern exposure, in deep, rich soil, it develops a giant structure, fitted for mast of ship or beam of factory. Falling in scant and rocky soil, and on northern slope, the acorn will develop but a poor and stunted life, fit for fagots and the winter's fire. And if circumstances cannot change the original birth-gift, they can develop the native capacity into full manhood and usefulness, or they can repress these qualities and make life stunted and misshapen. Having suffered much from many influences and many half-truths, our generation has suffered grievously from the over-emphasis of environment. Multitudes are the slaves of their surroundings and the victims of events. Carrying within themselves the powers that, if asserted, would make them the sons of happiness and strength, they go forward with bowed heads, sad, weary and dispirited. But if we are to understand the danger of an over-emphasis of circumstances, we must first consider its real scope and law. This we can do best of all by tracing its workings in the realms of vegetable and animal life. Ours is a world in which the rose is influenced by sunshine or shade, and in which the lark is influenced by the cage or by freedom; in which the sweet shrub is influenced by the early spring and the late frost. Carry the brilliant peacock to the dull, foggy climate of Norway, and the gay plumage within a few years is dulled into drab or a dirty grey. And if environment controls the colours of animals, sometimes it modifies, and even destroys the senses of sight and hearing. The blind fish that live in the underground rivers of the Mammoth Cave represent an optic nerve that has become a mass of ruins through disuse. We need not be surprised, therefore, that this law of environment is intellectual law and spiritual law. This law of environment as to evil appears in the proverb, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." It appears also in the proverb regarding Christ, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It reappears in modern science, insisting that man is the sum total of his circumstances. It explains the pessimism and the sadness and gloom in our garrets and palaces. If, now, we search out the secret of the influence of circumstances, we shall find it in the simple statement that the law of environment is the law of food, succour and nutrition. The root, for example, is related to its environment in the soil. The blossom is related to its environment in the sunshine

and light and heat. The leaf drinks in the light and heat, and absorbs the rich gases from the air. But if the blossom unfolds in the vicinity of a cotton factory, the leaves soon fall, choked to death by the foul gases. And if the root extends to the stream into which the same poisoned waters flow, then soon the tree and its trunk die also. And the question whether the tree is to come to full bloom and power depends upon the great facts of light and heat, and summer and winter that make up that total called the environment of the tree. Not otherwise is it with man. He is profoundly influenced by his circumstances and the atmosphere in which he lives, and breathes, and works. Only if the tree has one root towards the soil and others towards the air, the man has many nerves that relate him to his environment. Physically his body is small. But assemble the foods, and the various forms of water that he drinks, the air that he breathes, throughout a single year, and how enormous the bulk that makes up his environment. He hungers for food. Cut that nerve of relation, and he dies for want of succour. Feverish, he thirsts for drink. Cut the nerve that runs toward the fountain, and he perishes for lack of water. The intellect is a nerve toward the kingdom of truth. The imagination is a nerve toward the kingdom of beauty, the face, the flower, the picture. Affection is a nerve toward the kingdom of love, in friendship, and the fireside joys. The conscience is a nerve toward the God of righteousness, as are faith, and hope, and love. Physically, man must draw his succour from an environment called the granary and the storehouse and the fountain. Spiritually, he draws his life from an invisible environment, named God. Cut these nerves of relation, and death ensues. Feed and strengthen these nerves until all the Divine tide comes in, and man has life more abundantly. Upon the basis of the great scientific law, therefore, Christ said, "Without me ye can do nothing." And this spiritual law of environment appears when men exclaim, "In God we live and move, and have all our being." Having emphasised the truth as to the influence of circumstances and environment, consider the untruth involved therein. Misunderstanding, we have coined a proverb, "Among Romans do as Romans do." If this proverb asks a youth to be divinely good if he is with the angels, it bids him become a demon if his companions happen to be devils. Over-emphasising the influence of circumstances, some youth from the country will come into the city this coming autumn, with his stainless purity and beauty. Chancing upon evil companions, he will be confused by their profanity, he will blush at their salacity. But, accustoming himself to his circumstances, he will at last pride himself in that he can listen to a vulgar story without a blush, and roll off an oath without a single thought of revulsion. Yet it is given to the soul to rise above these untoward events, for happiness is not in circumstances, but in the will, and victory is not in events without, but in the trustful soul within. History holds a thousand examples of this great law of victory over circumstances. For forty years, until life had passed its maturity, Moses lived in the king's palace, and was the child of wealth and opportunity of leisure. Then the sceptre of power dropped from his hand, and in old age he dwelt apart in a desert and tended sheep. Never were circumstances so cruel, and yet, dwelling in the desert, Moses matured his great laws and plans of reform, and we know that his life in the palace was the era when his soul was poverty stricken, and that life never became deep, rich, and victorious until he wore a coat of skins and slept in a desert. And there is no temptation so fiery, and no testing so severe but that the soul can rise superior to these circumstances that try man's souls. In the palace Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph, and promised the youth that he might succeed to the great man's name and position, but Joseph came out of the fierce flame with no smell of fire upon his garments. Women, too, have defied circumstances. The soldiers' camp was once notorious for the grog shop, for gambling and licentiousness, and yet even there Florence Nightingale and Augusta Stanley moved in and out, lifting soldiers up from baseness to sobriety and integrity; cleansing the filth from others without staining their garments of spotless purity. Does not the sunbeam cleanse the soil and yet remain itself unstained? Our age has failed to realise the importance of the will. God has made the soul king over its own territory. And circumstances cannot rob the righteous man of his strength, nor spoil him of his happiness and his victory. Moreover, man can rise above circumstances that involve temptation, and maintain spotless purity amidst conditions vicious and surcharged with evil, for the sanctuary of the soul is sacred. It is a castle that has one key, and that is controlled by the owner. Evil can stand in the street, under the soul's windows. Evil can display bribes, offer gifts, hold out a cup brimming with sorcery and sing the siren's song. But sin, with its cloven foot, can never cross the threshold until the will draws back the bolts and bars. Sin has no hypnotic power. And the soul stands above evil as the hero stands looking down upon the serpent, knowing that even his heel can crush the serpent's head. Away with the excuse that the soul is the victim of circumstances. It is given to the disciple of Christ to walk through the fire of temptation, and feel no harm. It is possible, also, to maintain happiness, 'midst trouble, disquietude, and

defeat itself. For happiness is not in events on the outside. It is given to all to say with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." For know, all ye young hearts, that environment is not in dwellings or palace. It is in the heavens above you. The apple tree is rooted in the soil, yet this orb of luscious fruit is not of the earth. Ninety per cent. of the crisp, dripping juices were absorbed from the glowing sunbeams, from the forces of the great upper world, for the branches, stretching toward the sky, are the true roots. And man's body is a root that runs toward the house and street in which he lives, but the great invisible world above is the true world, toward which faith and hope, and prayer, and love, and aspiration, are branches dissolving invisible food, and there is man's true environment. There is your true life. The imagination can create its own environment. Only let the chambers of imagery be filled with lustrous scenes and noble imaginations. Doubtless the teachers of life are trouble and temptation, as well as joy and success. But happiness and victory are the ends thereof. It is possible to live victorious over all life's troubles. God wishes his sons and daughters to go singing through the years. Even in the tornado, it is said, there is a central spot where there is perfect quiet, and the particles of air are undisturbed. And he who trusts Christ his Saviour, and lives close to God's heart, has a chamber of peace in the very thick of life's storm. Be original in yourself, and overcome the circumstances that would degrade you. (*N. D. Hillis, D.D.*) *The Triumphant Life*.—I. THE ROOT OF THE TRIUMPHANT LIFE IS HOLY PURPOSE. "But Daniel purposed in his heart," etc. Those ancient monarchs were wise winners and compactors of kingdoms after their sort. When they conquered some foreign country they even violently welded it into homogeneity with the kingdom over which they already ruled. They did this by deporting the inhabitants of the conquered country to their original kingdom, and by importing into the conquered country great masses of their own already loyal subjects. Also, from the families of the best blood and largest influence of the conquered country they selected certain young men, carried them to their own court, subjected them under their own eye to special courses of education, showered upon them royal favours, fed them with such viands as graced even the royal table, attached them to themselves in the strongest way, and when their course of education was completed, weighted them with high official duty. Thus these rulers sought to rub out the lines of cleavage of race and of religion which otherwise had split their peoples. Thus Daniel, a young Hebrew of probably about seventeen years, had been treated—carried from captured Jerusalem to triumphant Babylon (*Dan. i. 3—7*); and there was appointed Daniel and his captive companions a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank. 1. This was an utmost honour. To eat with one or to eat what a lifted one partook of meant much in that Oriental society. In no way could one more thoroughly express his gracious favour to another than by sending him a portion of that which he himself was eating; and to do it daily was the constant expression of continued favour. 2. There were dietary reasons also underneath the royal grant. The king wanted them fed with the best that they might become the best. But for the Hebrew youth Daniel there was special trouble about the king's meat and the king's wine. 1. It was food selected without reference to the precise Mosaic ritual concerning meats clean and unclean. Because meats which the Divine legislation declared unclean were to be found even upon a king's table, they were not beyond the jurisdiction of a Divine law for a Hebrew. 2. It was customary among the pagans when they ate to throw a small part of the viands and wine upon the hearth as an offering to the gods, thus consecrating the whole to them. To partake of such food would be to a Hebrew the sanctioning of idolatry. And that word "purposed" is, in the original, significant. It means purposed in the sense of set, placed, as when you put down a thing, and leave it there and have done with it. There was no debating about Daniel's purpose. Think how many specious persuasions might set themselves at uncompacting his purpose. 1. He was a young man. His refusal might easily be charged to youthful rashness. How preposterous the thought that he, a boy, should fling himself against the mighty King of Babylon! 2. He was away from home. 3. He was in very peculiar circumstances—a captive, and of the king a special protégé. 4. Such refusal would be dreadfully inconvenient. Every day the king's viands were coming—every day to have to refuse! 5. It would damage his prospects—here was the only line of advancement possible for him. 6. It was plainly dangerous. 7. In itself it was only a little matter, etc. But notwithstanding Daniel "purposed in his heart," etc.; and the subsequent life of Daniel was according to the hand of this purpose he then laid upon his life's helm. He would not transgress. He would not do wrong. You cannot get the bloom of a genuinely triumphant life out of any other root. II. Consider, as we gaze upon this Bible specimen of a triumphant life, THAT A GENUINELY HOLY PURPOSE PROMPTS ALWAYS TO ACTION CONFORMABLE WITH ITSELF, AND SO THE LIFE IS MADE TRIUMPHANT. Turn again to our Scripture, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself," etc., therefore he requested

of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself; and when the prince of the eunuchs feared and objected, he proposed a way in which the defiling might be missed. And such action, conformable with purpose, makes purpose purpose, and rescues it from being but a poor and sickly sentiment. Ah! the Apostle James was right, conduct is the test of faith (James ii. 14—23); and just here is a frequent trouble: what we call our religious purpose is too much merely religious sentiment. It lacks the verve and vigour and granitic quality of a genuine purpose, because we do not act out that "therefore:" because purposing does not bloom into doing. When we are called to any special sacrifice that we may not defile ourselves with the king's meat, we have only a lavender sentiment with which to meet the sacrifice. But not thus can we live the really triumphant life. Holy purpose and holy action—these are always its essential elements. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*) *The Heroic Prince*:—The captive princes were honourably treated, as became nobles and princes. They were more than hostages. Daniel and his three companions were designated for a public career. For three years they were to be taught the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. They were provided with the best food for mind and body. But whatever Daniel had left behind him in Jerusalem, he had not left his religion. On religious grounds he shrank from the food and wine daily set before him. This was a crisis in Daniel's early life. The battlefield was a small one, but it was not little to him. He had much to tempt him to forgetfulness of God. He lived in an idolatrous atmosphere. This matter of his daily food was not a small matter. He must stand to conscience. He had courage, and he needed it; for his resolution involved risk. Doubtless he had the ambition as well as the great faculty of his race. He could make his way in this foreign court. He could outstrip many, perhaps all, competitors. The greatest heroisms are wrought in silence. The stand for principle may be taken on some small-seeming matter. But if there be principle in it, it is not a small matter. In doing the thing that is right, we must expect and be willing to run risks. There can be no true courage without it. Daniel saw that no way could risk be avoided. Daniel's courage was influential. The resolution personal to himself became the resolution of others. He kindled his three friends to courage. Every man has some influence in this world. The hero multiplies heroes; the one heroic act is the parent of many heroisms. That recorded example has quickened many in all ages to an imitation of his fearless conscientiousness. His courage was victorious. He was settled in his mind. Daniel gained his point, but mark his tact. He prudently asked for liberty of conscience. He made no parade of his conscientiousness. His heart is fixed. This is the spirit in which to do the right. Rudeness is no part of religion. Daniel, by his early stand for conscience, was committed to a life of piety. (*G. T. Coster.*) *Daniel's Resolve*:—The food provided probably contained articles interdicted by the Divine law. Portions of it were polluted with blood—forbidden to every Jew. And both meat and wine were probably offered as a libation to other gods. A great principle was therefore at stake. Daniel knew the worth of what some people call "a mere abstraction," "an idea." Is it objected that this was a small matter? Perhaps it was, but the battle of great principles is often fought on some small field, while the clang of swords and the tramp of victory resound against the vault of Heaven itself. We are sent into this world not to evade contempt, not to "get on" (as the phrase goes), not even to avoid calamity, not even to "account life dear" unto ourselves; but to finish our Divinely marked course, the particular "ministry we have received," to "testify the gospel of the grace of God." We have no hesitation in quoting such expressions as these when speaking of Daniel; for that he had a course to run, a service to humanity and God to perform, a testimony to bear, is at once evident the moment we think of his history, and his singularly elevated position as an evangelical prophet, a harbinger to prepare the Saviour's way. And so, whatever might betide, come what may, alone, as it would seem, without concert at this stage with his three associates, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." That resolution was one of God's moral inspirations. There was an ardour about it that fired the souls of the other three. It was the germ of great results, the parent of other heroisms, the one event that gave form and colour to all their lives. In executing the resolve, gentleness was wedded to fortitude. The conduct of Daniel is a good illustration of the motto, "fortiter in re, suaviter in modo," strong as to the matter, gentle as to the manner. He was too wise openly to resist the ordinances of the king. (*H. T. Robinson, B.A.*) *Daniel's Firmness and Prudence*:—Daniel's example teaches that we should carry the principles of religion with us into all situations, and through all the varying circumstances of life. There are some persons who will suit themselves to all society and all places; appear to be pious in one company and profane in another; attend the worship of God at home and neglect it when abroad, or just conform to the custom of the place where they may be. Not so was it with Daniel. Not so will it be with any of the consistent servants of God. It is this uniformity and consistency of conduct that is the

glory of the true servants of God, which brings honour to the Divine name, and shows the power of real religion. "The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Another interesting trait of character presented to us here is that while Daniel had formed this settled purpose in his heart, he adopted the most prudent measures to accomplish the object he had in view. He was a youth, but he had already learned "to be sober-minded," to act with humility, caution, and prudence. (*Thomas Coleman.*)

Conscience:—The distinctive thing about Daniel was his conscience, along with that sense of Divine authority with which, to Daniel, his conscience stood vested. The conscience is a solemn thing; it is the power with which we appreciate the right in its Divine imperialism. All the possibilities of the completest theism are involved in it. For Daniel to feel that to do this was right and that to do that was wrong was for him to feel that the Divine voice was speaking to him in terms of command or of prohibition. In that way behaviour became to him a kind of worship, and was the continuous expression of a religious loyalty. Conscience is an old-fashioned affair, but nothing has yet been discovered that will quite take the place of it. Doing right is itself religion when the right is done with a distinct appreciation of the infinitude of the obligation that we are under to do right. That is a point to be guarded jealously. It is religion's starting-point—conscience is. The right, when felt as such, with all its unspeakable sanctions, all its transparent validity, all its unargued authority, all its long and mystic reach into the realms of things unseen, is a point at which thought takes easy hold upon that which is eternal, and at which it rises up in quick response of reverent worship toward the Holy One in all the divineness of His imperialism. It is a long reach toward God merely to feel the sanctity of the claim which the right makes upon us, so that when alternative courses open themselves before us, however we may feel ourselves enticed toward that which is evil, we experience a counter-drawing that is too mystic to be explained, and that bears down upon us with too authoritative a compulsion to be lightly ignored. It is through the sensitive conscience considered as the soul's open eye that we first come into range with Divine things. Here, then, our first and most painstaking work must be done. The conscience is religion's front door; and yet it is not such a door that having passed through it you can close it behind you. We better say, then, that conscience is religion's bottom masonry upon which the whole superstructure has to be posited, such superstructure towering up in its permanence only so long as the substructure abides in its deep solidity. A man cannot become religiously expanded beyond the point where he continues to be ethically sound. Conscience conditions every step of our Christian expansion. You cannot plant religion on the top of moral mud any more than you can put up a fifteen-story apartment house on the top of the Jersey meadows. The stability of a house depends as much on the solidity of its foundation when it has stood for a thousand years as it does the first year it is erected. You admire the glisten of the diamond, but you cannot coax diamond-glisten out of polished putty, with whatever appliances of attrition it may be treated withal. The first thing to do is to do right; that is more than all creeds and more than all worship; for to a man in his wrong-doing it makes no earthly difference what he does believe, and as for worship, there is no such thing as worshipping God with one set of faculties at the same moment that we are disobeying Him with another set. Daniel faced the situation, saw his duty, and did it. Having seen it, and seen it distinctly, he did not obfuscate the situation by mixing in a mass of foreign ingredients that had no concern with the immediate case. He might have said that whatever might have been his duty if he had remained in Jerusalem ceased to be such on moving into a country where other customs obtained; and that a man, out of regard to the feelings of others, ought to consult to a considerable degree the habits and usages that are in vogue in his present environment. There is no known method by which we can trim our behaviour to others' ideas, and still keep a live conscience. On that day of his temptation, what he knew to be right stood out before him with lines as distinct as though they had been the lineaments of a personal face, and lineaments, too, so full of majesty and kingliness that they were apprehended by him as being the features of the face of God. So, instead of losing God by fooling with his duty, God became nearer to him, and duty a more impressive and superb reality by its discharge. The first thing to say about this is that a man is not safe except when the contrast between right and wrong is as sharp to his conscience as the contrast between black and white is sharp to his eye. That is not at all saying that there will not be questions of right and wrong that will be difficult of decision. It is merely saying that our only security lies in having so energetic a moral sense that right, when once we have decided where it lies, is felt by us to be tremendously right, and wrong felt by us to be devilishly wrong. No sliding scale between them; no fading off of the one into the other. Adam could not have transgressed so long as the tones of Divine command were distinctly ringing in his ears. That was the very genius of diabolic ingenuity. Adam's attention was diverted, his attention

was twisted from the single point at issue, and distinct considerations of personal gratification thrust before his regard instead. And sin begins to-day exactly as it began then. It begins by dragging into the decision of moral questions something beside moral considerations. Now that is the point where Daniel beat Adam. If, instead of pinning his eye to the moral element of the case, he had commenced to take into the account the advantages personal to himself that would have been certain to issue if he had become partaker of the king's meat and wine, it would morally have been the instant death of him. Perdition comes in instalments, and the first instalment is just as much perdition as the last one is; and the first instalment comes when a man or a child fronts a question of right or wrong, and instead of facing it and answering it on its own basis, wriggles off on to a side issue, and refers it to the arbitrament of considerations that have nothing to do with the case. Now that is the way that a considerable number of current Christians are settling current questions. If a man attends the theatre, having settled the question for himself on grounds that are distinctly and unmixedly moral, then it is no man's business but his own. But I know that there are a great many people who attend who have not settled the question for themselves, and who go there borne upon the current of contemporary usage. For them there is no moral ground involved; they have slipped in under the seal of example. In a word, although it is a conscience question, their own conscience has not faced it and answered it. They have not—if they have decided in the manner just described—they have not ruled out side issues and collateral considerations, and met the one only point, viz., Is it right? If there is anything that is calculated to stir moral indignation to its very bottom, it is to see men and women, grown up, with intelligence, congenitally endowed with a conscience, professedly concerned for the weal of their times, and yet allowing practical questions that are crammed full of moral elements to be decided by considerations of usage or convenience or emolument that have no slightest relevancy to the distinct moral issue. A pretty kind of Daniel those people would have made! Now that is what is the matter with us. People are not planting their own feet down on distinct solid moral ground of their own. A man cannot extemporise heroism. Daniel could not have stood up in the face of the whole Babylonian empire and have dared the empire to do its worst upon him had he not had in him the stuff that goes to compose daring. To do right meant to him so infinitely and so divinely much that the pains of it and the dangers of it signified too pitifully little for his arithmetic to be able to take hold of and numerate. I know that people are lacking in moral vigour to-day because I know that they are lacking in courage. People are afraid. There is a cowardice that is despicable. The crowd rules. There are men and women that are more afraid of the despotism of public opinion than Daniel was afraid of King Nebuchadnezzar and all his hired butchers. Men do not dare to speak out. Hesitant virtue, cowardly integrity, is iniquity's auxiliary. You can depend upon it that vice will keep in good spirits till you brand it, but if you go into the branding business you do it at your peril: well, what of it? And let me say only once more that this same moral fibre is not only the material of heroism, but it is also, of course, the material of indignation. Indignation is one of the moral graces, and is the spark that solid virtue has elicited from it when struck by villainy. A man's power of indignation is measured exactly by the vigour and intensity of his power of moral appreciation. To be patient is sometimes the most eloquent symptom possible of ethical insipidity. Moreover, meagreness of moral vigour is what accounts for indignation's fitfulness. A man's conscience needs to have a pretty good constitution in order to be able to keep indignation in stock—in order, that is, to be steadily in condition to resent vicious encroachments. There occur what are popularly known as "spasms of virtue." The phrase expresses it well. The case is to be diagnosed in this way; it is virtue, but so sparingly accumulated and loosely fibred as hardly to be more than aflame before it is consumed—a sort of sky-rocket affair that makes momentary diversion, and that only renders subsequent darkness but the more palpable and ponderable. The greatest thing a man can do is to do right, for while that is not the completion of the entire edifice, it is the plumb-line, dropped from Heaven, along which every stone requires to be laid that aspires to be a permanent element in the edifice. (C. H. Parkhurst.) *Decision and Consistency*.—In the case of Daniel early piety prepared for ripe excellence in old age. Daniel lived to be eighty; was prime minister of Babylon; and died full of honours. I. HIS EARLY DECISION. He purposed (resolved) not to defile himself with the king's meat. He put a restraint on his self-indulgence. It was the evident intention of Babylonians to wean Daniel and his companions from their patriotic and religious principles. The new names given to them suggest this. Great advantages attend early decision. It is half the battle. It was not his learning that gave Daniel this wisdom or decision. It was God's grace. II. ABIDING CONSISTENCY OF LIFE. This sprang from the early decision. What firmness, fidelity, and piety! Note the testimony of his enemies. Incorruptible in duty, blameless in life,

This is the way to honour religion. III. HELPS TOWARDS THIS CONSISTENCY. The source of it was Divine. There is no other safe or abiding course. But gracious helps are provided. 1. The Word of God. Daniel a student of it (ch. ix. 12). We need a chart for life's voyage, a lamp for life's path. 2. Prayer. Daniel eminent for this. He prayed alone (ch. ix. 3). He prayed with his companions (ch. ii. 17, 18). It was his custom, and was not given up, nor concealed, when a decree issued against it. How can we hope to walk wisely or safely without asking Divine help and guidance? 3. Godly companionship. The four children of the captivity were helps to one another. (*W. Pakenham Walsh, D.D.*) *Small Circumstances the Battlefield of Great Principles*:—The narrow mountain pass often becomes the scene of the deadliest struggles, because, though worthless in itself, that barren spot is the bulwark of the country. (*T. White.*) *The Influences Daniel Resisted*:—The whole tendency of the Chaldean education must have been to alienate the young captives from their own people and religion. The intellectual training which they received from the Chaldean sages was of necessity in the highest degree perilous to a continued belief in the God of their fathers. A harsher treatment might have driven their thoughts homeward, and made them cling with secret tenacity to their ancestral faith. But the captives' lot was made soft and pleasant to them; they experienced nothing save kindness at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. At an early and susceptible age, they found themselves removed from all the influences of pure religion, and surrounded by those of idolatry. It was not only that the superstitions of Babylon were interwoven with the secular instruction they received, though in that there was danger enough. But there was a danger beyond this. The wisdom of the Chaldees was the most varied and profound possessed by any nation then existing. Day by day new vistas of knowledge were opened before the Hebrew neophytes, who, it must be remembered, were all youths of singular mental capacity—had been chosen on that very account. Everyone knows what is the effect of an elaborate secular training dissociated from religion. The young Hebrews might well have been carried away by the pride of intellect, and have lost their grasp on the old faith, even though they did not embrace the superstitions of their masters. It happened thus, as may be inferred from the narrative, with the majority of those who had been taken as hostages from Judea. The influences brought to bear on them produced their natural result. Only one possessing more than ordinary strength of character could have withstood the tendency of such an education, and continued at that heathen court Jewish in thought, sympathy, and religion. Daniel continued, despite all temptation, what he had ever been—pious, consistent, and pure; and from his example his kinsmen gained the firmness of purpose to do as he did, and to face all risks in his companionship. (*P. H. Hunter.*) *Adhere to the Right You Know*:—Such scruples as those of Daniel and his friends may seem trivial when viewed in the light of Christianity. It may be thought a small matter, after all, on which those Hebrew youths felt so keenly and insisted so earnestly—whether or not they should share in a repast of which a portion had been laid on the altar of Bel or Nebo. But nothing can be deemed a trifle where principle is at stake. What makes the conduct of Daniel and his comrades so admirable is that, clearly perceiving what was right, they tenaciously clung to the doing of it. And that determination of theirs to abstain from the royal food meant more than lay on the surface. It meant a testimony to the one true and living God, in the midst of a society given over to the worship of dead and false gods. It meant the rigorous observance of the Mosaic law at a time when the Jewish system appeared to be falling into fragments. It meant the steadfast clinging to the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, even when it seemed as though he had abandoned their descendants. So this action of the Jewish boy, trifling in itself, was really great in its motive and spirit. It has to be remembered also that Daniel's adherence to principle was maintained in face of two special difficulties, which seldom fail to confront men when seeking to do right. One difficulty sprang from his own inclinations. He did not choose the pulse because he liked it; no doubt it would have been more agreeable to him to share in those royal luxuries which were his for the taking. Temperance is easy when the means of indulgence are out of reach, but not so easy when they lie within sweep of the hand. It might have seemed legitimate enough to soften the rigour of captivity by sensuous pleasure. Daniel and his friends did not think so; they thought only of their duty to God. Another difficulty which Daniel had to face was the force of opinion around him. He stood practically alone in his conviction that to partake of this heathen food was to dishonour God. The Chaldeans could not enter into the motives of such a refusal; to them the ways of the Jews must have seemed as inexplicable as those of the Christians seemed to Roman governors in the first and second centuries. It was an exclusively Jewish conception, that of a holy and righteous God, requiring in those who served Him holiness and righteousness of life—a consecration of self which must appear even in food and dress. But heathen religions were quite different from this, and the royal chamberlain, though

willing to humour his favourite, made no pretence to understand him. Of the fellow-captives of Daniel only three were found like-minded. It is not every man who will "dare to be in the right with two or three." It is to the credit of these young Hebrews that they chose the better part, and braved the common voice, resisting the power which lies in those words, "Everybody does it," because to yield would have been dishonouring to God. (*P. H. Hunter.*) *The Persistence of Early Religion*:—Babylon began too late with these youths. Their names were changed, but their principles did not yield to the enchantment. Early instructions are not so easily obliterated. The impressions of childhood are always the most lasting. They engrave themselves upon the whole formation of the man; they constitute the mould of one's being. They may be weakened and overlaid, but not extinguished. They are like words spoken in a whispering gallery, which may not be heard near where they are uttered, but are produced in far distant years and go echoing along the remotest paths of life. A child's heart is plastic, and the form to which it is once set is the hardest thing in the world to change. These youths had been brought up in the knowledge and worship of the true God, and had been taught His word and law; and their early teachings abode with them, and remained proof against all the subtle seductions and expedients of a heathen court. They quietly took the new names assigned them, for they could not help themselves. Those names were indeed lies as applied to them, but they were obliged to submit, as the good and pious of every age have had to bear the ill names which the world has put upon them. These Hebrew youths took the base cognomens dictated by their heathen conquerors, but under those offensive names still lurked the holy teachings of their childhood. Tyrants might change their names, but their hearts remained loyal to the God of their fathers. It was not long before a test occurred to prove how firmly rooted in their hearts were the sacred teachings which had been early imprinted upon these youths. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Purity Pays*:—As a rule, the undefiled man is the best looking man. It is redness of eyes, not clearness of complexion, which marks the lover of wine. The bloot of the beer-drinker gives the lie to every boast of the healthfulness of his favourite beverage. He who takes defiling food and drinks as a cure for his ailments, will have an increase of ailments for which to take the defiling portions. He who will keep himself pure will find himself in best bodily condition through his purity. The truth of this fact has been tested over and over again in army life, and in life at sea, in expeditions to the frigid and the torrid zones, and in every grade of society from the palace to the hovel. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Weighty Reasons for Abstinence*:—Daniel's piety appeareth in this, that he maketh conscience of smaller evils also, such as most men in his case would never have boggled at. He would not "defile himself with the the portion of the king's meat." He scrupled the eating of it; and why? 1. Because it was often such as was forbidden by the law of God (Lev. xi.; Deut. xiv.). 2. Because it was so used as would defile him and his fellows against the word of God; for the heathens, to the shame of many Christians, had their grace after meat, as it were, consecrating their dishes to their idols before they tasted of them (Dan. v. 4; I. Cor. viii. 10). 3. They could not do it without offence to their weaker brethren, with whom (they chose rather to sympathise in their adversity than to live in excess and fulness (Amos vi. 6). 4. They well perceived that the king's love and provisions were not single and sincere, but that he meant his own profit, to assure himself the better of the land of Judah, and that they might forget their religion. Lastly, they knew that intemperance was the mother of many mischiefs, as in Abram, Esau the rich glutton, etc. (*J. Trapp.*) *An Abstemious Prince*:—It is said that when the German Crown Prince went to Bonn University he invoked the displeasure of his colleagues because he would not participate in their drinking habits. The Crown Prince saw his father, the Kaiser, on the subject, and, as a result, the Emperor made it known that in his opinion the students were seriously injuring their health by excessive beer drinking; and he denounced the practice in unmistakable terms. In his temperance the Prince was using his influence aright, and he displayed a spirit akin to that of the apostle, who declared if meat should make his brother to offend he would eat no flesh. (*Christian Herald.*) *Youthful Temperance Secures Against Old Age Remorse*:—Once, when Socrates was asked what was the virtue of a young man, he said, "To avoid excess in everything." If this virtue were more common, how much happier the world would be. Before he died Lord Northington, Chancellor in George III.'s reign, paid the penalty which port wine extracts from its fervent worshippers, and he suffered the acutest pangs of gout. It is recorded that as he limped from the Woolsack to the Bar of the House of Lords, he once muttered to a young peer who watched his distress with evident sympathy, "Ah, my young friend, if I had known that these legs would one day carry a Chancellor, I would have taken better care of them when I was at your age." He knew from bitter experience the pains and penalties of an ill-spent youth. *Divine Help in Character Making* (ver. 17):—

Schools may make learned men, God alone can make wise men. And the character of such men as Daniel and his companions, who are at once distinguished for learning, wisdom, and uncompromising fidelity to religion, is, in a peculiar manner, the work of God's hands. Persons of such a character have been rare in the earth, and when raised up in an age of degeneracy, it is always for important purposes, which neither they, nor those who have the charge of their education, could have divined. In the training of these young men, Nebuchadnezzar had one design, and God had another. (*T. White.*) *Daniel's Education*:—Two arguments may be drawn from this passage, to commend the cultivation of religious character, to those who are engaged in the business of secular education. 1. They will find, as Daniel did, that religion is an aid to study. When she takes up her habitation in the heart, she will keep the soul calm, the reason clear, the feelings fresh, the taste pure, and secure the Divine blessing on diligence. The objects which religion presents to the mind are the most sublime that can be contemplated, and nourish the heart equally with the understanding. 2. The excellent character of these youths was the direct mean of their success in life. (*Ibid.*) *Intellectual Power Aided by Plain Living*:—We have the high thinking that follows "plain living." No doubt the frugal fare helped to keep the brains clear and the minds ready for work. The same Spartan discipline leads to the same results in many a Scottish University and American farmhouse, where some lad is half starving himself and enthusiastically grappling with study. Where do the great scholars and thinkers come from? From "huts where poor men lie," from humble homes where profusion was unknown and poverty often looked in at the window. Pulse and water are helps, not hindrances, to intellectual clearness and progress in knowledge. When the examination day came, the youths who had had "a good time" with "the king's meat," and, no doubt, had often laughed at the strait-laced four, were at the bottom of the lists, if they passed at all, and the four were at the top, as such people generally are. (*A. Maclaren.*) *Youthful Piety*:—I. **YOUTHFUL PIETY POSSESSED.** The piety of the Hebrew youths, the fact that their minds had been brought under the government of vital personal godliness, is distinctly implied and assumed. On this the whole of their history is specifically founded. In what manner it was that they had received the inestimable boon we are not informed. Belonging as they did to the royal house of Judah, or to noble families of that tribe, they probably had enjoyed early advantages, in connection with some instructor who had remained faithful to the Most High in that age of infatuated apostasy; and it may be that the disastrous event of the captivity, which had drawn them from their native scenes to a far distant and a far different land, had operated powerfully and grievously upon them. Some cases indeed may exist in which the germs of pious thought and emotion were implanted at a period so early and in a mode so gentle that the incipient processes of the work have been very indistinct. But then, again, there are other cases, and these perhaps numerous ones, in which the instrumentality, or a large proportion of it, is clear, is defined, is not destined to be forgotten. But then the instrumentality is not so important as the fact. What privileges, and at the same time what responsibilities are yours! My young friends, whose estimate of piety has perhaps been imperfect, and whose habits, it may be, have been utterly and entirely estranged from it, let me remind you solemnly that without delay such piety is indeed requisite, absolutely requisite for you all. Whatever else you may be without, you must not be destitute of religion. All possible inducements, arising from all possible sources, implore you to become what others are, and in entire and cordial dedication to give yourselves unto God. II. **From the notice of youthful piety possessed, we observe again that WE HAVE YOUTHFUL PIETY TRIED.** The religion of Daniel and his companions was submitted to a very powerful and decisive test. You observe that their conspicuousness in personal beauty and intellectual accomplishments obviously exposed them to a powerful and a perilous snare. Moreover, their names, which were appellations memorialising the true God, were to be exchanged for others, being the memorials of the idol divinities of Babylon. To Daniel, signifying "God is my judge," was assigned the name of Belshazzar, meaning probably "the keeper of the treasures of Bel." To Hananiah, signifying "the grace of the Lord," was assigned the name of Shadrach, meaning probably "the inspiration of the sun." To Mishael, signifying "he that is the powerful God," was assigned the name of Meshach, probably meaning "devoted to Shah," the Oriental Venus. And to Azariah, signifying "the Lord is a help," was assigned the name of Abed-nego, meaning probably "the servant of the shining fire." Thus it was that all remembrance of their allegiance to the true God was to be obliterated; and they were to be drawn into that great vortex of abomination which had well-nigh absorbed the world. But amidst these artful and cruel appliances, appealing alike to their vanity, to their sensuality, to their interests and to their fears, the piety of the heart stood firm; it steadfastly resisted, and it triumphantly overcame. You must understand their abstinence from the more dainty food not only as an act of

self-control in regard to appetite, and as a patriotic recognition of the affliction of Israel, they refusing to live in indulgence while their brethren in captivity lived in privation and dishonour, but as a solemn testimony against idolatry and against all compromise with it, and as a solemn testimony on behalf of the true Jehovah, to whom they were dedicated, and by whom they resolved unalterably to abide. Now, youthful piety is never without its difficulties; and many instances occur to us in which it has been, as in the case before us, severely and acutely tried. We may think of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, and of Moses in the court of Pharaoh, and of Samuel with the sons of Eli, and of Obadiah in the palace of Ahab, and of Hezekiah under the tutelage of Ahaz. And, my young friends, to whom God has given the inestimable boon of piety, you probably have already discovered the fact indicated in your own history, or you will discover it soon. You may be tried by your own indwelling passions, which, although subjugated by the grace which is in you, have not yet done striving for the mastery: vanity, self-conceit, cupidity, anger, envy, deceit, levity, animal passion and lust. You may be tried by the hostility of others, on whom by kindred or by civil position you are dependent—parents, guardians, masters, who hate your religion, and who hate what they conceive to be the results of it; attempting, therefore, in the ungenerous malice of domestic and social persecution, to rend you from your faith and your hope. You may be tried by the fascinations of worldly amusement and pleasure: the feast, the dance, the song. You may be tried by opportunities of secular exaltation and honour—of rising high in the ranks of life, of attaining power, and of associating on well-nigh equal terms with the magnates of the land. You may be tried by strange and terrible combinations of evil influence, formed and applied by the great adversary of souls, rushing in upon you mysteriously, impetuously, and suddenly, with an agency almost overwhelming, that must utterly amaze and confound you. Oh! accept the warning, and vigilantly and prayerfully prepare. Let us observe, in the next place, that the trial of useful piety of which we now speak is permitted and arranged by God in wisdom and in kindness. It might seem to some a harsh and an inopportune dispensation; and questioning might be indulged, whether it would not be far better to wait and postpone the ordeal until he who has to endure it has become more matured in character and more ample in resources. The test never can be applied to one who has what the Scriptures emphatically term “the root of the matter in him,” without the test being found adapted to produce, and actually producing upon character results of the most salutary and beneficial order. It is the discipline which fits the Christian labourer for the field, the Christian pilgrim for the journey, the Christian mariner for the ocean, the Christian combatant for the battle. It leads to acquaintance with self and all other beings; it augments hatred of sin, it exercises patience, it strengthens faith, it quickens action, it encourages prayer, it promotes dependence and reliance upon God. “Endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” “Fight the good fight of faith,” whereunto you were called; and “lay hold upon eternal life”; and then but a little while, and He to whom you have been loyal will crown you with the laurels of the conqueror. III. Having illustrated youthful piety possessed, and youthful piety tried, we have to observe **YOUTHFUL PIETY HONoured**. You have heard how the experiment proposed by Daniel in respect to the food for the prescribed period was blessed by God. You are informed, further, how Daniel and his companions improved under the mental tuition which was administered, though still retaining their religion, and so indicating to us the fact that the pursuit of learning and science may be continued in perfect subservience to the honour of religion, and positively for the advancement of its empire. Additional instances of the honour which is attached to true piety have been preserved to us in the sacred records. The cases which we have cited as instances of trial we can also cite, and we ought to cite, as instances of honour. Remember the case of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, resisting the temptation in the spirit of inquiry, “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Then imprisoned by the revengeful lie of the tempter, but emerging at length from his ignominy and his peril, and set on high to be ruler over the land of Egypt. Remember the case of Moses. We can add to these multitudes of cases more from the annals of the Christian church, and we have memorials around us to this day, all proving that through piety is the pathway to honour. “Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.” With regard to the honour which arises from youthful piety, were we to classify it we might commend to you such arrangements as these. There is honour from the world. It is a mistake to conclude, as it has been hastily concluded, that genuine and decided piety is the parent of privation and disgrace in the world. Humility, amiableness, diligence, integrity, purity, benevolence—these are to men, under God, elements which, employed in the common affairs of life, constitute them the architects of their own

fortunes. And then again, there is honour from good men. Those who are devoted to the high service of God in the Gospel of His Son are welcomed cordially and gratefully by the churches of the living Jehovah. There is honour, too, from God, in accordance with His ancient promise, "Them that honour Me I will honour." The honour that arises from the world and the honour that arises from good men He ultimately communicates, and then He imparts further and most delightful communications of His love.

IV. But then we have also to contemplate YOUTHFUL PIETY USEFUL. The decision of the Hebrew brethren, besides being associated with their own personal exaltation, was associated with many and momentous results of benefit and advantage to others. We do not dwell upon what must have been the influence of their example in the sphere in which they moved, but pass to the express and positive records. The immediate recorded result of their decision was an impression made upon the mind of the potentate they served with regard to the claims of the living and true God. We wish the young to remember this one simple fact, that the piety of four young men produced an immense effect upon the interests and destinies of the world. Now, we refer again to the instances of piety which have been selected from the sacred Volume as instances of usefulness. They are all, as you must perceive, eminently so. We then proceed to affirm as a fact that in the annals of the church youthful piety has generally been by far the most useful. Then we may proceed further to state that God has given youthful piety for the express purpose of being useful. Those who possess it possess it not as a privilege merely, but as a responsibility—not as a blessing merely, but as an obligation. They possess it, that they may work for Him whom they are called upon to serve, in the advancement of His kingdom, and in the salvation of the souls of their fellow men. They are placed under the government of principles, the legitimate operation of which invokes them constantly to earnest and zealous effort, and which they must carry out into every department of influence, in order that the law of their stewardship may be fulfilled. The opportunities for usefulness on the part of the young are manifestly great. And then, again, the prospects of usefulness are animating. No labour can be in vain; all work forms a part of one grand system, impelling to a grand consummation, when the cause of God and truth shall extend its dominion over the world. (*James Parsons.*) *The Character of Daniel.*—

I. And what first presents itself to us is that HE WAS A MAN OF AN ABSTEMIOUS LIFE. AND OF THE GREATEST TEMPERANCE. He knew that delicious entertainments, however pleasant to the senses, often tend to hurt the stomach and impair the constitution. When this is the case, why should the poor ever envy the rich, or wish to change conditions? Is not health the first of temporal blessings, and what we had better enjoy, than all the fine things at the tables of the great? Besides, luxury tends not only to enfeeble the body but to enervate the mind. The more we indulge our sensual appetites we weaken our intellectual powers. By pampering our taste it acquires new strength, and is apt to engage the whole soul. With what relish does an epicure talk of a fine dish, or of rich wine, and with what pleasure does he partake of them! He enjoys them more than the most rational, intellectual entertainment whatever. It deserves our remark that some of the greatest prophets mentioned in Scripture were remarkable for their humble and plain manner of life. It is recorded of John the Baptist, than whom none greater was born of a woman, "that his daily food was locusts and wild honey" (Matt. iii. 4). And it appears from the Gospel that our Lord and his disciples lived on the simplest food. Barley loaves and small fishes were their common entertainment. And why did the blessed Jesus prefer this manner of life when all the creatures were at his command? Why, but to teach us temperance and sobriety, and to set our affections upon things more substantial and valuable. Let us, therefore, be improving our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and in getting them enriched with Divine grace. The greater proficiency we make in the knowledge of Christ the more indifferent we will become about sensual enjoyments.

II. In the second place, concerning the prophet Daniel, THAT HE WAS RENOWNED FOR KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM ABOVE ALL THE WISE MEN OF BABYLON. To have his mind enlightened in the knowledge of God, and his memory stored with Divine truth, were the great objects which engaged his attention. Whilst others were amusing themselves with empty speculations, and employed about trifles, he was contemplating Divine things, and was chiefly conversant with the living oracles of the living God. Was it the wisdom which is from above with which he was chiefly conversant? Do we not approve his taste, and admire his choice? Human science is at best extremely imperfect, and may be called a mixture of error and of folly; but the knowledge of God and His blessed Son is truth itself, and the fruit of it eternal life.

III. Let me remark, in the third place, concerning Daniel, that HE WAS THE ROOTED ENEMY OF IDOLATRY, AND A SINCERE WORSHIPPER OF THE ONE TRUE AND LIVING GOD. Though he lived in the midst of the heathen, he kept himself pure from their abominations and despised their idols. Let our closets bear witness for us how regular we

are in our devotions! God forbid that they should appear against us in judgment! IV. I would remark, in the fourth place, concerning Daniel, that HE WAS A FAITHFUL SERVANT TO HIS PRINCE. Would to God that all in such elevated stations were men of similar worth! V. I remark, in the fifth place, concerning Daniel, THAT HE DARED TO DECLARE THE TRUTH TO THOSE PRINCES TO WHOM HE DELIVERED IT, HOWEVER MORTIFYING AND DISAGREEABLE TO THEM. Nebuchadnezzar had incurred the displeasure of the Almighty by his pride and arrogance, and it was revealed to him in a dream that he should be deprived of his kingdom, divested of his reason, and reduced to the humbling situation of eating grass and straw like an ox. The king, anxious to know the meaning of the vision, sent for Daniel to explain it, when the prophet told him the awful judgments which awaited him, and pressed upon him the duties of repentance and charity. It argued not a little fortitude to inform an arbitrary prince of the mean and despicable situation to which he was to be reduced, and to be put upon a level with the brutes. But Daniel dreaded not the king's resentment, because he trusted in God. Truth was too important to be concealed, even from a despotic monarch. We, too, are sometimes obliged to preach disagreeable truths; but fidelity to our great Master, and to the souls of men, requires it. We must declare the whole counsel of God, in whatever manner it may be taken. VI. I remark, in the first place, concerning Daniel, THAT PROVIDENCE INTERPOSED IN A VERY REMARKABLE MANNER WHEN HIS LIFE WAS IN IMMINENT DANGER. 1. From this subject I observe that those who fear God will be taken notice of and respected in the world. 2. I observe that by faithfully serving God we shall most effectually recommend Him to others. (*D. Johnston, D.D.*) *The Personality of Daniel*:—1. So the first characteristic of Daniel was his fidelity to religious convictions. Piety, moral integrity, and the favour of God, he preferred to the pleasures and prizes of life. 2. Another trait of Daniel's was judgment, so extraordinary as to make his name proverbial for that quality. His tact, his diplomatic skill, is admirable. Never once does he forget himself. No matter what dilemmas surround him, he is always the judicious, the well-balanced, the equipoised man. 3. But the most pleasing aspect of the personality of Daniel was his humility. (*J. B. Remensnyder.*) *Religious Constancy*:—His conduct through life was all in beautiful accordance with his first recorded action. After his example, let us cultivate constancy, as well as decision of religious character. Let not our religion be like a torrent filled by the falling of a water-spout, or by the hursting of a thunder-cloud, whose waters for a time overflow, and carry all before them, but anon its channel is dry, and the only memorial of its former fullness is the sediment it has left behind. Let our religion be like a pure stream, fed from some living fountain, whose waters flow daily to the sea, yet flow each succeeding day in undiminished fullness. (*J. White.*) *Daniel's Continuance a Remarkable Testimony to His Worth*:—Dr. Pusey remarks: "Simple words, but what a volume of tried faithfulness is unrolled by them!" Amid all the intrigues indigenous at all times in dynasties of Oriental despotism, amid all the envy towards a foreign captive in high office as a king's councillor, amid all the trouble incidental to the insanity of the King and the murder of two of his successors, in that whole critical period for his people, Daniel continued. (*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*)

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1, 2. **Nebuchadnezzar Dreamed Dreams.**—*The Wise Men of Babylon*:—In the conclusion of last chapter, we are informed that Daniel "had understanding in all visions and dreams." Events are now ordered so that he shall have an opportunity of exercising his skill on a more illustrious theatre. "And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar the king dreamed dreams." Nebuchadnezzar's dream was not of an ordinary kind. It was not caused by the ordinary working of a mind agitated by anxiety, or excited by ambition. It came immediately from that great and only God of whom Nebuchadnezzar was ignorant. It was so ordered, for reasons that will afterwards appear, that Nebuchadnezzar forgot what his dream was. But it was also ordained that he should not forget that he had a dream of a most wonderful kind. The impression made upon his mind was deep, and painful, and permanent. He could not forget it. It filled his whole soul. He was so troubled that he could neither compose himself to sleep nor be at rest when awake. Nebuchadnezzar,—the great, the terrible, the invincible,—who had already stormed so many towns, conquered so many countries, routed so many armies, and who, like the eagle in the tempest, seemed to exult in the storm of battle—Nebuchadnezzar troubled by a dream! How completely are the greatest

of men in the hand of Jehovah. How easily can he make the stoutest among them to quail. And may we not reflect, if this transient glimpse into the invisible world—if this unveiling of a portion of time and space, so small when compared with eternity and infinity, produced such trouble of mind, what amazement and terror will seize upon the souls of the ungodly, when the gates of the invisible world shall be thrown wide open, and the spirit, disentangled from matter, shall enter, and feel itself encompassed on all sides, not with the vision, but with the reality of the spiritual world—encircled with what is infinite and eternal—and penetrated by the holiness of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Being greatly troubled by his dream, Nebuchadnezzar was anxious to regain his composure. He was an idolater, and, consequently, ignorant of those hidden sources of comfort that are opened up to a believer in his time of need. (*J. White.*) *The Lost Dream*:—And as to the sneering Infidel question, How could a forgotten dream trouble the king? it seems quite a sufficient answer to ask whether its propounders have common sense enough to dream? For every one must know from experience that the mind is often greatly agitated by visions of the night, which vanish, leaving only a general impression. It is easy to suppose cases where the agitation would be even increased by the very fact that the particulars were no longer remembered, and the relief that might be hoped for could not, therefore, be so readily obtained. The dimness, indistinctness, mysteriousness of the subject only increases the agitation. The king knew three things. He had had a dream. It was lost; but still it greatly troubled him. He, therefore, called for his wise men. 1. How poor and wretched a creature is a man left to the power of fierce and ungovernable passions! How contemptible a figure does the great King of Babylon make in demanding what was impossible! Hot-headed and furious men are generally without reason, and deaf to all remonstrances. How blessed are your privileges, that you live under constitutional laws, and are not subject to the arbitrary power of a tyrant! Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus, and trial by jury are blessings that cannot be too highly valued. 2. In the rise and fall of nations, shadowed forth in prophecy, and presented in history, it is of great importance to bear in mind the fact that the Supreme Being does rule over all the inhabitants of the world, and yet does no violence to the free agency of any rational creature. The mightiest planets in the highest heavens sweep round in their orbits at his bidding, and so arise and fall the mighty dynasties of our race, both in ancient and modern times, and in both the Old and New World. Not a few seem to think that God's providence was concerned with ancient nations, but has ceased to take notice of modern nations. This is nothing but practical atheism. God is not less vigilant and supreme now, in the midst of our inventions and improvements, than He was in the days of Jerusalem and Babylon. The celebrated and pious Bogue was in the habit of saying, when he took up the papers in the time of Napoleon the Great, to read what was passing: "Let us see how God governs the world." 3. In the history of nations there are always two classes of interests and facts very distinct, and yet exercising over each other a powerful influence. I mean political and religious events. The first relates to kings, emperors, rulers, cabinets, and forms of government; the second relates to the moral character, religious sentiment of the people, and pertains to the salvation of their souls and the condition of the Church of the living God. These interests must necessarily exercise over each other a powerful influence. The history of nations and the history of the Church of Christ reflect mutually the state of the other. 4. Finally, here you are taught where to go in all cases of difficulty. How did Daniel obtain the knowledge of the lost dream? By asking for it. He prayed to God. He sought help in the right direction. We do not, indeed, expect miracles now, yet we do expect answer to prayer. (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*) *Dreams and Dreamers*:—Dreams have played an important part in the history of the world. God seems to have made large use of the visions of the night and of dreams to call men into His service, to commission them to do His will, execute His judgments, and to reveal His gracious purposes concerning the world. It was in a vision that God revealed to the patriarch Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for number. Nor is the New Testament without them. After our Lord Jesus Christ came and revealed God, life, immortality, salvation, and peace, the use of vision and dream did not cease. It was in a dream that Joseph was warned to flee into Egypt, and thus secure the safety of Christ. When the time had come that the Gospel of the grace of God should be preached to the Gentiles, God revealed His will in the matter to Peter in a vision on the housetop at Jaffa. But among all the dreams and visions of which we have read, there are but few more remarkable and important than this, which filled the slumbers of Nebuchadnezzar, and slipped from his memory afterwards. I. We will consider THE DREAMER. The dreamer of the text was an Eastern monarch. There he is in secure possession of his throne. Famed as a skilful soldier and victor, he is the mightiest monarch on the face of the earth. Babylon, the seat of his empire, the place of his throne, is among

the most imposing and great of the ancient cities of the world. This is the home of this royal dreamer. See him in the midst of it. Seated on his throne, around him stand his chief men of state, his eunuchs, priests, princes, and captains, all in their many-coloured and glittering garbs. He is troubled. What has gone wrong? Has some part of his kingdom broken out into rebellion? Has the death-plague seized upon his friends and chief councillors? Nay, he has had a dream, a simple dream. The world owes a great deal to its dreamers. Some have blessed the world by the great victories which they won. What a great and noble company the dreamers make. John Bunyan dreamed the "Pilgrim's Progress," a book which, next to the Bible, which it illustrates, has had a larger circulation than any other book in the world. That was a grand dream, and the world owes much to it. Columbus was a dreamer. He had visions of another and a great land across an unexplored and unknown ocean. Sir Christopher Wren was a dreamer. He had a vision of St. Paul's, and it grew up in the city of London. II. THE DREAM. The dreamer was a mighty monarch. The dream was worthy of the dreamer. However great the dreamer, the dream was not less so. He went to rest that night with his mind full of great and important thoughts. He thought of what wars had been, and wondered what wars would be. He knew himself secure on his throne then. But did he think that soon he would be gone? He wondered "what should come to pass hereafter." It was a great dream. No idolater ever had a greater dream, and but few men any so great. He went out far beyond himself. The present did not satisfy him. He wanted to pull back the curtain and see what was beyond. Have we not all had dreams like this? Think you that this king was the only man who ever felt dissatisfied with the present? Have not we all tried to look beyond? I have had a vision of God; it may have been a dream, but I have thought about Him. I have looked around me in the world, and have seen traces of Him. The great mountains and the mighty ocean, which I have seen in the majesty of its fury, have said something to me of the greatness of God. I seem to have had visions of love, and mercy, and pity, but I can't quite find out myself, I want some one to interpret. I can't myself quite solve it all. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" asks one in ancient days who also had dreams about God. Then I have had dreams of the soul and its destiny. I have dreamed of "what shall come to pass hereafter." Then I have had visions and dreams of a future in which justice and righteousness shall prevail, in which the glaring iniquities and wrongs of this present life shall all be set right. But have we not had dreams of another sort? Sometimes we have felt with sorrow and shame our own weakness and badness. We have become conscious that we were out of harmony with things around us. There is a something within us which speaks to us. Call it conscience or anything else—there it is. I have dreamed of forgiveness, how to get it, and where. Who can tell me? Who can interpret for me all these dreams of mine? Is there any Daniel whom I can call into court who shall reveal to me all these secrets? III. THE INTERPRETATION of this dream. Daniel was able to tell the king his dream, and also to expound it. And what an exposition it was! Kingdom succeeds kingdom, monarch follows monarch. The Babylonian head of gold, the Persian breast of silver, the Grecian thighs of brass, and the Roman legs of iron, all come and go as Daniel expounds the dream. There are two things we must note in this interpretation. 1. The Christ kingdom symbolised by the stone cut from the mountain without hands. 2. The second thing I wish to note is that this Christ prefigured by the mountain stone is the interpreter of all my dreams of God, the soul, and a future state. In His school I get my answer. I have been to other schools and could not learn. Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his wise men. They were accustomed to interpret dreams, but they were perplexed now. When I come to Christ He interprets my dream. He not only reveals God to me, but He tells me of His love and kindness. God is love. God is a Father. God cares for me. Jesus Christ tells me how I can be at peace with God through Himself. He tells me about things which are to come to pass. Jesus Christ is God's answer to all my questions, and visions, and dreams. (C. Leach, D.D.) *Human Wisdom Tested and Found Wanting*:—I. THE DREAM. The first verse states that this vision occurred in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; i.e., in the second year of his sole sovereignty. His father, Nabopolassar, being now dead, the empire devolved upon Nebuchadnezzar alone. 1. The dream reveals the nature of his ambitions. It shows that his mind was busy with projects of conquest, and the cares of government, and the hopes of secure power. How natural that these engrossing thoughts of his waking hours should pursue him in sleep and give complexion to the visions of the night. 2. But the dream was sent by Divine agency. It was not only natural, but also supernatural. This is not the first nor only time that God has vouchsafed to make his revelations to heathen minds. Balaam is a notable instance of prophetic gifts bestowed upon unworthy persons. All extraordinary channels of Divine communications were no doubt selected for a purpose; and while the

light of revelation shines steadily upon his own chosen people, yet he vouchsafes occasional flashes upon other minds to illuminate some truth which may be best illuminated in that way. 3. The dream is forgotten. Strangely given, it was strangely recalled. The honour shall be God's and God's alone. God will show by an infallible sign that it is His revelation, and will not suffer the Chaldean sages to tinker with its interpretation. Nothing remained but the disturbing sense of having seen strange things, and an abiding conviction that these things were closely related to his destiny. To whom shall he turn in his perplexity? II. THE DEMAND. We may well imagine the surprise and alarm of the sooth-sayers and magicians when they become acquainted with the nature of the king's demand. Had they been quite sure that the king had indeed forgotten his dream they might have very easily invented one to satisfy him; but I suppose they were apprehensive lest this was only a snare cunningly placed by this intelligent monarch to expose their duplicity. It seemed to them the safer plan, then, not to hazard so dangerous an expedient, but to declare their inability to do more than interpret the dream when told. The king, however, reiterates his demand. 1. The Chaldeans maintain that this demand is unjust in that it was without precedent. There is a true and a false law of precedent. It is undoubtedly true that whoever demands or enacts a new thing, a thing counter to existing usages, must have strong and unquestionable reasons for such a course. There are always presumptions against novelties and innovations, and one who appeals to custom has an undeniably strong ground to rest upon. On the other hand, the law of precedent can create nothing more than presumption. It still leaves the reason of the thing to be inquired into. It is probable the imperious temper of this monarch would not be balked by an appeal to customary usages. 2. They further maintain the injustice of this demand on the ground that it is beyond human power to comply with it. They say: "There is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Some have supposed this declaration that the dwelling of the gods "is not with flesh" to be indicative of scepticism. It was the cardinal belief of the Babylonians that the gods were very near to men. Their temples, and sacrifices, and priestly rites proceeded upon that belief. These Chaldeans, then, are supposed, under the influence of their great peril, to betray here their utter disbelief in these hollow mockeries. And the lesson is drawn from it: "Alas, that this unbelief should so often, in Christian as well as in Pagan times, have found a nest for itself so near the altar!" But I would rather believe that these Chaldeans, whose studies brought them in contact with the mighty works of God, had more exalted conceptions of the deity than those which prevailed among the masses. 3. In this view the demand was not so unreasonable as the Chaldeans would make it appear. They had wilfully imposed upon both king and people, laying claim to mysterious arts by which they could read secret things; and had no doubt taken care that this faith in their powers should be implicit and well-nigh unlimited. They could scarcely complain, then, when they are taken at their word. Skilled in plausibility and ambiguity, they no doubt relied on these powers to cover up a failure when one occurred, and to impose successfully upon the credulity of the king. 4. It is a great gain to the cause of truth when impositions are detected. So, then, Nebuchadnezzar deserves praise for pressing this matter to a decisive issue. The cause of religion no doubt suffers a shock when priestly pretensions are thrown in the crucible and tested, but it rises from such shocks to greater stability, and usefulness, and power. III. THE DECREE. Whatever may be said of his demand, certainly the decree of the king is indefensible. These wise men had done nothing worthy of death. Moreover, there were many among the Chaldeans who laid no claim to magic powers, but who contented themselves with the sciences, as patient and laborious students, and it was not only manifest injustice, but strange impolicy to include them in this sweeping condemnation. Yet more, why should Daniel and his friends, who had but just passed their novitiate and who had not been consulted at all, share their fate? But rage is blind and knows no discrimination. There are not wanting some, as an illustration of this spirit, who would obliterate Christianity because of unworthy Christians; and no one can estimate what man has suffered from this stupid lack of the power of rational discrimination. IV. CONCLUSION. What a striking picture is here presented us of Nebuchadnezzar and his wise men trying, by human devices, to arrive at the mind of God! How we yearn for man when we behold his boundless aspirations confronted by his impotent nothingness! But it was well that human skill should first exhaust its resources in endeavouring to know the mind of God. It was a proper prelude to God's revelation, this confession of impotence: "There is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." It is a law of God's providence that He will not intervene until man has discovered his own absolute inability, and felt his imperative need. (*The Southern Pulpit*.) *The Dream of Humanity*:—There is no function in life which can compare for one moment to that of him who can minister to the perplexities of his fellow-men.

The story connected with these words is very simple and well known. The king had dreamed a dream, and when he woke in the morning he could not recall it to his mind. A vague sense of the splendour of that dream haunted his imagination and memory. He felt that there was bound up in it some deep and mysterious truth. He hardly liked to let the whole remembrance of it quite go. He had around him his Chaldeans and his wise men, and he turned to them for aid, and their answer was that their function was limited only to the interpretation of dreams; it was not their function to enter upon a process of thought-reading unless there were present in the mind of him who demanded the interpretation the subject matter of those thoughts. In the emergency the difficulty was solved by a Jewish exile; to him it was given to be the reviver and interpreter of the dream. And we, perhaps, may feel that that ancient story is not wholly lost to us when we cast our mind upon our own lives, and remember how much we, too, have been haunted by some magnificent dream. When the vision of what life really was, with its deep and solemn significance, was granted to us, we, awaking with the impression of all life's business, lost the vivid force of that dream—we could not recall it, and we turned to the seers about us. They are plentiful to seek, the wise and the unwise, the weak and the strong, the false and the true, and we, haunted by the remembrance of that vision of what life's deep significance is, turn in vain to these. And yet the conditions may teach us what are the real features and the real capacities of the true prophet. If I am not mistaken, the story suggests to us that there are two great elements which are essential in order that a man may be a real helper of his fellow men, the true prophet of his age. The condition which the king insists upon supplies one of these—it is that he should have touch with human nature; and his interpretation of the dream suggests the other—he must have some knowledge of the law and order of life. These two were just those that were vouchsafed to Daniel. 1. The first is knowledge of human nature. Let me ask you to put yourselves for the moment in the position of those who had this somewhat unreasonable demand made upon them. Their answer to his demand was very simple and fair. "We are perfectly ready," they said, "to interpret your dream, but our ministrations extend thus far; tell us the dream and we will tell the meaning." But the king, whose vision was elevated, perhaps, by the dream which he had experienced, began to see that he was surrounded by those who were in a large measure but charlatans; and prompted by this, he perhaps insists all the more pertinaciously on the condition. "You profess to be able to interpret my dreams. How do I know that your interpretations are true? Tell me what the dream was, and I can verify your accuracy. In other words, vindicate your pretensions in a sphere where I can test them, and then I will be able to give you my faith in the sphere where I cannot test them. I cannot verify your interpretations, but I can verify your statement of what passed through my mind. You profess to explain my life to me, and all the destiny that awaits it; if it be in your power to do this, show, first, that you understand me, and then I will believe that you can unfold my destiny." And that, in itself, when you come to study it, is no unfair condition. It may be unreasonable in the circumstances in which it was used, but there is a vein of reason, and there is a vein of fairness in it; for when you reflect upon it there is no power in a man to teach and to speak concerning the future, unless he has a certain knowledge of the present. The man who can read deepest into the circumstances and the situation of the present is the man who is far the more likely to be able to forecast the future. You would not entrust your case to the doctor who had no knowledge of your symptoms. You would believe that the man, and the man only, who could read into your symptoms, would be able to track the probable development of the disease. It is the same in nature. The naturalist cannot predict a harvest except he understands the nature of the seed, and it is just in proportion as he is possessed of the power of insight that he is possessed of the power of foresight. That is taught us in the pages of history. As long as men thought, as it were, to out-manœuvre Nature, and to read her secrets by ignoring her face, they simply courted defeat. These were the astrologers, the charlatans of science; but the moment they took up the other attitude, and began to scan closely the features of nature, and sought earnestly to understand the meaning of her thoughts, they began to discover her laws, and discovering them they had the power by which they could predict what would be the evolution of those laws. And if that be true in the law and order of nature, has it its counterpart in the moral order also? Place ourselves for a moment in the position of the king. Daniel comes and unfolds to him the vision. That splendid vision, that noble and colossal figure, represented what had passed through the king's mind, not that night only, but every night. It had been the dream of his life, the splendour and the magnificence of his position; the glorious headship which he held over the empire which he thought his own, from the high vantage ground of which he looked down in proud contempt upon human kind. His thoughts were read. The man's heart is read; his vision, and all the subtle

play of his thoughts is unfolded to him. "The man that can tell me these secrets of my heart is the man into whose hand I will place my destiny and bid him point the way along the track of my life. He can understand what is the outcome of this career of mine who thus understands me." And wherever men have been in the position of prophets of their age, their strength and power has depended upon their capacity to read the minds and the play of thought of the men of their age. If they are not familiar with this life they cannot have any power to deal with the life that lies beyond. The men who stood in their day foremost had an intimate knowledge of human nature. Take, for example, what, after all, is an illustration in the same direction. This Book of God has found its dominion over the minds and the lives of men because it has always displayed itself as a book well read in the depths of human nature. "I say," said one, rising from the perusal of it, "the person who wrote that Book knew me." "I believe," said one, who was cut off only too early in his splendid and promising career, "I believe it to be God's Book because it is man's Book;" that is to say, it has such a power to fit into the needs of human kind that it vindicates its divine strength because of the very humanity of its methods. And this is what we may call the divine key to the method which God Himself has adopted in the life and pattern of Jesus Christ. He comes into our midst to be the Divine Teacher. He understands men. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee—I knew the devout aspirations of thy life," and that breaks down the thought. "This teacher understands me. Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the Judge of Israel." Sometimes we feel ourselves a little disheartened. The cynic turns aside and says, "It is true your Christianity is played out, your religion effete." I say it is an unwise thing for a man to echo these doleful complaints. May it not be the case that we have lost touch with humanity, that we have failed to understand human nature as it is before us in the century in which we live; that we have allowed, so to speak, our Christian teaching to grow fossilised, and the fossilised thing has lost its life and the hands and feet of its movement, and it cannot grasp upon the heart of humanity again? 2. But let us look at this second condition—the knowledge of a Divine order. What was the interpretation of the dream? Here stood this colossal figure, glittering with its varied metals. By-and-by, "without hands," came the stone which smote upon it, and then, as in a moment, all the magnificence dropped into pieces, and these huge masses of metal, which had been the admiration of the world a moment ago, are lifted as things light, as "the chaff upon the summer threshing-floor," and swept away, and the little stone begins to grow, and to take the place of this great image, and to fill the world itself. Of course, you may say the figure represented the empires which were existing and which were to follow—Persia, Greece, Rome, or, if you will have it so, the Egyptian or the Syrian kingdoms; but whatever the historical interpretation, the ethical interpretation is for you and me. That splendid dream, and that magnificent figure which appeared in the king's dream, is the dream of man in all ages; it is the dream of self-realisation. He who dreams is king. He sees that grand figure bearing human form, dominating the plain; and this is the ambition of men in all ages; but as he beholds he sees it in its glory and in its weakness. He sees it in its splendour—there is the effort of man to realise himself. It was so with all those who endeavoured to establish any solid, single monarchy. From the days of Nebuchadnezzar or Nimrod, if you will, to the days of Napoleon, this has been the same dream, "I will take my idea, and I will impress it upon the world, and I will mould that earth and all the creatures that are in it to my will, and I shall dominate all." That is the ambition; what I want you to notice is, that it is the effort of a man to realise self in some form or other. That is an instinct which does not simply breathe into the hearts of great conquerors, or great founders of monarchies; there is not a human being created with a soul or an intelligence that had not had the dream that he will realise himself. The artist who seeks to cast his ideas on the canvas so as to speak his thoughts in richness and detail to his fellow men—he is seeking to realise himself—his own idea painted there. Even in the home life you can see it. This joy of home life has largely its play and its beauty because it is the very thing in which we see that in our children we live again—we realise ourselves in them. This instinct of self-realisation is at the root of man's best ambitions as well as his worst, and as it is at the root of them you can understand why it is, but the life and the form of that which was given him from God; for God Himself, if we may in reverence say it, has made His world but the picture of the same principle in Himself. The world is God realising Himself in material beauty; the page of history is God realising Himself in moral order, and this Christian revelation is God realising Himself in spiritual splendour to humanity; and I am not surprised if this, the very impulse of God, be self-realisation that He may manifest His greatness and His love, that therefore we, drawing our life from His hand, should be filled with a like instinct. But while this colossal figure in the vision is shown in its splendour, it is also shown in its weakness. This

little stone, without hands, should demolish the whole; man's best and noblest dreams, man's most brilliant ambitions, are destined to be overthrown. And why? This stone represents precisely that unseen, that handless power which has not its origin in the conceptions of man, but in the nature of things; it is just the picture of what you see in nature. Man builds his noble shrines, he rears his sumptuous palaces, he spreads abroad the magnificent tokens of his power; but law, re-written deep down in the heart of nature, lays its hand upon all these creations of man's genius, and overturns all that man creates. In the precincts of moral order the law will overturn also; under this condition, all that is up built disregarding God's eternal law must perish. It is not merely because man made it that it must die, but it is that man made it in violation of eternal law. Three laws were violated in its erection—the law of time and growth, the law of righteousness, the law of solidarity. The law of time, because this is that which is built up, made—it does not grow in contradistinction to the stone “without hands.” That grows, this is made. That which is made, as it were, is merely built and at variance with the law of growth. The things which are alive grow, and in those things in which there is any moral life there is the capacity of growing. All the best things of this world grow, but the impatience of man hastens them onward. God will make a kingdom, but men with their impatience say, “We will make it in our own time,” and therefore at all costs—at the cost of blood, at the cost of righteousness, the kingdoms are made. These empires have perished. Why? Because they violated eternal laws of God; and as surely as the power of natural law can overthrow every shrine of human erection, so surely must every kingdom, every monarch, every race, every nationality, every church die and perish, if it tries to construct itself out of God's due time and out of God's due order. And as it thus violated the law of growth, by the very impatience of its construction, you know that it violated the law of rectitude. Men often imagine that they can do the right thing, but that they can do it in any way they please. There are two sentinels that stand at the outgoing of the temple of God; the one is the sentinel of a right way and the other of a right thing, and you are not permitted to build where God builds for all eternity, unless you be directed by the right thing and also by the right way. The weakness of life, as we often see it, is that men are passionately devoted to some great and noble enterprise, but they undermine the very foundations of their own edifice, because, while they seek the right thing they miss the right way, and that is the secret of many a failure. It sinned also against the law of solidarity. If you look at the construction of this image, you will find that it is merely a piling together: there is no homogeneity about it, it is heterogeneous; I am of gold, and I will be the head of all; I am of silver, and I will be the strength of all; I am of brass and I will be power of fertility to all, and my iron heel shall be planted upon all. Christ has made all men to be of one blood upon the face of the earth, and the kingdom which He establishes shall be built up not with materials which shall represent the dignity, the glory, or the pre-eminence of one nation or one people over another, but that wider and better glory, which is the organisation of humanity unto a loving, living whole. “Then, if that be the doom, as it were, of this dream of humanity,” we begin to say, “is it not, then, a sad close to it all?” If the instinct to realise self, that is, to leave some impress of our own upon the world ere we die, be a great and a God-given impulse, and if what we see is the constant overthrow of all our schemes, are we, then, to settle down into a miserable pessimism and say, “It is vain ever to expect the realisation of human dreams?” Nay, not so. This little stone “without hands” takes the place of this overthrown image; it grows; it is the empire of heart, the kingdom which cannot be shaken; and, therefore, there has never passed through human mind a noble and a true dream that God does not see the way to realise. He breaks down our little efforts to realise it that He may substitute His own. Never let us think, then, that we are to be for ever disappointed by incessant and perpetual failures. The world grows old, but with it there grows, also, the everlasting and the ripening purposes of God. (*Bp. Rhydd Carpenter.*)

Ver. 5. **The thing is gone from me.**—*Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*:—The “thing” is considered by many to be the dream, and so they also understand the same phrase in the eighth verse. There is nothing in the Chaldee (Aramaic) of this passage to forbid this understanding, for though *millethath* means “word,” yet, like the Greek *rema* (and even sometimes *logos*) it may also mean a thing or subject of which there is speech, as it seems to do in verses 15 and 17 of this chapter. The other interpretation, however (“the word is gone forth from me”), which is given in the margin of the Revised Version, appears to have most probability. The reasons are these: 1. The king would scarcely call his dream a “thing.” He would have said, “the dream is gone from me” if he had meant that. “Thing” would have referred not to the dream, but to the whole matter

connected with the dream, and that had not gone from him. 2. The sequences in both the fifth and eighth verses are not relevant with reference to "dream," but are relevant with reference to "word" or "decree." In the fifth verse there is no nexus between "the dream is gone from me" and "if ye will not make known unto me the dream," etc. We should have expected a "therefore." In the eighth verse the seeking to gain time would be a natural result of the terrible decree, but not a result of the dream being gone from the monarch. 3. The similar expression in Ch. ix. 23 and in Is. xiv. 23 (*yatsa dhabbar* "the commandment came forth," "the word is gone out") is a strong support for the meaning here, "the word or decree is gone forth from me." Some have supposed (with this rendering) that Nebuchadnezzar well knew his own dream, but wished to test his wise men, and so insisted on their telling him what the dream was as well as its interpretation. It would certainly not be unlike an Oriental despot to do such a thing on pain of death if they failed. But there is one thing that forbids this theory. It is the terrible distress of soul which the monarch experienced regarding the dream. Such distress (ver. 1) would not permit him to indulge in a grim play with his wise men. He would be quick enough to tell them the dream in order that his soul might have relief from the interpretation. He would be careful to tell them every feature of the dream which he could remember, and so help them every way to the result—the interpretation. He most certainly had forgotten every detail of the dream, and only remembered that it had impressed his spirit with care and perplexity, which is a common experience in dreams. There may have been beside this a spiritual intimation that the dream was of God, but Daniel's marvellous telling of the dream (apart from his interpretation of it) and recalling every feature to his mind must have been the conclusive proof to him that the dream was no ordinary and unmeaning one, but a divine revelation. (*Howard Crosby, D.D.*) *Things that are Most Remembered*:—The king, it would appear, had two dreams at different times. One passed clean out of his memory, the other hung about his memory so that he could not shake it off. The first dream caused a very slight uneasiness, and gave him very little concern, compared with the second dream. The first made but an evanescent impression, the second an enduring one. Look at the dreams, and we may discover the reason of all this. The first vision was about the coming of Christ's Kingdom, its power and glory. The second vision had reference to himself. Because of his pride, God ordered that he should become deranged for seven years, and all his power forsake him, and that he should be driven from his kingdom and be treated more like a beast than a man. At the end of those years he should recover his reason, and with it his power and majesty. The second vision was all about the king himself and his worldly prosperity. All that was revealed to him about Christ's Kingdom he forgot directly. All that was revealed to him about his own fortunes he remembered well enough. The revelation of the future of Christ's Kingdom gave him some anxiety. The revelation of the future of his own affairs filled him with lasting distress. The only vision that goes clear out of remembrance is that with reference to Christ's Kingdom. Is it not so now? is it not so with you? is it not an old story repeated over and over again? Everything that has to do with your earthly fortunes, every scheme that has to do with worldly advancement, every dream of human prosperity, sticks firmly in the memory. Bad telegrams in the morning papers, what uneasiness do they not cause? The thoughts upon your bed and the visions of your head trouble you. Very foolish and improvident persons you would be if you did not feel anxious about your incomes, your speculations, your crops. But then if you remember these visions, do not forget those which belong to Christ's Kingdom. I suppose there was a time with most of you when your mother, or father, spoke to you earnestly of your duties to God, and the care you must have for your soul. But time passes, and "the thing is gone from me." Some sickness falls on you. On your bed you are brought near to the brink of the grave, pain and fear of death distress you, eternity assumes a more real aspect, God's judgments appear more fearful, the service of God more obligatory. Oh, if you might recover, how you would walk in newness of life! You get well, all the business and care of this present life begin again to engross your attention, and as for the dream of God's Kingdom—"the thing is gone from me." There are solemn moments of solitude, when the heart is especially awake to spiritual influence, and when the soul sees God in an extraordinary, supernatural, manner. Does this last? Sometimes. But too often the clouds roll again over the horizon, "the thing is gone from me." (*Anon.*)

Ver. 8. I know of certainty that ye would gain the time.—*A Meditation for the New Year*:—The magicians wished to gain time, hoping that the king might remember his dream, or that something might happen to extricate them from the dreadful dilemma. Notice the two main thoughts and the suggestions suitable to the season. 1. TIME IS

ON MAN'S SIDE. We are often made to feel this. Men of the world know how precious sometimes is an extension of credit for a month, a week, a day, even an hour. Give the perplexed man time, and he will know how to act. "It is all a question of time." On the higher plane of things this is specially true. Morally speaking, time is of infinite consequence to us. 1. Time is another word for mercy. So long as we enjoy the shelter of time, we are safe from the judgments which our sins have provoked. All the retributive suffering of this life is light indeed compared with the retributions which await the transgressor farther on; it is but the spilling of the red vials. "Flee from the wrath to come." The fulness of penalty is reserved. 2. Time is another word for opportunity. It is not bare duration that is granted us, but a period rich in influences, succours, instrumentalities, and inspirations. To say that time is lengthened out is to say that the Word of God is continued to us, the means of grace, the privilege of prayer, the influences of the Spirit, all the fulness of the blessing of the redeeming gospel. Life teems with chances of getting good and doing good. 3. Time is another word for hope. Whilst time is granted, wonderful changes are possible. II. THE PERIOD APPROACHES WHEN TIME CAN NO LONGER BE ON OUR SIDE. It was thus with these Magi; they had nearly exhausted the king's patience. An end comes necessarily to all respites. The business man in difficulties gains time, the bill is renewed, it is again and again renewed; but the inexorable day dawns. So a limit is fixed to the opportunities of the religious life. The dispensation of mercy and opportunity is soon past. 1. Most appropriate to the season is the spirit of thankfulness. All have reason to thank God for the past year. "Thy saints shall bless Thee." They bless Thee for the sweet spring, the opulent summer, the mellow autumn, the stern winter, and for those larger, richer spaces of heavenly blessing which accompany the circling year. They bless Thee for three hundred and sixty-five days and nights burdened with spiritual benediction and hallowing influence. The unconverted also have reason to thank God for sparing mercy. Job asks, "Why do the wicked live, and become old?" There is but one answer: Because God delighteth in mercy. 2. The spirit of humiliation becomes us. How much more good we might have gained! Instead of ending the year with a bosom full of sheaves, too many of us with shamefacedness bring to God only a few blighted ears and withered leaves. 3. The season demands the spirit of consecration. New scenes and opportunities open to us: let us be faithful, and God shall restore unto us the years that the caterpillar has wasted. (W. L. Watkinson.)

Ver. 12. **The king was angry.**—*Anger*:—"Anger," Dr. Cox observes, "is (1) undignifying; (2) unreasonable; (3) destructive of that just and useful influence to which we should aspire, and for which everyone is naturally capacitated by his position in society; (4) usually makes a rapid progress; (5) is productive of great unhappiness; (6) is a most guilty passion." It is remarked by Robert Hall: "Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to the calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell."

Ver. 18. **That they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven.**—*Companions in Prayer*:—Daniel and his companions were all equally concerned, every man of them for his life, and therefore ought everyone to pray; but, being companions in every other respect, it became them also to keep company in prayer. The necessity was urgent. In the land of Judah they might have gone up together to the house of God, and sought counsel of the Lord by Urim and Thummim. There they would have had the assistance of the priest, but here there was no priest and no oracle. Prayer, without ceremonial, was all that could be presented at the mercy seat, but it was quite enough. Time had come for the people of God to learn that the Mosaic ceremonial was not only interrupted for seventy years, but that, after frequent interruptions and woeful desecrations, even at Jerusalem, it was soon to pass away. A little party of faithful persons already proved that not in Jerusalem only, but even in a strange land, God could be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that prayer, more fragrant than the purest incense, would rise acceptable to God, without priest, or thurible, or altar; that, just as Jonah sent up his cry out of the depths of the sea, and gained an instant hearing, so at any time, and at any place, the poor man might cry, and God would hear him, and send present help for his necessity. Thus did Divine Providence prepare the way for a higher dispensation, when that meeting for prayer in the house of Daniel should be followed by many other such gatherings of the people of God in the lands of their dispersion. So was prayer made for imprisoned Peter by brethren assembled in the house of Mark. So did Roman Christians resort to the Catacombs, and Italian Christians to the Alpine valleys, and good men of every land to secret chambers. Daniel, be it noted, began his public life

with prayer, and hence it came to pass that, as was said of the prophet Samuel, not a word of his ever fell to the ground. (*W. H. Rule, D.D.*) *Affliction Teaches Men to Pray*:—It was his yoke in his youth that first taught Daniel to pray. And Babylon taught Daniel and his three friends all to pray, and to pray together in their chamber, as we read. To be arrested in their father's houses by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers; to have Babylonian chains put on their hands and their feet; to see the towers of Zion for the last time; to be asked to sing some of the songs of Zion to amuse their masters as they toiled over the Assyrian sands—you would have been experts yourselves in a school of prayer like that. You would have held little prayer meetings yourselves with your class-fellows and your companions, if you had come through half that Daniel and his three companions came through. It is because you are not being emptied from vessel to vessel all the week that we never see you on Tuesday night. Jeremiah, a great authority on why some men pray, and why other men never pray, has this about you in his book: "Moab hath been at his ease from his youth up; he hath settled on his lees; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; neither hath he gone into captivity; and, therefore, his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." *The Cumulative Power of Prayer*:—Manton says: "Single prayers are like the single hairs of Samson; but the prayers of the congregation are like the whole of his bushy locks, wherein his strength lay. Therefore, you should, in Tertullian's phrase, *quasi manu facta*, with a holy conspiracy, besiege Heaven, and force out a blessing for your pastors." *The Advantages of United Prayer*:—I often think of the negro woman who was once asked by the governor of Surinam why she and her fellows always prayed together. Could not they do it each one for himself? He happened to be standing at the time before a coal fire, and the woman answered: "Dear sir, separate these coals from each other, and the fire will go out; but see how brisk the flame when they burn together." (*Expository Times*.) *Prayer Cultures Character*:—We may learn from this passage one principal means of Daniel's excellence. Daniel was a great character: one of those illustrious men whom God raises up in His church, at distant intervals, when He has great works to accomplish. The excellencies of such men are the gift of God. Yet, while gifts, they are generally nourished to their perfection by appropriate culture; and it is of importance for all men to mark and consider the influence under which such characters were reared. Now there can be no doubt that Daniel's prayerfulness, his habits of regular and frequent correspondence with God, had the greatest effect in fostering the excellencies of his character. Prayer did not give him his great intellect, for that was created with him; but prayer gave him wisdom, and self-denial, and fortitude, and true independence. We would, therefore, recommend prayer to all, and especially to the young, as a means of purifying, and elevating, and perfecting the character. It does this in a twofold way. It brings down the sanctifying influences of the Spirit into the mind. Frequent intercourse with God transforms the soul into His likeness. It fills the mind with a holy reverence that casteth out the fear of man. It begets confidence in all the Divine managements, which raises the soul above the fear of danger. It begets a sense of His favour, that sweetens the soul and keeps it in a healthful frame. All the great men of the church—prophets, reformers, martyrs—were brought up in the school of prayer. (*William White*.) *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*:—I. IN EVERY DIFFICULTY WE SHOULD APPEAL TO GOD. Very serious was the position in which Daniel and his friends were placed, as well as the native wise men of Babylon. The demand of the king was altogether unreasonable. Only a despot could have made such a demand, and issued such a sentence because of the non-accomplishment of his will. By any human power the thing wanted was impossible of attainment; but Daniel knew where to find help. Full often had he and his companions repaired to the throne of grace; and it was easy for them, with full confidence in the Almighty arm, to visit that throne in the day of their distress. II. AND SINCE CHRIST JESUS IS TO REIGN OVER ALL, SHOULD WE NOT SEEK TO HAVE HIM AS OUR FRIEND? If we knew that some great earthly ruler was certain soon to be put in rightful possession of the kingdom in which we dwell, and if we had the means to acquire his favour, so that when his throne was erected amongst us, we should be his prime favourites, and during his life enjoy great riches and influence under him, I daresay we would earnestly employ these means to secure such a happy result. But Christ's Kingdom is not for a lifetime merely, but for ever. Of His government there shall be no end. His friends are all to be raised to regal eminence and power, and their glory shall never fade away; but His foes shall be driven from His presence, and reap eternally the just recompense of their rebellion. Is it not, then, worth while to cast aside everything that would hinder us from securing the favour of this King, immortal and eternal—nay, to sacrifice even our earthly life, rather than not make certain of His friendship? (*Original Session Magazine*.)

Ver. 19. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.—*Daniel's Preparation for Prophetic Work*:—A prophecy does not fall from Heaven in the form of a book written and sealed. Prophecy is given through the spirit of a man. It comes first into the living soul. He afterwards declares it, and then records it, in a form adapted to the needs of living souls around. The situation of the prophet, then, must be favourable to the full reception of the prophecy in all its significance. "To qualify him for his work his historical position must be such that his whole situation may be, so to say, the human question to which revelation proclaims the Divine answer." Accordingly, Daniel was carefully placed by the hand of God so that the prophecies with which he was favoured should have for him the fullest meaning. When we say that his watch-tower was in the palace of Babylon, hard by the very throne, we indicate how exactly God prepared him to be the prophet of this crisis in the history, not of Israel merely, but of the whole world. For more than seventy years he lived at the Babylonian and Medo-Persian court. He was a member of the government, high in position. His political preparation for successive revelations was very favourable. He gained an insight into the secular organisations of the kingdoms of this world, and became thus fitted to receive what we may be allowed to call political revelations. His spiritual preparation, too, was wisely and graciously ordered. The moral victory over the temptations of his state of pupilage rendered it possible for God to communicate with humanity through him. He was well versed in previous revelations. Daniel knew the contents of preceding prophecies (ix. 2). Besides this preparation of knowledge and self-conquest, the experience of life at Babylon was likely to make his soul very susceptible to Divine impressions. (H. T. Bobjohns, B.A.)

Vers. 20—23. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever.—*Daniel's Prayer of Thanksgiving*:—Such a prayer sheds a flood of light upon the character of the man who utters it. It was addressed to the "God of Heaven," and that title has a peculiar significance when the facts of Daniel's history are taken into account. He had been brought up among an idolatrous people, who worshipped "gods many and lords many," the sun, moon, and planets, and a host of inferior deities. Despite these influences he had kept untainted the faith of his fathers. God was for him the God, the true, the only existing; and He was "the God of Heaven," the Almighty Ruler who had fashioned that mighty host of stars which the Chaldeans adored, and had traced out those courses from which they professed to gain their knowledge of the future. As regards the prayer itself, it will be observed how an ascription of praise both begins and ends it, as with that prayer which the Saviour taught. He "changeth the times and seasons"—not conjunctions of the planets. He "removeth kings and setteth up kings"—not human ambitions and earthly armies. He "giveth wisdom to the wise"—not the exponents of Chaldean lore. He "revealeth the deep and secret things"—not the astrologers and diviners that call on heathen gods. There is a kind of subdued triumph in the prayer, a spirit of exultation in its language, without any alloy of mere mortal pride, but befitting one who had trusted so fully and been rewarded so richly. (P. H. Hunter.) *Daniel's Thanksgiving*:—The name of God is an Hebrew form of expression for God Himself. It is, therefore, the same as if He had said, "Blessed be God for ever and ever." There is a great difference between the manner in which God blesses us and that in which we bless Him. God blesses us by showing us kindness, and bestowing on us such benefits as tend to promote our present and eternal well-being. In this manner we cannot bless God. To bless God is simply to ascribe to him the glory that is due unto His name, and not to give Him something which we have, and He has not. To be in the frame of mind which leads us to admire and adore the Divine excellency, is to be in the highest state of emotion of which our minds are susceptible. There is no region above this into which our faculties can ascend. To contemplate and adore the Divine character will be the sum of heavenly beatitude, "Blessed be the name of God." Let Him be praised, extolled, and magnified. Let earth and Heaven, time and eternity, unite in this exercise. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever!" This implies that God would deserve to be praised for ever and ever. Human excellencies wither and decay. But the excellencies of the Divine character are everlasting and unchangeable. "Blessed be the name of God, for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." Wisdom and might are God's in every sense. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in wisdom; infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in power. There is nothing which He does not know; nothing that He cannot do. He is so wonderful in counsel that no flaw deforms His plans; so excellent in working that no obstacle can frustrate the execution of them. Creation, in all its departments, proclaims these attributes. That, however, which called forth the exclamation from the prophet's mind was the contemplation of Divine agency, as presented to him in the vision, over-ruling everything connected with the rise, pro-

gress, and ruin of the four monarchies, to prepare for the erection of Christ's Kingdom over all the earth. We may learn from Daniel's example, in reading history, which is just the unfolding of the vision, to look beyond the visible actors unto God. We should not rest content with knowing the exploits of warriors and the plans of statesmen. We should endeavour to see the wisdom and the power of Him "who ruleth among the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." And if we would see God in history, we must compare causes and effects, events and their consequences. We must not be content with looking to what occurs; we must observe what comes out of occurrences; especially must we take in the whole range of this vision, and consider the effect which every general movement had upon the world, in the way of preparing it for the millennial glory. This is the end in which all the general movements are to issue. Looked upon in this light, history becomes one of the purest fountains of wisdom and devotion—one of the brightest mirrors reflecting the Divine attributes, every page of which may be inscribed, "blessed be the name of God, for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." Contemplating the changes presented to him by this prophetic vision, that which most impressed itself upon the mind of Daniel was the supreme, universal, uncontrollable sovereignty of God. "He changeth the times and the seasons, He removeth kings and setteth up kings." The seasons sometimes signify the marked times and periods of the natural year. In this sense God is the author of all the revolutions of the seasons. It is He who daily teacheth "the sun to rise and know his time of going down." But the times and the seasons, in this passage, are to be understood in connection with the four monarchies, and denote the period appointed for the various revolutions they were to undergo. When He is said "to change the times and the seasons," this implies that God hath appointed to each of these monarchies the time when it shall rise, the period of its duration, the revolutions through which it is to pass, and that, by His providence, He brings about each of these changes at His own appointed time. "He removeth kings and setteth up kings." Kings, as in the following vision, may here be used for kingdoms. The meaning will then be, "The rise and fall of empires is from God." While in the rise and fall of empire God is sovereign. His sovereignty in this, as in everything else, is not arbitrary. "He removeth kings and setteth up kings," in infinite wisdom. Each of the four kingdoms answered a most important purpose in regard to the human race. This is a very glorious view of God. Independent Himself, all things depend on Him. Unchangeable, He is the author of all changes. The God of order, He is also the author of all revolutions. This is a very comfortable view of the world. It is proverbially said to be a world of change. Nothing in it is fixed—nothing stable. We never lie down and rise up in precisely the same world. But here is an anchor that may stay us in every storm, here is a polar star to steer by in safety, amid the tossings and the heavings of the tempestuous sea of time. All the changes that are in the world come from God, and God is unchangeable. The tide of revolution which at times sweeps with such terrific power across His footstool cannot reach His throne, and the lapse of ages cannot affect His nature. Having adored the Divine character as manifested in the dispensations connected with the four prophetic kingdoms, Daniel now renders thanks for Divine goodness shown in the revelation of the vision unto him. "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding," &c. While all knowledge comes from God, this is specially true of the knowledge of what is hidden and future. "He revealeth the deep and secret things." Whatever glimpses men have gotten into the future, have come from God. And how consolatory is it to reflect that God sees into the darkness of futurity. The throne of providence is often encompassed with clouds and thick darkness. Let us remember that when Daniel disclosed the dream which baffled all the wisdom of Chaldea, he fell down before God in grateful adoration, and, instead of boasting over the wise men, as many of the expositors of prophecy have done over one another, his very first request, as we shall see in the following verses, was in these words, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon." And in all cases the study of prophecy is profitable only when it increases our admiration of the Deity, and our humanity to our fellow creatures. On the other hand, it is a sure proof that they have not studied prophecy aright, who, as the result of it, have increased in dogmatism, and not in devotion—who, as if inspired by misanthropy, become denouncers of wrath upon the world, and seem to exult in fancy over the downfall of nations, and hurl forth their anathemas against all who refuse to receive the wildest wanderings of their imagination as the infallible dictates of Divine truth. (*J. White.*) *Daniel About to Interpret Nebuchadnezzar's Dream:*—I cannot but think that the conduct of the prophet will impart, when carefully examined, practical lessons of the widest application. You will none of you be required, as Daniel was, to recall to the memory of another the details of a forgotten dream, and to interpret with accuracy any signification which might be supposed to attach to it; but, nevertheless, you must

all of you be tried, as Daniel was, through occurrences the dealing with which will test at once your faith, your gratitude, and your love. 1. And I apprehend that the narrative ought to prove to you that under the pressure of even the very heaviest afflictions nothing, in a multitude of instances, can be less to the point than inaction or despair. There are, of course, numerous cases wherein the exhibition of a meek resignation involves the sole duty required; but those dispensations are frequent, concerning which it is the appointment of Providence, that men shall help themselves; entreating fervently, indeed, the bestowal of that gracious aid without which their most toilsome exertions must be futile; but still tasking their own energies to the utmost. In the instance before us, prompt action was the primary obligation of the prophet. He accordingly proceeds at once into the royal presence, and undertakes to set at rest, within a reasonable time, the monarch's anxiety as to both of the points specified. But it does not, for a moment, occur to him that he could be competent, in his own strength, to fulfil his engagement; for, together with his three companions, he directly betakes himself to the Divine footstool; and they offer their joint supplications that it may please the Lord to disclose the nature and bearings of the secret. So then, it was no outburst of self-sufficiency which impelled the prophet to apprise the king that in due time he would discover to him all which he desired to know. A more striking illustration of the unlimited possession and of the unbounded influence of faith, than is supplied by the prophet's course of action and its consequences, it were hardly possible to conceive. You recollect what strong terms our blessed Saviour employs as descriptive of the mighty effects which would be produced by the manifestation of such a spirit. Faith would even remove mountains, He declares. And you cannot but remark that Daniel seemed to entertain no doubts of the satisfactory accomplishment of the wondrous task undertaken by him; he, without a moment's hesitation, assures the king of his ability to perform it. At the same time, I would again remind you that his confidence was strictly connected with his resolution to resort, with assiduity, to the right means of procuring success; and I repeat that the work of earnest supplication to which he betook himself was undeniably the strongest evidence of his faith. His, you see, was not that so-called faith which eventuates in nothing practical; his assurance of the result, unwavering as that was, was nothing else than an assurance that God's blessing would rest upon the due employment of those fitting means which he was determined not to neglect. It rested with the Almighty to suggest to the mind of the prophet the dream and its interpretation, whilst it devolved upon His servants, with all earnestness, to entreat the bestowal of suggestions which He alone could impart. And may we not succeed in deriving hence a lesson for ourselves? Whilst it should at all times be the highest delight of the Christian to repose on the justifying merits of his Redeemer an unhesitating and a grateful confidence; whilst he should permit no floods to overwhelm, nor fire to consume, nor lapse of time to impair the vigour of his faith; oh! let him ever keep in remembrance the great truth, that the character of his works and his course of life will, after all, stand as the final tests of the genuineness of that faith; and that no mere consciousness or semblance of occasional spiritual fervour can compensate for the absence of all practical evidences of the sincerity of his profession. Like Daniel, he may feel perfectly assured, whilst adopting this course, that the requisite support will be given; and thus is he completely equipped for every enterprise. 2. But let me now more particularly call your attention to the circumstance that the prophet, when in quest of the inspiration which alone could enable him to perform his task, did not satisfy himself with merely presenting his own supplications, how impassioned soever, before the throne of grace, but desired his companions to mingle their entreaties with his; and thus may be considered to have taken every possible means of obtaining from his Maker a favourable response. And hereby also may we receive instruction—instruction having reference to the value of united prayer. But Daniel did not confine himself to entreaties that God would graciously enable him to disclose the details and import of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. His supplications having secured the accomplishment of his desire, he omitted not forthwith to tender to the Divine Being the unfeigned and reverential expression of his gratitude. "I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee; for Thou hast made known unto us the king's matter." And it must at once be admitted that in pursuing the course which he did, the prophet set an example which should be copied even by ourselves, who enjoy the privilege of living under another and far higher dispensation. We complain, and justly, that men do not sufficiently betake themselves to prayer; and yet, after all, they far more frequently cultivate prayer than praise. How many are there who, when visited with afflictions, their deliverance from which appears to be almost hopeless, or when placed in some position of difficulty or danger, where special Divine assistance is absolutely required, will humble themselves in the

dust before the Majesty on high—will confess unreservedly and earnestly their sins and shortcomings; and will almost “pray without ceasing” that they may be guided amid their perplexities or rescued from their perils! Yet let a kindly Providence but accede to their entreaties—let these perplexities be surmounted, or these perils be happily removed, and, in multiplied instances, the warmth and constancy of their devotions survive not the change; the period of distress and trial seems now to be passed; and alas! the very consideration which should call forth the loudest accents of thanksgiving and praise tends only to the renewal of that spiritual indifference which had for the time been parted with. 3. Let me ask you, in the next place, to observe the mode in which the prophet addresses the Great Being whom, in the words of the text, he was approaching with “the voice of thanksgiving.” His experience, doubtless, supplied him with many instances of Divine watchfulness, Divine care, and Divine support. That he cherished a most grateful sense of God’s mercies to him is quite undoubted; and we may rest assured that at all times he recognised in the Maker of heaven and earth his Guardian and his Guide. But, nevertheless, it is not as his own God that he addresses the High and Holy One in the passage under consideration. He addresses Him as the God of his fathers, thus showing that his memory was stored with incidents wherein, in former times, God had proved Himself a Shield and a Succour. His words tell that he must have felt, and have exulted in feeling, that—“the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever”—the eye of that mighty and uncreated Intelligence which had looked down with tenderness and affection upon the ancestry, would continue to beam brightly and benignantly upon the descendant. Oh! that there were more amongst ourselves of such simple but well-founded, beautiful, and heaven-born faith! Oh! that our hope, that our trust, that our joy, that our love, might be inspired, elevated, augmented, as well by the remembered history of the past as by personal and more recent experience! God is still, as in the days of David, “a very present Help,” a “Fortress,” and a “Deliverer!” But the declaration of Daniel that the “wisdom and might” which then belonged to him had been conferred by God, demands, in another point of view, our attention. I have already admitted that there were, in his case, peculiar circumstances which exist not in our own. But acknowledging that both in the mode of their communication and in the largeness of their amount, as well as in the direction which they took, his endowments differed very widely indeed from any which have ever been bestowed in modern times—throughout which, in fact, there has been no occasion for the exercise, to any extent, of supernatural powers by man—we may contend still for the desirableness of ever cherishing the recollection, that the human faculties have been imparted by a higher Power, as calculated to exert a most salutary influence. It will dispose us to dedicate these faculties to our Maker’s service, engaging in no pursuit which His statutes have condemned, and devoting ourselves to the practice of every virtue which He enjoins. It will tend to bring home to us the consciousness that “we are not our own.” It will beget a sense of responsibility to which otherwise we should be strangers. It will check pride, and will thus prepare the heart for profiting by progressive communications of Divine grace. 4. In conclusion, let me point out to you that the Almighty availed Himself of even the iniquitous decree of a selfish tyrant by producing a most striking display of His omniscience, by making an important addition to the prophetic announcements, and, further, by promoting the temporal welfare of one of the most devoted and distinguished of His servants. Doubtless, indeed, His providence was at work, suggesting to the monarch’s mind the exciting dream. But assuredly the edict by which the dream was succeeded can be regarded as no dispensation of His providence. Yet mark how speedily that providence brought good out of evil! Then, under no circumstances, however apparently untoward or threatening, must the Christian give way to despair. (*H. B. Moffat, M.A.*)

The Workings of Gratitude:—Turning to the practical improvement of this narrative, we have: 1. The value of united prayer. When Daniel undertook the solution of the difficulty, he engaged his three friends to pray earnestly on his behalf, and we may be sure he was fervent in supplication on his own account. He believed in God as the hearer of prayer. The issue showed that he acted wisely. There is a special promise to united prayer. 2. An illustration of the workings of gratitude. The moment he had received the revelation Daniel poured out his heart in thanksgiving to God. How many, when they have got the blessing for which they asked, forget to be grateful for it! We cry when we are in extremity, but when the terror passes we forget to give thanks to Him who has removed its cause. 3. An illustration of the devout humility of genuine piety. Daniel is careful to let the king understand that he has not received the secret from God for any excellence about himself. He fears to stand between the king and Jehovah. He gives all the glory to the Most High. There is always a modesty about true greatness, and you may know whether or not piety is genuine by inquiring if it be characterised by humility. The good man will never seek to hide God from the view of his fellow men.

4. An illustration of faithful friendship. When Daniel was exalted, he did not forget his companions. Knit to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah by congenial tastes, as well as by the ties of country and religion, he had become to them a friend indeed; and they had shown their deep interest in and attachment to him, not only in sharing his protest against the diet of the College, but also in praying for him at his special request. It was meet, therefore, that he should remember them in his prosperity. But this conduct is not common. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 28. **But there is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets.**—*A God in Heaven*.—I. THE ASSERTION. There is a God in Heaven. Daniel was not one of those who say in their hearts "there is no God"; he was well persuaded, both of His existence and of the perfections of His nature. Daniel's God is a God of wisdom and knowledge; a just God; a powerful God; a great God; a good and merciful God; a faithful God; a holy God; a God of love. II. WHAT IS SAID OF HIM. He revealeth secrets. He is capable of doing this because He knoweth all things. He makes known to men the pride, hypocrisy, unbelief of their own hearts. He reveals to His people, who are called by grace, the secret of His love and favour. This secret is revealed in the work of regeneration. He reveals also His covenant to those who fear Him. He shows them the necessity, nature, and stability of the covenant, and their interest in it. He reveals to His people a sense of their pardon and acceptance in Christ. And as the Lord will reveal these secrets for His people's comfort in this world, so also He will reveal to them the secrets of that which is to come. (*S. Barnard.*) *My Dreams*.—Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was sorely troubled by a vision of the night. The wise men of the age acknowledged that the secrets of the mind were beyond their ken. The whole narrative affords us an excellent illustration of the limits of human reason, and the necessity of a revelation from God; and in these days, when both science and philosophy are employed to cast doubts on revelation, when the "wise men" of our time would decry the Word of God, it is well for all lovers of the Gospel to give a clear and settled answer to those who question the hope that is in us. I. THERE ARE SECRETS, THE REVELATION OF WHICH IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO HUMANITY. I, also, in common with all mortals, have dreamed a dream, ay, dreams of God, of responsibility, of happiness, of immortality; but they have gone from me; the pictures are blurred, the ideas are indistinct. 1. I dream of the existence of a God. I have a dim consciousness of a great First Cause, an innate conviction independent of creeds, and which defies the impious foot of Atheism to crush it, or the breath of a cold Materialism to wither it away. I see around me a thousand irresistible tokens of His creating power and wisdom. He is my Maker, hence my Master! the Creator and Maintainer of the Universe, hence the Universal King! My lot, my destiny, is in His hands. To Him I am responsible. On Him I depend. Who is He? How does He regard me? I would secure His favour. For the sake of my happiness, my life, it is essential to me to know my God. Who art Thou, Lord? What is Thy will, that I may do it? What are the conditions of Thine approval, that I may obtain it? I have faint dreams of God, of truth, and right, and duty. Tell me, ye wise men, "Who is the Ruler, and what is the rule of life?" I also have dreamed a dream, and, like the vision of the king, it has left an intermittent horror on my soul. 2. I am conscious of wrong-doing. I am sensible of the existence of a certain something, which condemns or approves, according to the nature of my deeds. This "conscience" which is native to my soul upbraids me with my guilt, and saddens me with the responsibility of my own "I will!" All peoples, all individuals, have this conscious wrong. God is angry with me, and justly. It defies argument. What can I do? Must His justice take its course? How can a man be just before God? This guilt oppresses me, this sense of sin embitters my life and fills me with unspoken dread. Is there an interpreter, one among a thousand, who will deliver me from going down into the pit, saying, "I have found a ransom?" Like Nebuchadnezzar, I also have dreamed a dream, but it has gone from me. 3. I dream of a possible rest. Tiring and moiling amid the cares and anxieties of time, wrestling with ever-multiplying trials, my weary spirit gets fitful and broken glimpses of a state of quiet. I strive to bear my disappointment with a manly spirit, but I miserably fail. I hanker after contentment. I am a searcher after happiness, and my search is vain. All men seek it, but gold cannot buy it; honour cannot invest me with it; pleasure is a false and gilded substitute; I dream, and the world dreams of a one time golden age, but it has gone from me. I ask the "wise men" of the age, "Is there a possible happiness for my poor soul to-day?" Like the King of Babylon, I also dream a dream, and it fills me with anxiety and unrest. 4. I dream of an "after life." My mind refuses the idea of dying like the beasts below me. I am repelled at the thought of annihilation. I shall live!—this is the innate instinct of every human mind. The conviction is universal. Then, what is there awaiting me in that unseen

future? I submit to you that these are primal questions of man; and while these secrets are unrevealed, what good will my birthright do me? I cannot live by bread alone. I cannot subsist on theories and propositions. Who will recover and interpret my dreams and bring me satisfaction and repose? Oh, ye "wise men," ye sages of to-day: I sit at your feet! I open my ears to your words. My anxious soul awaits your answer to these problems. But leave me ignorant of these vital matters and my life is chaos, existence is a riddle and a curse, death is a horror, and the mysterious afterward a terror and a woe! II. THE REVELATION OF THESE SECRETS ALTOGETHER SURPASSES HUMAN WISDOM. Nebuchadnezzar called to his aid the "wise men" of his kingdom, the philosophers and scientists of the day, men who professed to read the secrets of the stars. To these the king stated his difficulty; they honestly confessed that the thing was beyond their skill. This, I submit, is the position occupied by the wise men of to-day as regards these solemn problems of the soul. In the presence of my questioning heart, Science is voiceless, Philosophy makes an effort to reply, flings a little border light upon the mystery, flounders in a sea of contradictions, then lapses into silence. The Astronomer talks with me on the composition of the sun, he tells the number of the stars, calculates their distances, and calls them by their names. He cannot tell me by what law my wandering soul may gravitate towards Deity, and circle in the orbit of truth and duty around the Eternal God. The geologist, who digs among the deep foundations of the earth, can read the wondrous scroll of the earth's biography; can echo in mine ear the testimony of the rocks; but he finds no rock on which my restless soul can settle and build its hopes of Heaven! "The depth saith, it is not in me!" The Zoologist thrills me with his descriptions of animated nature. He discourses on all the winged denizens of air, from the eagle with the sweeping pinions to the sparrow chirping amid cottage eaves, but he hath found no single messenger who can bring to human hearts, fearsome and sorrowful, the true olive-branch of peace! The botanist, splendid sage, expounds the secrets of the vegetable kingdom, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop upon the wall, from the tropic palm to the lichen amid northern snows; but, tell me, glorious magician! canst thou tell me where the herb heart's-ease grows, to soothe the moral sores that run in the night of sorrow? The mathematician hath a marvellous power over numbers, and proudly calls his, *par excellence*, the exact and certain science; but can he calculate the unknown quantity of the price required to redeem a law-condemned life? The geographer's eye ranges over the wide surface of the globe from China to Peru, from the scorching equator to the shivering poles. But he hath never found the river of life among the unknown hills! If we were to travel thus around all the circle of the sciences, if we questioned thus at the portals of every school and system of philosophy, the answer of the Babylonian astrologers must come alike from all: "There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter, and there is none other that can show it except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." Great and precious and important are all these in their legitimate domain. All honour to the men who patiently study the mysteries of nature, and explore the secrets of mind; but there are higher studies, there are grander laws. Discarding all secondary illumination, we must go to the Fount of Light and utter our humble prayer to the Highest—"Teach me Thy statutes, even wondrous things out of Thy law." Let human wisdom honestly avow its limits. III. These great secrets, so important for humanity to understand, have been revealed by God himself! Daniel received the desired knowledge direct from Heaven. Even so hath God revealed these great mysteries to the human mind. He hath reproduced the dreams that had gone from us, hath showed the great necessities of our moral nature, and hath produced in His glorious Gospel an efficient satisfaction for every yearning of the human heart. Jesus Christ is God's answer to man's questions, and the answer is redemptive and complete. Come and hear Him, then! His lips are touched by an unkindled fire. He speaks as never man spake, for He is "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God." He hath come to answer the cry of humanity. Sit at His feet and propound your heart-questions. Do you ask Him for rest and peace? He says, "Come unto Me, and ye shall find rest unto your soul." Do you ask for power and guidance, comfort and aid? "I will send unto you the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who shall guide you into all truth." Afraid of death, do you ask for help and victory? "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoso liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Oh! surely these are glad tidings of great joy! Oh! my Saviour, I will trust Thee! I will listen and believe! My fears fade, my doubts vanish, my terrors die! Here, then, lies the key to unlock all secrets. We are, by the mediation of Christ, brought back to God—to God, the true home of the soul. Offended God and offending man at one and reconciled, and Jesus Christ the healer of the breach! From Nebuchadnezzar went forth the edict that, should the secret remain unrevealed, the men must die. "There is but one decree for you." That edict was a cruel wrong, a

strict injustice. But that decree has also gone out from God. There is but one decree for you if this divinely-interpreted secret is not made clear to you; and this decree is just. You have the dream and the interpretation; you have the statement of your need, and you have the Gospel that will meet it to the full. If you reject this great salvation, so adapted to your need, so attested as to its authority, so simple in its terms, so mighty in its transformations, so glorious in its results, so tremendous in its cost—there is but one decree for you—"He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned!" Alas for us if the slope of natural religion, the ladder of science, were the only stair to lead us up to God! But where natural religion abandons us, where science at its highest leaves us, where philosophy in its purest form forsakes us—then revealed religion takes us up. (*J. J. Wray.*) *God as a Revealer of Secrets*:—Men have secrets, or what they consider secrets, for really there are no secrets in the universe, nor should there be such. Sin alone has secrets, virtue has none. With it, all is as open as the day. Looking at the Great One as the revealer of secrets, we observe: I. HE MAKES NO OMISSIONS. When men reveal the secrets of others, from ignorance they omit something; but God knows the whole—the most hidden thought of the most obscure mind in the universe. II. HE COMMITS NO MISTAKES. Men who reveal secrets, commit great errors; they either say too much or too little. Omniscience commits no blunders; the revelation will be severely faithful. III. HE HAS NO UNKINDNESS. Men often tell the secrets of others maliciously, but not so with Him. God is constantly revealing the secrets of men now: 1. Through the dictates of human consciences. 2. Through the unguarded actions of human life. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 31—33. **Thou, O King, sawest, and behold a great image.**—*The Aggregation of Evil*:—Look at evil as represented by this colossal image. I. IT IS A COMPOUND THING. The image was made up of various substances: gold, silver, brass, iron, clay. Evil does not often appear here in its naked simplicity, it is mixed up with other things. Errors in combination with truths, selfishness with benevolence, superstition with religion, infidelity with science, injustice with law and evil, too, is in combination with customs, systems, institutions. It is a huge conglomeration. Unmixed naked evil could not, perhaps, exist. Worldly souls so compound it as to make evil seem good. II. IT IS A BIG THING. This image was the biggest thing in the imagination of the monarch. Evil is the biggest thing in the world. The image represents here what Paul meant by the "world," the mighty aggregation of evil. Alas, evil is the great image in the world's mind. III. IT IS AN IMPERIAL THING. The various substances that composed the image, Daniel tells us, represent kingdoms—Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome. Evil here is imperial. The New Testament calls it "The kingdom of darkness." It wears the purple, occupies the throne, and wields the sceptre of nations. IV. IT IS A HUMAN THING. The colossal image was a human figure—human head, breast, arms, legs, feet; and of human manufacture. All the errors of the world are the fabrications of the human brain; all the bad passions of the world are the lusts of the human heart; all the wrong institutions of the world are the productions of human power. Evil is human, it thinks with the human brain; it speaks with the human tongue; it works with the human hand. Man is at once its creator, organ, and victim. V. IT IS A TOTTERING THING. On what does the figure stand? On marble, on iron, or brass? No, on clay; its feet part of iron and part of clay. Evil, big, grand, and imperial though it be, lacks standing power; it is not firm-footed. It has clay feet, and must one day tumble to pieces. (*Homilist.*) *Symbolical Metals*:—The metals symbolical of the four kingdoms are placed after one another in the order of their value. First gold, then silver, then brass, then iron. There is a progressive deterioration in this arrangement of the metals. That which is accounted most precious is first; that which is of least value is last. To hold out the idea that the world is constantly growing worse, heathen fable represented it as passing through four ages, which were also named from these four metals, the golden age, the age of silver, the age of brass, and the iron age. In each succeeding period the world became worse than it had been during that which preceded. From the fact of the metals in this image following one another in the order of their value, the most precious being first, and the least valuable being last, we are not to suppose that Scripture countenances this idea of heathen fiction, and that the world is really in a state of constant deterioration—becoming more base and worthless by every succeeding revolution. This idea is not correct in point of fact. It is true that every nation, after reaching a certain stage, has decayed and been dissolved by the corruption of manners, as the human body, after reaching a certain stage, gradually decays and is at length dissolved by death. But while every particular nation has in course of time deteriorated, the human race has been steadily progressing in the knowledge of art, science, legislation, and everything that is most conducive to the individual and social advancement

of mankind. National progression may be compared to the incoming of the sea. Almost every wave advances farther than that by which it was preceded, and then falls back, leaving the sand bare which once was covered; but another and another wave follows, each succeeding one advancing nearer to the shore, until the sea covers all its sands, having reached the point at which the voice of the Almighty said to it, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." In regard to the four monarchies, it is not a fact that the condition of mankind became worse under every succeeding monarchy than it had been during the reign of that by which it was preceded. On the contrary, it could easily be shown that the iron monarchy, which on the other supposition should have been the worst, was more conducive to the welfare of mankind than any of the other three. From these statements it appears that the metals are not prophetic of the relative condition of the world under these monarchies, but are descriptive of the character of the monarchies themselves. Each of the metals represents the principal feature of the monarchy of which it is the symbol. As regards the order of their succession, it ought to be remembered that these metals have a real and a nominal value, and that their real value is in the inverse ratio of the nominal. Gold and silver possess the greatest nominal value, because in exchange for them everything else can be procured; but in themselves they are of less value than brass and iron. Keeping this universally recognised distinction in view, the succession of metals in the image may intimate that in these monarchies there would be a declension in outward splendour, and a progression in those things which were useful to mankind. Gold, the symbol of the first monarchy, intimates that sumptuous splendour would be its most striking feature. (*J. White.*) *The Dream Recovered*:—The king's inability to recollect the dream that caused him so much anxiety gave occasion to call for Daniel, and enabled him to prove the vast superiority of his God over the gods and magicians of Babylon. By being able to restore the lost dream, he proved at once that he was able to give its true interpretation. By restoring the dream and giving its interpretation, he revealed to the king two mysteries at once—a mystery from the past and a mystery of the future. A great image. It appears from ancient coins and medals that both cities and nations were represented by gigantic figures of men and women. The old writer Florus, in his history of Rome, represents the Roman empire under the form of a human being, in its different states from infancy to old age. The recently-discovered monuments of the Nile, and of Nineveh, and of Babylon, show that stupendous human figures were objects and emblems familiar to the ancients. Geographers, also, have used similar representations. The Germanic empire has been represented by a map in the form of a man, different parts being pointed out by the head, breast, arms, &c., according to their geographical and political relation to the empire in general. The various metals of which Nebuchadnezzar's image was composed represented the various kingdoms which should arise subsequent to the fall of his own empire. Their position in the body of the image clearly denoted the order of their succession. The different metals and their position also expressed different degrees of strength, riches, power, and durability. Clay, earth, and dust, of course, mean weakness, instability. (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*) *The Dream Recovered*:—We see the hand of Providence in bringing Daniel and his friends forward at the Babylonish court at the time when it was the most proper they should be honoured. God never forsakes those that trust in Him. I. THE DREAM, ITS PREDICTIONS, AND THEIR FULFILLMENT PROVE THE SUPREME AND PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OF GOD, AND THEREBY ALSO SHOW THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE. Now this prediction of the future destinies of nations could not be without revelations from God, nor could it be unless God be both sovereign in providence and in nature. It is God only and alone who can foretell the distant changes of time and nations; and this He can do and has done as infallibly as He knows the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. God knows as perfectly and as certainly what the commotions of the people and the thousand passions of kings and statesmen will produce, as what the thousand attractions of the stars and their most distant courses will bring about in immensity. Astronomers give us beforehand the details of eclipses, because the Creator has impressed His will upon the universe as a code of physical laws. He rules mankind, who dwell on the earth, as well as the worlds which roll in infinite space. He stays the commotions of the people, as well as the billows of the sea. He holds in His hand the hearts of the rulers of the earth, as He counts the hosts of Heaven and calls them all by name. II. THE HISTORY OF NATIONS PRESENTS TWO ELEMENTS IN THEMSELVES PERFECTLY DISTINCT, AND YET ALWAYS MORE OR LESS UNITED, AND ALWAYS MORE OR LESS SUBJECTED TO MUTUAL AND RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES. I mean the political and religious history of a country. The religious habitudes of a people do of necessity deeply affect their morals, and their social and national characteristics. So palpable is the influence of religion upon a nation, that it has long been received as a canon of philosophical history, that the religion of a country being known, all the rest of that country's

history can be easily known. It is not essential to mere physical existence that we have comfortable houses to live in, and that they are adorned with the products of industry and filled with the comforts of commerce. We could live in tents. But certainly those who have once tasted the elegances of refined life will not desire to go back to semi-barbarism. So it is not essential for all pious people to be politicians, yet all the members of Christ's Church are interested in the political interests of the world; and Christian young men should prepare themselves to take a part in the civil affairs of their country. If the administration of our laws and the outwork of our great institutions are left wholly in the hands of ungodly or unprincipled men, we cannot expect God's blessing to rest upon us. III. Observe HOW CAREFUL DANIEL WAS TO REMEMBER HIS FRIENDS IN PROSPERITY. Like Joseph, when exalted, he was not ashamed of his poor kin. At his request his three friends were promoted to high employments in the department over which he presided. IV. Throughout Daniel's history we see in him, as in Joseph, A DISPOSITION TO HUMBLE HIMSELF AND EXALT HIS GOD. Without prevarication or hesitancy he shows his abhorrence of idolatry, and his deep and earnest conviction that the God whom he served was the only real and true God. He claims nothing for himself. When the king asks him if he is able to make known the dream and its interpretation, he reminds the king that there had been no power in the gods of his diviners which had enabled them to do this; but "there is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." And in the whole affair we hear him ascribing everything to God. And his object was in part attained. The king's mind became so powerfully impressed with Daniel's arguments and demonstrations, that he made the remarkable declaration: "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*) *The Inconsistent Image*:—"Behold this dreamer cometh" to us then, and says, "I saw in my dream" an image of a man, in which, whilst the head was of fine gold, the farther each part was from the head, the more inferior it appeared. And the least gifted of the wise men among us replies with modest demureness, for he has read the interpretation within himself a thousand times: Man's knowledge may oft seem like fine gold, but his action is at best but silver, and often but iron and clay. It may even be that, in desire, he is of the noblest metal, yet in will and deed but of the baser sorts. The youth is fired by the electric spark of heroic emulation from the recital or vision of another's glorious achievement, hope and noble ambition stir within him till he burns to be a hero in the strife; and in the absence of some great thing, he fails to fling his force so richly accumulated into the duty that is nearest to hand, and so to irradiate it as to make drudgery Divine. And as, at the day's close, he recalls the longing that leaped that morning within his breast, and contrasts with it the cold commonplace achievement, life seems to him like a mocking travesty of a true man, with a head of fine gold, but its feet part of iron and part of clay; golden desires but deeds of clay. And the old man reads within himself the messages that tell of the coming dissolution. It is time, he says, that autumn touched my life to mellowness and maturity. Should not some of that excellent glory begin to be reflected from me, if so soon I am to enter those Everlasting Gates? And so there comes home to him the sense of space between his desire and his attainment, his ideal and his actual. What artist before his most finished work, what reformer after telling out all his scheme, what minister as he reviews his ministry, what child of God as he surveys his life, does not say to himself, softly and sorrowfully, "If the head was fine gold, the arms were but silver, the feet part of iron and part of clay?" Yes, and if any man rejoins that in his case achievement equalled, if it did not surpass, intention—the feet were equal to the head—we have no hesitation in replying, "Then the head was by no means 'of fine gold.'" Full attainment means small attainments. Better a golden conception carried out by silver arms, incomplete as that must appear, than that both conception and execution be of no higher order than iron or clay, though it be then symmetrical. Better lofty standards and ideals imperfectly carried into action but honestly attempted, than low standards, though completely realised. Let nothing, then, delude us into debasing the "head." Though it make our ears tingle and our cheeks flame scarlet daily, ever above us and beyond us must be the prize of our high calling. To be satisfied, to stop, is to perish at the core. We are saved by honestly hoping, and we can only hope for the unattained. Let him only who is honestly striving to make his life of one substance throughout, and that "fine gold," take to himself the encouragement we have deduced from the image. Let all others beware lest their baser metal, or incongruous compound, melt utterly in that day when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. But can we think long of the spiritual life under the figure of a body, with its head and members, without St. Paul's vivid and effectively practical use of the metaphor coming before our view? "Jesus Christ the head," and "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?"

And then as if some such grotesque and inconsistent image as this of Nebuchadnezzar's dream loomed before his vision as more than a possibility, with a keen sense of unfitness amounting to horror that neither the King of Babylon nor the inspired seer of old ever felt, he asked: "Shall I, then, take the members of Christ and make them members of the clay and mire of lust and sin?" "As He is, so are we in this world," so be "conformed in all things to our Head." This, then, is the unending royal road along which the saints are called to journey. Our "Head" is "of fine gold." All the choice virtues and fair excellences of the Divine human nature dwell in Him. Lovely beyond comparison, the sum of all perfections, the essence of all that is fragrant and fair, is our Head. And one thing only is wanting, that the Church which is His body becomes as its Head, having attained "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness" of its Head; a glorious body, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." And "because we are members of His body," to us is this word sent. "Ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof," or "members each in his part." (Marg. R. V.) What is our contribution to the visible Body? "Ye are My witnesses." Do they who see our works glorify our Head which is in Heaven. Or is there a shocking incongruity, as in this image? Do not multitudes to-day honestly think—yes, honestly believe—that Jesus' day is over, that He was not the imperishable fine gold, but if not simply "clay" that served its passing purpose, at the best "iron" or "brass," because they have seen His "members," and have concluded (and how shall we blame them in many instances?) that since the "members," the "feet" and the "legs" and the "hands," were so palpably baser metal, the "head" must be also? Shall our Divine Head be thus baffled in us His members? Let us labour and pray so to be "changed into the same image" that as His feet we may run swiftly at His bidding; as His arms and hands we may work out fully His will, and our whole being show itself a "vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use." (*E. B. Shepherd, M.A.*) *Deterioration in Successive Nations*.:—The prophecies of Daniel (relating to "the times of the Gentiles") are marked by evolution, but it is downward, and not upward; rather, it is devolution! They are marked by progress, but it is progress in corruption; by development, but it is inferiority. This outline is given us in two parts. One from the human standpoint in Daniel ii., where, under the figure of a man in stately proportion, they are seen in their succession by a man of the Gentiles; the other from the Divine standpoint in Daniel vii. and viii., where, by a man of God, they are seen in their origin. The one, therefore, displays their outward appearance to the eye of a man of the world; the other reveals their moral character to the eye of the man of God. Nebuchadnezzar sees these nations and "times of the Gentiles" under the outward aspect of glittering gold, shining silver, brilliant brass, and irresistible iron. Daniel sees them as wild beasts, ferocious in their nature, cruel in their career. Nebuchadnezzar sees them in a dream, as a stately man, in his palace. Daniel sees them in a vision of God, as wild beasts arising out of the waters. For, "man being in honour abideth not, he is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 12). And man apart from God, has ever gone, and must ever go down, down! Even the saint without Christ can do nothing. But man apart from God can do "only evil continually." He goes down, as it is here shown, from gold to mire clay; and from the noble lion to the nondescript dragon! Yes, man has indeed a free will, but it is ever exercised in opposition to God's will, it is "enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). Man has ever destroyed himself, and his help is found only in God (Hos. xiii. 9). Now look at the image. Look first at its values. All tend downwards, first gold, then silver, brass, iron, and clay. Look at its weight, its specific gravity. Gold is equivalent to 19.3; silver, 10.51; brass, 8.5; iron, 7.6; clay, 1.9. Down, down from 19.3 to 1.9. The image is top-heavy, and the first blow of the mighty stone upon the feet shall shatter its pottery, and bring it all down in pieces. So it is with the beasts, which are all emblazoned on the banners, and stamped on the coins of the Gentile nations. But they are wild beasts, and they run rapidly down from the lion to the bear, from the bear to the leopard, and from the leopard to the hybrid monstrosity. All is on the descending scale, all is seen to be growing worse and worse. Those who look for the world to improve and progress till it develops into the Millennial kingdom, must account for this. We all agree that these things are figures, but they are figures of a reality, and that which is represented as an ever increasing descent, cannot possibly be the figure for a gradual ascent. At any rate, it was not so interpreted to Daniel by the Holy Ghost. He said to Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold, and after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee" (Dan. ii. 38, 39). Yet, with all this advancing deterioration, there is a seeming advance in apparent greatness, but it is in reality only weakness. The first empire, Babylon, is seen as one; the second, the Medo-Persian, is seen as two; the third,

Greece, becomes four (Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, Egypt); and the fourth, Rome, becomes ten. So that there is less and less of that unity which is strength, and more and more of that division and separation which is weakness. And as the image thus declines in all that is great, noble, and precious, so the beasts become more wild and ferocious. Government runs down, down! The first (Babylon) was an autocracy, "whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive" (Dan. v. 19). The second was a parliament of princes, and the law of the Persian kingdom was stronger than the Persian king (Dan. vi. 1-14). The third, Greece, was a government of oligarchies; while in the fourth, Rome, we see the mingling of princely iron with the communistic clay; until, in our day, we see more and more of the clay and less and less of the iron, till good government is the one great want of the age all over the world. Man has been tried and found wanting. He cannot govern himself as an individual, apart from God. How, then, can he do it nationally? No! the descent is from God to the devil, from Christ to anti-Christ. (*J. Bullinger.*) *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*:—The passage here brought to our attention is only the first of several visions recorded in the book of Daniel treating of the same events. The dream of the great image as given in this chapter, and the vision of the four beasts as recorded in the seventh chapter, unquestionably describe the same things. To a certain extent, the same thing is true of the vision of the ram and the he-goat in the eighth chapter, and of the statements in the eleventh chapter regarding the succession of kings. Daniel was first of all a devout worshipper of the true God; he was further a patriotic Jew; and the combination of these peculiarities turned his thought intensely toward the promise of the coming Messiah. God uses men according to their fitness, and Daniel, by his predispositions, was eminently fitted for the Messianic prophecy. But Daniel had his speciality even in this. He was a statesman—the greatest of his age. From the beginning of manhood till the weight of years was heavy upon him he stood behind the throne, and in the reigns of four kings and during two dynasties he was the chief adviser of royalty, studying with the eye of a master the relation of nations and the development of history. His Messianic prophecies were shaped accordingly. He wrote, not as did Isaiah, of Christ the sufferer, but of Christ the king, and he viewed the future in its relations to the rise and fall of kingdoms, their influence on the coming kingdom of Christ, and the final triumph of that mysterious and mighty Messianic dominion which should cover the whole earth. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as interpreted by Daniel, describes the succession of four great world-kingdoms, each preparing the way for the kingdom which followed it, and the four leading to the last and most wonderful, a fifth, to fill the whole earth and last for ever. All interpreters agree that the last kingdom is that of Christ. The statement, also, is explicit that the first kingdom is the Babylonish. What are the three intervening? There is substantial agreement that the second and the third kingdoms are the Medo-Persian Empire and the Macedonian. The only serious division of interpretation is in regard to the fourth kingdom. What is meant by the legs of iron, with feet part of iron and part of clay? Until within about a hundred years there has been no question that by this was signified the Roman Empire. But after Luther's day entered German rationalism, claiming that the book of Daniel was written by an uninspired pseudo-Daniel living in the times of the Maccabees. Such a man, of course, could write history, but would neither dare nor wish to prophesy another earthly dominion antagonistic to the Jews; and so these rationalists feel obliged to find some other kingdom than the Roman to represent the fourth. It is a similar prejudice against the supernatural which has led to much of the destructive criticism of the present day, and it was such prejudice which first suggested the substitution of the Syrian Empire for the Roman in the interpretation of this passage. It is enough for our present purpose that such scholars as Keil and Pusey advance satisfactory arguments that the fourth kingdom can be no other than the Roman. Why, then, are these great kingdoms introduced here? Because they prepared the way pre-eminently for the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. Each world-kingdom represented certain ideas, and the downfall of that kingdom showed their inability to meet the needs of man. Each world-kingdom did a certain work in shaping human life, so that when Christ came the world was in better shape to receive Him. Let us briefly examine these great empires to see what they accomplished in these directions. 1. In showing that certain prevailing ideas of excellence were inadequate to satisfy human wants, each one of these world-kingdoms played an important part. It has evidently been a part of God's plan to let nations try, on a great scale, their theories of human advantage. Then, as one after another nations carrying out these theories have gone down into ignominy and ruin, the fallacy of their theories of happiness has been proved. Babylon represented the idea of sensuous and sensual pleasure. There money could purchase everything, and there the grossest delights of the flesh were indulged in to the full. Its luxury was boundless. The wild and wanton feast of Belshazzar and his lords,

as described in the book of Daniel, is a mild picture of the drinking habits, the profligacy and licentiousness of the Babylonians. No other nation ever illustrated so fully as they the idea that man cannot find satisfaction in material enjoyments. An Oriental people, of warm blood, living in a hot climate, with the greatest abundance about them, their very religion ministering to their ideas of pleasure, surely, they, if any in the world could do it, might find the end of life in luxury. But in this they were grievously disappointed. Their pleasure-loving was utterly demoralizing, and ended in their ruin. The Medo-Persian Empire comes next into view. This people had higher ideas of life than the Babylonian. They were monotheists, or at least dualists. They were not a luxurious people. They despised silver and gold, and when they made war upon Babylon they could not be bought off as other attacking armies. Hence Isaiah says, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them,"—that is, against the Babylonians—"which shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it." The controlling idea of the Medo-Persian Empire was glory. What they sought above all else was military renown. To them vastness of numbers and vastness of territory had a peculiar charm. At one time the empire covered an immense stretch of country, from the river Indus and the Hindoo-Koosh Mountains on the east to the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Sahara on the west. This was the empire which delighted in the most immense armies the world has ever known. Xerxes brought together against Greece two million and a half of men. But glory failed to satisfy, as had pleasure in the preceding kingdom. Presently this great empire, with its twenty satrapies, fell to pieces. The Macedonian Empire followed, bringing into view a wonderful civilization. Its days exalted intellect. Philosophy and art were the prominent forms of delight. Men sought refuge from the ills of life in the spacious groves of the academy, where Socrates and Plato and other great thinkers elaborated schemes of thought to explain all that troubles man and to provide a remedy. The faculties of man were at their highest, and in no age of the world has there been a finer development of literature and art. But it failed to meet the cravings of man, or to defend him against evil. The Macedonian Empire went down into speedy decay. With the death of Alexander it broke into two great fragments, the empires of the Ptolemies and the Selucids, and presently another and greater world-empire swallowed up both of these. The Roman Empire was the last of these great world-kingsdoms, and this set forth the idea of power. Rome, as no other nation before it, was thoroughly organized. The controlling ambition of Rome in its highest prosperity was to rule. It emphasized the ideas of law, of order, of force. It drew up a legal code that became the model for subsequent ages. Its mighty legions swept all lands, and nothing could stand before them. Lacking the grace and delicacy of Grecian civilization, caring less for fame and show than the Medo-Persian civilization, scorning in its best days the sybaritism of the Babylonian civilization, its fitting symbol was not the gold of Babylon, nor the silver of Persia, nor the bronze of Greece, but iron—hard, destructive, invincible iron. But law, though organized most thoroughly, and force, though developed into its highest forms, gave no guaranty of national permanence and secured no national happiness. Rome lapsed into weakness. The magnificent nation became permeated with vice, and easily fell a prey to the barbarians of the north. Its iron was mingled with clay. 2. And as the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were broken in pieces together and carried away by the wind, while the stone that smote them became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, it is well for us to see how these world-kingsdoms all contributed toward the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth before they disappeared. Babylon destroyed the tendency of the Jews to idolatry. Before they were carried away into captivity they had repeatedly gone after the false gods of the nations around them. But Babylon established them in the firmest opposition to the sin. Even Rome trembled before the fierceness of their hostility to idolatry, and at their wish removed from Jerusalem its military ensigns on which were images of Cæsar. This intense monotheism was a necessary preparation for the coming of Christ. The Babylonish captivity likewise scattered the Jews everywhere. But few of them returned to Jerusalem. This dispersion of the Jews served an important purpose in making ready for the kingdom of Christ. It caused a general expectation of His coming throughout the world. It provided places for the preaching of the Gospel, for wherever a synagogue stood there Jewish Christians were at first able to speak for Christ. It secured an early presentation of the Gospel in all lands. The Jews converted at Pentecost went back into every land with the story of the Cross. The Jews in foreign lands were obliged to modify largely the ritual of their fathers. The Medo-Persian Empire broke down the scandalous Babylonish idolatry and destroyed a pestiferous influence in the ruling forces of the world. By its wide conquests it broke up the fallow ground of human thought, destroyed prejudices, and so opened the way for the Gospel. It re-established the Jewish worship in Jerusalem, and so kept the Divine fire of religious

truth burning till Christ should come. The religious efforts inaugurated in the time of Cyrus and Darius and other Medo-Persian kings were permanent in their results. Not simply was the temple rebuilt, but the Scriptures were collected and copied and familiarized. And what did the Macedonian Empire do for Christ? It diffused the Greek language with Greek literature and Greek modes of thought. Intellectuals were wonderfully quickened the world over. The Old Testament was translated by Alexandrian scholars into Greek. Thus the Scriptures were made known to the world, thus language was fitted to express the lofty thoughts of the Gospel, and thus men were lifted up on a higher plane of thought, where they could appreciate and receive the preaching of the apostles. And Rome? The great Roman Empire established a universal dominion which facilitated the spread of the Gospel. It built good roads to all lands and policed them. It secured a fair measure of good order. In consequence the apostles could carry their Divine message all over the world. The Roman Empire also had an important bearing on Christ's atonement. It was the official authority which put Him to death. Thus it joined Gentile and Jew as alike guilty before God, and alike needing the benefits of the great sacrifice. It furnished a legal, and, therefore, peculiarly incontrovertible testimony to His death. It proved His resurrection by stationing guards at the tomb, who would assuredly have been put to death if His body had been stolen by His disciples. And it ended the Jewish ritual, for shortly after Christ's death Roman legions destroyed the temple, scattered the Jews, and made impossible the temple service. Can we doubt, even after this review, that Christ's empire is superior to all that went before it, and that on their pulverized and widely scattered fragments it is built up? (*Addison P. Foster.*)

The Great Image:—I. ALL WORLD-KINGDOMS DESTITUTE OF GOODNESS WILL END IN DESTRUCTION. This is the doom of the great kingdoms of the world who are destitute of sufficient morality to preserve themselves in existence. II. THE OLDER THE WORLD BECOMES THE LESS ENDURING AND THE MORE WORTHLESS ARE THE MERE WORLD-KINGDOMS. The longer anything that is dying lives, the less valuable it is. Those who are dying morally become of less and less worth in the world the longer they continue in it. So with all kingdoms founded on a mere worldly basis. Mere physical power becomes of less worth in proportion to the progress of the world by the development of moral force. III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THAT OF CHRIST, IN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE IMAGE AND THE STONE. In relation to size, materials; in their origin, strength, place in human history, length of existence. Lessons: 1. God may instruct a saint through the brain of a sinner. Here Daniel is instructed by Nebuchadnezzar. 2. That all the materials of the world may be used, and so consecrated, as means of illustrating Divine truth. The most common-place things can be ennobled by being the vehicles of moral teaching. 3. We must judge, not according to appearances, but according to the inherent strength of things and persons. 4. Sin will not resign its dominion unless it be smitten. We cannot drive out the devil of evil habits by gentle persuasion or long speeches. 5. There can be no success against evil unless we are connected with the supernatural. There are virtuous people in the world who are not Christians. There have been some bright examples of such among heathen nations. But they could make no head against sin around them, even if they had no strong tendencies to gross or palpable sin within. Sin within us, or around us, can only be smitten through connection with a "stronger than the strong man armed," who has himself smitten evil by a sinless life and an atoning death. (*Outlines by a London Minister.*) *The Church and the World*:—The general condition of the Church, in reference to the world, urges to the consideration of large and fundamental principles. There is in the prophetic image a very exact picture of the condition of the world in a Pagan state, and, to some extent, of what it is in every state, short of moral perfectness; and there is, in the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, an equally exact picture of the Christian Church working out the renovation of the world. I. THE IMAGE. We are not left to conjecture the meaning, either of the whole or of its separate parts (v. 36—43). The head of gold meant the Babylonish empire, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 37, 38). The breast and arms, which were of silver, are understood to mean the Medo-Persian empire (v. 39); the belly and thighs of brass, the Grecian, particularly under Alexander the Great (v. 39); and the legs and feet, these last being divided into ten toes, the Roman, in the different conditions of an empire and of the ten kingdoms into which it was afterwards divided (v. 40—43); all of this is commonly understood, and so generally allowed, as to warrant our omitting any special or detailed proof. It will also be observed that these different empires are introduced as occurring in succession, and as bringing before us the condition of the world continuously, during a very long period. But there remaineth another characteristic of this vision. The object revealed is an image. The word translated image is indeed something employed to signify merely a figure or resemblance of something. But its more ordinary meaning, and that which the circumstances

seem to require, is that of an idol. The object introduced is in the form of a man, the materials employed are like those of idols, and the greatness and strange mixture of the figure do also correspond. But the nations of the world, and especially those introduced, must in this way somehow or other be idolatrous; and the idolatry will require to be such as may be reached, as will afterwards appear, by the progress of Christianity. Thus far we are carried by the image itself; and now we are led to look around, and to ask whether the kingdoms of this world be really such as is here supposed—whether all Pagan nations are essentially idolatrous, and whether all others not yet perfect are in the sight of God chargeable with less or more of the same offence? 1. Now, first of all, it will be recollected that the same corruption which exists in the individual affects society. Speaking of man as an individual, sin was first introduced into his heart; but out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c.; and thus the whole man becomes defiled. Then families made up of such individuals must also be impure; and this not merely as regards the conduct of particular members, but as respects domestic habits, and the authority of those who are heads of families. But families grow into tribes, and tribes have laws and law-givers exercising authority over them. But again, tribes become nations, and nations, whether by conquest or federal union, become empires; and in this state the evil is still worse. The contagion is greater, and the laws and customs, if supported by public opinion, are almost irresistible; and what now would the world itself be, if left to its own corruption, but one common though varied mass of moral evil. 2. The reasoning employed in these remarks is fully borne out by facts. The sin originally introduced into the breasts of our first parents soon discovered itself in their offspring; Cain slew Abel, and because his own works were evil and his brother's good. In the course of a few generations the Church had to be separated from the world on account of the prevalence of iniquity. The same thing again occurred after the flood. It occurred to such an extent that in the days of Abraham, who was only the tenth from Noah, special provision had again to be made for the preservation of religious truth. And we have, if possible, a still stronger proof in the description furnished by an Apostle, as applicable to the world at the fulness of time. This account contains an explanation also of the corrupting principles. In different countries there are different forms of superstition, different kinds of prevailing indulgences, and laws, and customs having different tendencies; but in all, the corruption of the human heart is seen festering in society, and pervading all its arrangements. It is not merely that there is the oozing forth of the corruption of the heart, and this as defiling all things, but that all the influence of power, all the authority of laws, and strong current of public opinion, are wholly impure, unrighteous, and irreligious. And what, in like manner, are the sympathies of such a people, but sympathies in favour of corruption, of immoral indulgences, and unrighteous laws. 3. But there is another view of this subject, necessary to the filling up of our prophetic delineation. We understand the image to be representative of idolatry, and in correspondence with this we believe the world, in its unbelieving state, to be essentially idolatrous. It will be generally admitted that Pagan nations are for the most part idolaters. The true history of man's condition religiously is this: Religion is of God—is communicated by His Spirit to the individual inwardly; and to the world by the revelation of His will outwardly. It is itself pure in either way; but on coming into contact with the corruption of the human heart, and of a world lying in sin, it becomes impure, and if left alone would grow into corruption itself. Confining our illustration to the world collectively, the history of nations has only to be read that it may be seen. But this very tendency to corrupt, tends also to an ultimate annihilation of religion itself. The same alienation of mind from God, which veils in forms adapted to the human heart, leads to an utter forgetfulness of God, and distaste for everything proper to His worship. Even ancient Greece and Rome had almost reached this very condition, when Christianity stepped in and saved these nations from absolute infidelity. It will be observed that in all this we have spoken only of Paganism, but the same principle extends to corruptions of every form. The very same tendency of our corrupt nature, which converted the simple faith of the Patriarchs into Paganism, changed the doctrines and worship of the Apostles and first Christians into Mohammedanism, Popery, and other forms of error less generally known. In these respects, therefore, nearly all will admit that the nations of the world are for the most part idolaters. But there is another sense in which the nations of the world are fitly represented by the prophetic image; and although this is certainly the more abstract, it is nevertheless that which seems mainly intended. The head of gold directly pictured the King of Babylon and the glory of his reign (v. 37, 38), not the priests of Bel, or anything proper to the idolatry of Babylon; and so was it of the other parts of the image (v. 39—43). These were like the head, all severally descriptive of the nations they represented politically. And politically, therefore, must these nations be held as idolatrous. The principle arrived

at in the other case will assist us. Idolatry is the giving of that honour and glory to any other which is due only to God. And so, when the flatterers of Herod shouted, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man, immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory!" (Acts xii. 22, 23). And this was the very sin of the King of Babylon, and no doubt that which rendered the head of gold a part of the image (v. 28—30 and 84—37). And this is the master sin, first of the human heart, then of each family, and lastly of kingdoms and empires, including their laws and customs, and whatever else may direct or control society. And curious enough it is, that here also the corrupting tendency diverges into two separate currents, the one ending in an entire absence of everything like an acknowledgment of God, and the other in the embodying of interested and corrupt ends under the cover of Divine authority. The latter, as in forms of worship, is greatly more common than the other. Most nations embody their faith in their constitution, and some even allege the authority of the State to be Divine; nevertheless that it is in all its leading features opposed to the will of God, and essentially an organized form of oppression, and thus instrumental in promoting rather than restraining wickedness. This alliance nevertheless gives stability to such governments, and, on the principle already referred to, namely, that the ends so served are natural to man, and are sought by him. And the analogy holds equally good in the other branch, for what is a government, simply expressive of a nation's will, and without any acknowledgment of God, or any observance of His laws, but infidel? Now, both of these tendencies, it will be observed, manifest themselves in Christian as well as Pagan nations. They are the concomitants of moral corruption, the one generally in circumstances of popular ignorance and superstition, and the other in nations distinguished for intellectual attainments, or at least activity, with a less amount of practical religion. The rapid survey which we have thus taken of what may be called political idolatry, is perhaps enough to show the truth of the principle proceeded upon; and there is only one other element in this condition of the world which we shall stop to notice. It is the well ascertained fact that no nation has the power of reforming itself. No barbarous nation, for example, has ever been known to become civilized except through the interference of some other nation already in that state. All intellectual improvement originates with religion—with revealed truth. This at least may be proved, that the introduction of religion to any nation is ever followed by intellectual improvement. And it is all but proved that nothing but religion will so humanise the mind of any nation as to give it a taste for general knowledge. And so far as the lights of history guide us, we are farther induced to believe that the early improvement even of heathen nations, such as that of Greece, was brought about by the importation of knowledge from countries which had not yet wholly lost an acquaintance with Divine truth. The prophetic image was thus literally descriptive of the condition of the world. The head was of gold, and it passed downwards into silver, and brass, and iron mixed with clay; but still it was a piece of dead matter, undergoing indeed changes, but these were all downward. They were as nations themselves, still becoming more and more debased, and yet, in no stage of this progress, discovering aught of a redeeming tendency. This, be it observed, is the character under which all nations, unblessed with the Gospel, are to be seen, and in so far as any nation is wanting in moral and religious influence, it is under the same taint, and is subject to the same progress. This, therefore, is the aspect under which the world ought to be contemplated, apart from the effects of Gospel truths, or short of their full and transforming power.

II. THE STONE CUT OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN WITHOUT HANDS. The cutting of this stone out of the mountain was not coeval with the commencement of the succession of kingdoms set forth in the image. "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out," which is explained in the 44th verse thus: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom." Then, as to the execution of the threatening that this stone should smite the image, it is said in the vision, "which smote the image upon his feet," that is, during the continuance of the Roman empire; and yet, in doing this, it is added that not only the iron and clay, but also "the brass, the silver, and the gold" were to be broken to pieces together. This leads us at once to the time of the cutting out of the stone. It was to be looked forward to during the times of the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, and the Grecian Empires; but it was to occur under the Roman. And how is it then possible for anyone to doubt as regards the fulfilment? The explanatory description is, "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." The figure introduced is in many respects fitted to bring before us the leading characteristics of the Church as regards the world. 1. And first, as to its origin. Quarries were of old frequently in mountains, and there is nothing perhaps in this beyond a proper keeping with the imagery employed; but its being cut out of the mountain "without hands" was no doubt intended to point at the Divine origin of Christianity, and this as distinguishing

it from every other form of religion. It was literally of God. Its foundation stone was His own incarnate Son—its first propagators were His inspired Apostles—the first Christian Church was born under the special power of Pentecostal influence. Such an institution is eminently of God, and must, from its very nature, endure for ever. 2. Another of its characteristics is set forth in the power of the stone to break the image. We all know that among the rude implements of ancient times employed in breaking any piece of carved work, a mass of stone was the most natural, and that which was most frequently used. Now, be it remembered, that the prophetic image has been explained as meaning not the abstract constitution and power of nations, but their idolatrous character—and this, whether it respects the moral condition of their superstitious and polluted worship, or their self-willed and unrighteous, if not also impious, governments. The thing to be broken, therefore, and reduced to powder, is not the ordinance of government, which is of God, but the idolatry of nations, which is wholly of man. And now it will be seen that Christianity, as taught by the Apostles, was eminently fitted to effect this—was so fitted as simply by its progress to carry out all that is here meant. But allow conscience to be once awakened—let the individual once feel himself restrained from wonted habits, and compelled to unwonted causes of conduct—and even he will be brought into collision with his fellow men. His own family will take offence, and his neighbours will eye him askance, and by and bye an arm of power will be lifted up against him. But allow the one to become a thousand, and the thousand to become many thousands, and now the cry will be raised of “turning the world upside down.” It will now become a matter of necessity, either that such parties shall be freed from sinful laws and customs, or that they shall be put down by the hand of power. What reason would thus pourtray, history narrates. The day of Pentecost was but as yesterday, when the doctrines of Peter and John gave offence, and they were called before the Jewish Sanhedrim, and taught as they had been by the Master himself to “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” they were nevertheless compelled to say to the High Priest and his Council, “whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts iv. 19, 20); and on another occasion, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts v. 29). This of itself affords proof as well as illustration; but the instructions of the Saviour, originally given to His Apostles, are more direct and certain. (Matt. x. 16—18, 34—36.) Nothing can more clearly show that the Church was to be brought into collision with the idolatry of the world, and that it was in the first place to suffer. 3. It may, however, be well to rest here for a little, so as to look at what is said of this smiting of the image even on the feet, that the whole image was thereby reduced to powder. In this we have just another proof of the principle on which we are proceeding. Suppose mere idolatry, as known under some particular form, to be meant by the image, then would the stone require to have been applied to the head of gold, as well as to the feet of iron and clay. But if the idolatry meant, be as we have been alleging, that alienation from God, and substitution of the corrupt will of the creature for the unerring will of the Creator, then will the idolatry brought before us be one as the prophetic image, no matter that the head and the other parts are of diverse materials. It will be thus seen that the kingdom of Satan is one, though of many successive ages, and that it remained in power down to the time of the first planting of Christianity. And it conveys to us this farther idea, which is of some practical importance, namely, that whatever remains of national alienation from God, is in reality a part of the kingdom of Satan, and such as ought to be kept under the power of the stone. And what would you more? it will be said. Would you have her to do as she had been dealt by? Would you have her to persecute? By no means. And what would you then? Simply to carry forward the work in which she had been engaged, with all the advantages of her acquired power; not to rest, but to carry forward the work of Christ as regards Scriptural instruction, till, by the blessing of God, the remaining outfield be as the vineyard of the Lord; and not to rest as regards laws, and customs, and authority, till these be severally based on the Word, and imbued by a spirit of piety. 4. But this carries us forward to another and most important branch of this subject; we mean the stone becoming the mountain and filling the whole earth. It is altogether too large to be received merely as one characteristic; and, therefore, we shall speak of it in parts. It will be observed, then, from the vision, that the pounding of the image and the enlargement of the stone, so as to become a mountain and to fill the earth, were not strictly consecutive, that is, the stone did not first become a mountain filling the earth, and then smote the image, neither that the stone first broke to pieces the image, and that when this was quite done it became a mountain, for the co-existence of the stone and the image for some considerable time is clearly implied (v. 44). The thing meant was, that the stone, when first cut out of the mountain, and when still portable, was employed in pounding the image, and that

as this went on, so it grew, till by a diminution of the image and an enlargement of the stone the one took the place of the other. The one disappeared and the other became a mountain, filling the whole earth. And this we have in part seen. As Christianity grew, Paganism and Pagan rule decayed, and nominally at least, Christianity is even now seen as some lofty mountain towering over all human institutions, and as it grows applying its weight—its influence—to the demolition of another and another position of the fabric of Paganism. 5. But we ought not, perhaps, to conclude this series of remarks without adverting to an interpretation of this and similar passages, which has, in different ages, been the cause of great social mischief, and which ought to be guarded against. When the Reformation in Germany had well-nigh reached a state of general diffusion, there broke out among the half-instructed people an opinion leading to revolution and bloodshed. Galled with the continuance of political grievances, they sought to obtain deliverance under the influence of religious motives. They fancied themselves entitled to revolutionise states and overturn governments, for the purpose of erecting in their room others more in accordance with what they believed to be the will of God. And the effect was, first a civil war, and afterwards the destruction of the parties engaged, and last of all the hindrance of religion, as regarded its progress and also its legitimate influence. On these accounts it may be well very distinctly to guard whatever is said on a subject of this kind. This is due to Society—it is due to as many as would be instructed and act on their belief; but it is due also to religion. And it is a matter of satisfaction that this may be done simply by pointing back to the doctrine of the vision. It is not, then, be it remarked, that the Church is to interfere with the affairs of the State, and far less that Church members are to draw the sword, and thus forcibly to alter the laws and constitution of kingdoms. The Church is spiritual, and it is to carry on its pounding process only by spiritual means. It is to shed abroad the light of the Gospel on society, and thus to dispose the nation to righteous laws and right government. (*D. Macfarlan, D.D.*) *The King's Dream*.—What was its meaning? I. THE GREAT EMBLEMED WORLD-EMPIRES. 1. The Babylonian monarchy was the head of gold. The head well emblemized it for its unity and intelligence. The sagacious and despotic will of the king bound the far-reaching kingdoms into one. Nebuchadnezzar's victories were those of peace as well as of war. 2. The Medo-Persian Empire. Emblemized by the breast and arms of silver. For two centuries it was the universal empire. But it lacked the unity of the kingdom it overthrew and was as inferior to it as silver, for value and solidity, is inferior to gold. Cyrus was its greatest ruler. 3. The Empire of Greece was emblemized by the belly and thighs of brass. Its soldiers were known among the ancients as the brazen-coated Greeks. Its founder was Alexander, a swift, transcendent, military genius. He sought, with wise, philanthropic aim, to blend the nations of Asia and Europe into a brotherhood. 4. The Roman Empire was emblemized by the legs of iron, with the feet part of iron and part of clay. The stern, if not savage, valour of Rome was well pictured by iron. The Romans, the ironsides, the iron hearts, vanquished the world to their power. But their power was mixed with weakness, for they gathered nations into their citizenship without inspiring them with their own hardy virtues. So Rome ended in being divided into many kingdoms. All the four powers became embodied in the Roman, which was the world-power when our Saviour was upon earth, and thus may all be deemed as broken with it. II. CHRIST'S EMBLEMED KINGDOM. The stone cut from the mountain. 1. Humble in its beginning was Christ's kingdom. 2. Heavenly in its origin. "Without hands" was the stone cut. God set up this kingdom. His strength is in it. It is from God, for it makes men God-like. 3. It is destined to be universal. The stone grew till it filled the whole earth. So is Christ's kingdom to grow. That kingdom is coming in the hearts and homes and lives of men. 4. This kingdom is eternal. When many kingdoms have passed, this has survived the treachery of friends and the fierce assaults of foes. Its glory cannot be extinguished. It shall "endure for ever." (*G. T. Coster.*)

Vers. 34—49. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands.—*The Dream Recovered and Interpreted*.—The vision suggests to us many interesting things concerning the Kingdom of Christ. 1. Its superhuman origin. The stone was "cut out" of the mountains without hands. There was no natural cause for its severance. So the foundation of Christ's kingdom was the result of no development of human character, but rather of the bringing of a new spiritual and heavenly power into the world. 2. The comparative feebleness of its beginning. The language of the vision indicates that the stone grew from a small size until it became a huge mountain. Frequently earthly kingdoms have had very insignificant beginnings. So with this Kingdom of Christ, which began with the meeting of a few Galilean peasants in an upper room. 3. The gradualness of its progress. Not all at once was this development made. It was a work of

time. And so in the kingdom which it symbolises advancement was by degrees. Beginning at Jerusalem, its first preachers sought their earliest converts among their fellow-countrymen; but, as the seed sloughs off its outer shell when it begins to grow, the Christian Church very soon put off its Jewish restrictiveness and found a root in Gentile cities. 4. Its universal extent. The mountains "filled the whole earth." "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth." 5. The perpetual duration of this kingdom. "It shall never be destroyed," and "it shall not be left to other people." This perpetuity is intimately associated with its character, and that again with its origin. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*:—The Jewish people and kingdom, to all human appearance and judgment, was, at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, hopelessly destroyed; for in the history of the world a nation which has been broken up as the Jewish nation then was, never reformed itself, its people becoming absorbed and incorporate with succeeding nations. But it was not to be so with this nation, apostate and broken though it was—and is. We see in the story of Daniel and his three friends the germ out of which is to spring the nation's regeneration. In these young men the true principles of the Theocratic Kingdom survived; faith, obedience, and the spirit of prophecy. The first chapter has to do with the fact of this remnant and God's special protection thrown around it. In the second chapter we begin to see the Spirit of God working in the heart of the ruler of the great world-power, disturbing it with dreams of things to come; and also we see the spirit of prophecy working in the head and heart of Daniel, to interpret the dream of the great heathen king, and to set forth the course of history among the nations until God should re-establish His own Theocratic Kingdom and give the world to the saints according to His original and eternal purpose. I. THE GREAT IMAGE. The general meaning of this dream is perfectly clear. It represents the succession of great world-powers which should rise in the world, to whom God had given, directly or indirectly, the sovereignty of the earth, until Christ himself should come and completely overthrow them, once for all, and take possession of the whole earth, and reign upon it for ever with and by His saints (vii. 18—27; Rev. v. 9, 10; xi. 15—17; xix. 6; xx. 4—6; xxii. 5). In this image two things are particularly set forth: that the world-power tends to division, as seen in the legs, feet, and toes; and that it gradually deteriorates from the gold, down through silver, brass, and iron to potter's clay. It is only when the world-power becomes a mixture of iron and clay, which cannot become permanently united, though having in it an element of strength, that it is finally overthrown. The attempt of Napoleon to establish a fifth universal monarchy was defeated and brought to naught by his two great reverses at Moscow and Waterloo. There shall be no other universal kingdom, that is, of a merely world-power. Man has come to the end of his strength in the matter of conquest. Russia may attempt to succeed to universal dominion, but will fail even as Napoleon. II. THE STONE CUT OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN. The prophet having described to the king the progress of the successive world-powers, through four universal kingdoms, now takes up the interpretation of that mysterious event which he saw in his dream: A stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which first smote the colossal image on its feet of clay and brake it in pieces, alike the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold, and then itself increased more and more until it filled the whole earth. This he declares to be the establishment of a universal kingdom upon the ruins of the great world-powers. This kingdom, however, is not a successor to the former in the sense in which the four kingdoms succeeded one another. This kingdom had no part in the image, but was different in its origin and in its method of power. 1. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands. The expression "cut out of the mountain without hands" clearly indicates the supernatural origin and character of this omnipotent power, which was to break in pieces all these world-kingdoms, take possession of all things, and establish a kingdom for itself. 2. The universal and everlasting kingdom. The world-powers were never absolutely universal; but the Kingdom of Christ shall include and fill the whole earth. 3. The suddenness of the advent of the stone. There is no preliminary movement ascribed to the stone. It seems suddenly to rise up and smite the image with one mighty blow that shatters it to pieces. It is not a gradual, but an immediate conquest. There is no struggle for supremacy; no long conflict ending in final victory by the gradual rise of power and increase of might. This, therefore, cannot refer to the slow conquest of the world by the Gospel. The stone first smote the world-powers in pieces and scattered them like chaff from a summer threshing floor; then it went on and grew and filled the whole earth, and there was found no power to oppose it. This must refer to the sudden coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of man, in the clouds of Heaven (Dan. vii. 13; Rev. i. 7, 13; xiv. 14; compare with Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; xxvi. 64). When Jesus comes again in the clouds of Heaven he will destroy all the organized powers of this world. THE EFFECT OF DANIEL'S INTERPRETATION. When Daniel had finished his interpretation of his dream, the king was so profoundly moved

by its majestic truth that he fell upon his face, and having worshipped Daniel, caused that oblations should be offered to him. We have no record of what Daniel did when this act of worship was paid to him, but no doubt he rejected it, or at least fully understood that the act of worship was not meant for him, as it certainly was not, since he had already disclaimed any power of his own to interpret the dream or unfold the secrets of God (v. 27, 28). Moreover, the words of the king clearly intimated that he meant the worship to be for the God of Daniel, and not Daniel himself. "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." This intimates a partial conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to the true God. The second result was that it brought to Daniel power and authority in the government of the kingdom, even as a similar revelation of secrets and interpretation of dreams brought to Joseph in Egypt great power, to be used in God's service. Thus do we see how God takes possession, even in their day of power, of the kingdoms of the earth; so far at least as is necessary to carry out His purposes. The third effect was to lift the three friends of Daniel also into places of great eminence and usefulness. What a lesson is this for the encouragement of those who have purposed in their hearts to be true to God in the world where they are placed for a testimony! (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *The Evil and Good in Human History*:—Here is a remarkable fact—a Pagan ruler made the organ of a Divine revelation. The great Father of Spirits has access to the souls of every type. The deepest Paganism cannot exclude Him from contact with the spirits of men. There are two circumstances connected with the Divine communication to this monarch which in all likelihood are ever associated with "communications" from Heaven to depraved spirits. It came to the king entirely irrespective both of his choice and effort. And it had a most distressing influence upon his mind. Many great souls move about heathendom under the pressure of strange and soul-disturbing visions from eternity. I. THE GREAT ATAGONISTIC PRINCIPLES IN HUMAN HISTORY—GOOD AND EVIL. The huge image is the symbolization of evil, as existing everywhere in the kingdoms of men. The four great dynasties of the ancient world are here represented in one colossal human form in order to symbolize in its totality the moral evil that sways mankind at large. The image stands for evil, the stone stands for good. II. THE VERY INTERESTING SCENE OF THE GOOD ENTIRELY DESTROYING THE EVIL. To this day the great portion of the world is under the dark reign of evil. It is enthroned on the heart of humanity. To see the good, therefore, rising, growing, battling with it everywhere, and finally overwhelming it in ruin, is a sight deeply interesting and refreshing, both on account of its novelty and soul-inspiring character. This is the glorious scene before us. The evil is entirely destroyed in the vision. 1. The entire destruction of evil is effected by a supernatural manifestation of the good. There are circumstances connected with this stone which undoubtedly indicate its supernaturalness. Its origin, its self-motion, its world-wide expansion. (1) Christianity is good in a supernatural form. Its founder had a supernatural history. (2) The good in this supernatural form is the good to effect the entire destruction of evil. Good in its natural forms would never master evil. It tried for ages. Tried in the devotions of religion, the beauties of poetry, the enactments of law, the teachings of philosophy. But the "world by wisdom knew not God." In its supernatural forms of Christianity good becomes "mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin." In this form it is truth in its mightiest force—moral truth, a force to move the affections, the conscience, the entire soul. (3) The entire destruction of evil by the good is not what appearances would indicate. Evil, as a whole, stands before you as a vast Colossus. Every part of the figure is imperial. It stands from age to age on the vast field of human life the most commanding and the most splendid of objects. The supernatural form of good was to human eyes very mean. To the worldly there was nothing attractive or imposing about Jesus. Who would have thought that "the stone" would at the first touch shiver that huge figure? Yet it did so. (4) The entire destruction of evil by good involves a thorough change in the character of the world. Here is the removal from the world of its most conspicuous object. How complete the destruction! A large thing is removed from the world's horizon, but a larger takes its place. The image was great, but the mountain was greater. Great as evil is, good is greater. A human thing is removed from the world's horizon, but a Divine thing takes its place. Evil in this world is a human production. The good that is to fill the world will be Divine. This subject supplies: 1. A guide to a correct judgment. Judge not from appearances. 2. A test of moral character. In order to be a Christian indeed evil must not only be smitten, the Divine thing must fill up thy nature. 3. A warning to infidel opposition. All opposition is both useless and dangerous. 4. Encouragement to Christian labour. The stone has smitten evil. The stone will roll on—nothing can stop it. The kingdom will be an "everlasting kingdom." (*Homilist.*) *The Statue and the Stone*:—In primitive times dreams were often used as the mediums of Divine intima-

tions. "In slumberings upon the bed," says Elihu, "God openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." I. The first point of contrast is the **ENORMOUS BULK** of the statue as compared with the **SMALLNESS** of the stone. Man estimates the importance of things by their size and appearance. Vast proportions produce a feeling of awe; and primitive races strove to minister to this feeling by building gigantic structures which would exalt the idea of human genius in contrast with man's personal insignificance. The idol which the Babylonish monarch saw in his dream was in harmony with the huge monoliths, temples, and human-headed bulls which formed the architectural ornaments of his capital. Its colossal size admirably represented the material power and extent of his kingdom. Mere bulk and physical massiveness were the characteristics of the great empires of antiquity. But God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts. In nature He accomplishes His mightiest operations by the most insignificant agencies. Large islands are created by the labours of tiny coral polyps. And as in nature, so in grace. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all the seeds that be in the earth. What was Palestine but a very little country among the mighty continents of the earth? And what was Israel but an insignificant people in comparison with the great nations of antiquity? And was not Bethlehem where Jesus was born one of the least cities of the land, and the house of Joseph among the poorest and most obscure families in it? II. Another point of contrast is the **HETEROGENEOUS CHARACTER** of the statue as compared with the **HOMOGENEOUS NATURE** of the stone. The statue was composed of gold and silver, iron and clay; and these substances were moulded and held together in a human shape, not by a vital organisation, nor by chemical affinity, but by mere mechanical force. And in this respect the statue graphically represented the outward symmetry of the great world-kingdoms of antiquity, which was the result, not of a natural spontaneous association, but of a forced union of discordant elements by human power. The might of the autocrats of Egypt, Assyria, and Rome blended together races and creeds that had no natural affinity or sympathy with each other into one form of government, one mode of political life, and one mould of religious profession. This hard mechanical uniformity was secured by crushing the instincts of human nature and the liberties of the individual. And hence there was a constant tendency in this compulsory unity towards disintegration. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom divided against itself, and, therefore, cannot stand. Men who hate each other, and have nothing otherwise in common, will combine for some wicked purpose. But the unhallowed alliance has in it a principle of schism. But widely different was the stone, which symbolized the Kingdom of Heaven. It was a homogeneous substance. All its particles were of the same nature, and they were held together by the law of mutual cohesion and chemical affinity. The same force that united these particles into this compact form, changing the mud at the bottom of the ocean, or the sand on its shores, by pressure under massive rocks, or by the induration of volcanic outbursts into stone, still held these particles together because of their similarity, and resisted the processes of weathering to which they were exposed. The stone of the vision was no conglomerate or breccia in which pebbles or fragments of different minerals were held together by mechanical force, but in all likelihood, judging from the geological formation of the region where the vision occurred, a mass of limestone or marble, whose substance was homogeneous—composed of the same calcareous sediment, which fire and pressure had metamorphosed into this solid and enduring form. And how strikingly in this respect did it symbolize the City of God, which is compactly built together—the Kingdom of God, which is composed of those who are all one in Christ Jesus. Believers have a strong family resemblance. Notwithstanding their individual peculiarities, and their varieties of character, culture, and circumstance, they are all essentially one, after the image of God's unity, and consequently of His eternity. Their unity is not legal, but spiritual; not of dull uniformity, but of bright unanimity. III. Another point of contrast is the **LIMITATION** of the statue as compared with the **ILLIMITABLE DEVELOPMENT** of the stone. The statue was of gigantic size, but its human shape circumscribed its boundaries. Its outlines were rigidly determined. And this was the characteristic of the vast empires of antiquity, which, almost as soon as they were formed, became stereotyped and incapable of progress. Unassisted human nature had reached in the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Roman empires its utmost limits, and disclosed its fullest capacities; and we see how incapable it was of bringing anything to perfection—how stunted and stereotyped all its mightiest efforts were. China has lived for two thousand years upon the work of five centuries; it has never got beyond the doctrines of Confucius as explained and unfolded by Menucius. In striking contrast with the fixed limits and definite proportions of these human civilizations is the indefinite size and shape of the Kingdom of God. The stone is an appropriate symbol of it, the rough stone taken out of the quarry—the amorphous boulder lying on the moor, not the stone crystallized into the mathematical facets of

the gem. The statue, moulded by human art, shares in the limitations of man's own nature. Made by God, the stone shares in His infinitude. The mystic stone in the vision grew and expanded until it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The landscape consisted of itself and its shadow. It presented a different aspect from each new point of view. The uniform monotonous despotisms of antiquity were created by man for his own aggrandisement; they had, therefore, fixed bounds of space and duration beyond which they could not pass. But the Kingdom of God is the creation of Divine love and grace, and, therefore, it unfolds with the need of man, and develops new capacities of blessing him, and endures for ever. The image of the stone does not suitably convey this idea. Every stone, however rough, has a limit as fixed as the statue. But the idea of fixed shape is not so inherent in the stone as in the statue. A stone may be of any shape—may be weathered by the elements, or roughened by violent contact with other stones into the most varied forms; but a human statue must preserve the human shape and observe the fixed proportions of the human form. So, in like manner, the idea of development is not inherent in a stone. It is of a fixed size; it cannot become larger. But Scripture imparts the power of growth to it, and secures, by a combination of images, what one alone cannot effect. We see this in the union of ideas borrowed from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms—from architecture and plant life—in some of the images employed to designate the Christian Church and the Christian life. "In whom all the building framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord"; "Rooted and grounded in love." The grandeur of the Bible gives the grandeur of its own conceptions to every comparison it uses, expands its powers, and imparts to it qualities which it does not inherently possess, and thus makes it more elastic to represent the expansive force of the Kingdom of God. There is nothing fixed or stereotyped in this kingdom. It has a wonderful power of adjustment and assimilation. It expands its horizon as humanity progresses. It grows with human growth. The idea of growth is inherent in the Christian religion. It has created for itself a literature and an art in which progress is essential. The horizontalism and exact regularity of Greek and Assyrian architecture expressed the permanence and immutability of the religious system associated with it; while the verticalism and endless variety of the Gothic architecture embodied in a physical form the ideas of advancement, elevation, and progress contained in the Christian religion, which has chosen that style of art for its own. The religions of the heathen keep man as he is—confined to the earth, limited and bounded on every side by the restrictions and incapacities of his faith; the religion of Jesus raises man from the ground, lifts up his nature to another world, arouses his intellect and lightens his cares, bursts the fetters of his flesh, sublimates his affections, fills the whole sphere of his vision with grand and aspiring spectacles, and embodies itself in structures which exhibit a similar analogy. The religion that will satisfy the soul is a religion that makes provision for its growth and expansion, that shares in the infinitude and indefinite progressiveness of man. The stone must destroy the statue. IV. Another point of contrast is the BRILLIANT APPEARANCE of the statue, and the VALUE of the materials of which it is composed, as compared with the MEANNESS and commonness of the stone, and the WORTHLESSNESS of its substance. With the exception of the clay, out of which its extremities were partly moulded, all the other materials used in the composition of the statue were exceedingly valuable according to the human standard. These materials are the highest forms which the mineral kingdom assumes—the sublimation of the substance of the earth, and therefore they fitly represent all the pomp and circumstance of the proud kingdoms of the world—all that is strongest, most precious, and enduring in human sovereignty. On the other hand, the stone which smote the magnificent statue had no value or splendour. It was a rude aggregation and consolidation of the common sand or mud or dust of the earth. It was made up of the materials which are trodden under foot or employed only in the humblest uses. Who values a rough stone by the wayside? And in this respect it is a fit symbol of the Founder of the Heavenly Kingdom, who, while on earth, had no form or comeliness, and was despised and rejected of men. Christ in His life and death presents no attraction to the natural eye. His Church was the filth and offscouring of all things to the world. The subjects of His kingdom were the weak, the foolish, the ignorant, and the poor. The dream of the night has become the grandest fact of history; the vision of a heathen monarch has become the reality of Christendom; and every age will give the vision and the dream a grander and yet grander interpretation. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The Stone and the Image*:—Ordinarily there is nothing more unreal and flimsy than a dream. It is but a shadow, a freak of fancy, the effluence of a distempered body or an unquiet soul, the echo of sounds we heard, or the confused picture of sights we saw, on the previous day, a gossamer structure reared by the imagination, which the first breath of awaking reason will dissipate for ever. The great mass of dreams have all this unreality about them. They are as a

shadow that declineth. They are more the creatures of the past than the prophets of the future. Their face is turned towards yesterday rather than to-morrow. And yet in the history of the world there can be no doubt they have played an important part, as they have been one of the ways in which God has communicated His will to man. And even the Apocalypse may not unfitly be viewed as a glorious dream. In fact, there is no dream recorded in Scripture which is destitute of meaning; and the meaning of the dream before us is fully expounded by Daniel. It was the dream of a pagan, of a wicked and cruel pagan. But all souls are God's, and He has access to them all; and the narrative before us shows that, though Israel was God's peculiar people, to whom He specially revealed Himself until the fulness of the times should come, He did not leave Himself without witness among the heathen. He was asleep upon his bed, when lo! the form of a stupendous image loomed before him and filled his soul. Some men forget their dreams, forget even that they have dreamed. So did Nebuchadnezzar. He knew only that he had had a dream which greatly troubled him. In vain he tried to recover his dream. What was to be done? He had men, however, about him whose business it was, among other things, to interpret dreams. Let them be summoned and try their skill. They were staggered at the claim. They reminded him that no king, lord, or ruler had ever asked for such an extravagant and impossible thing before; and told him that what they could not do, no one could do except the "gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." This was true. No one but God could tell the dream and the interpretation thereof. But there was one in his court whom God knew well. Let us look at the vision and the interpretation. The vision, then, consisted of an image, a majestic image, not like some of those which at times appear in our dreams, monstrous and distorted, but symmetrical. It was in the form of a man. But its material was not uniform. Its head was resplendent gold; and not merely gold, but fine gold, gold that had been purified. Then came the breast and the arms, and these were composed of the metal next in preciousness—they were of silver. Below these were the thighs, which were of inferior metal still; and then came the legs of iron; and last of all came the feet, which were part of iron and part of clay. This was the vision, and doubtless as soon as Daniel had finished the description it would be recognised by Nebuchadnezzar as true, just as memory promptly verifies what we had for a moment forgotten, as soon as it is brought to our mind by another. Then comes the interpretation. It promised well at the beginning. It seemed to be very flattering to the king, for he was the head of gold. But the cup of comfort was dashed from his lips at the next sentence, for it speaks of a kingdom that should rise after him. Startling intelligence for the proud and powerful king that he was to pass away. So much for the head. But what of the silver breast and arms? This was the Medo-Persian dynasty, which was established during the life of Cyrus, who marched through the earth with resistless armies, melting the nations as the sun melts structures of snow, and subduing them to his sway. It was touching him that the handwriting on the wall gleamed forth Belshazzar's fatal doom, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." But was even this to last? No; a few years only should elapse, and then a brazen kingdom should arise under the victorious sway of Philip and his son Alexander the Great, the latter of whom, at the close of his sanguinary battles, finding himself the conqueror of the world, sat down and wept that nothing more was left for his ambition. Surely that kingdom will endure. Look at it. It is so vast. It comprises Macedonia—it comprises Greece—it comprises Persia—it comprises Media—it comprises Asia Minor—it comprises Egypt—it comprises Afghanistan and the Punjab. Surely such a kingdom will endure. There is not a power in the world to resist him, to fight with him. Alexander is emperor of the earth. But at length he died, and another power arose which is set forth in the iron legs of the great image. Before the prowess of Rome the Græco-Macedonian empire succumbed like a pigmy in the grasp of a giant, a giant which extended its sway more widely than any previous kingdom. Its empire was about two thousand miles in breadth. Its length extended three thousand miles, from the Western Ocean to the Euphrates. It razed Carthage to the ground—it subdued Spain and Gaul—it attacked England and Scotland—it triumphed in Judæa—and to this day may be seen, in Rome, the stone from which the miles were measured throughout the enormous extent of its dominion. But the iron which broke in pieces all else was itself mixed with clay in the toes of the feet, signifying that the Roman empire should be partly weak and partly strong. This wonderful prediction, uttered six hundred years before the birth of Christ, was accomplished with the most literal exactness. It was the forestalling of a series of events which no human sagacity could possibly infer from the condition of things at the time of Daniel. Nay, it was the declaration of what then seemed impossible. But the God to whom prophecy is history, who sees the end from the beginning, who causes weak things to confound the mighty, and things which are not to bring to nought

things that are, displayed this wondrous succession of dynasties as in a panorama before the mind of Daniel. And there is one thing which we must very specially note. It is this—that the dream of Nebuchadnezzar did not represent the mere decay of one kingdom through successive stages of diminishing grandeur and power until it finally collapsed in its feet of clay and iron. This might have been in keeping with the general character of the image itself, and Daniel might have said, "Thy kingdom, which is now of gold, shall become at length silver, after that it shall degenerate into brass, then it shall be transformed into iron, and shall finish its course in iron mixed with clay." This has been the history of some nations, but it was not to be the history of Babylon. It should perish in its grandeur. It should be smitten in its strength; so should the Persian, so should the Macedonian; while the Roman power, on the other hand, should, after centuries of imperial rule, sink slowly into decay, being at length divided into ten minor monarchies. This was one part of the sublime and impressive vision by which the sleep of Nebuchadnezzar was troubled on that memorable night. Now we turn to look at another. The object at which we have been looking was an image at rest, a colossal monument standing, as it were, in solitary grandeur in the midst of an expanded plain. But yonder in the distance, on the edge of the horizon, is seen another object. It is not at rest. It moves. It moves, too, of its own accord. It comes nearer. And lo! it is a stone; a stone which bears no marks of the delver's art and power. It does not bear the dint of hammer nor the scratch of crowbar. It has been cut out of the mountain without hands. And this is not all. It grows as it rolls, unlike other stones, which, whether rolling in river or down the hill-side, lose something of their size from moment to moment, the very friction chipping them or wearing them away. This stone expanded as it moved, rose higher, spread wider, advanced with more terrible momentum. But what of the image? Was that left standing? No. Nebuchadnezzar saw the stone roll onwards in the direction of the image with silent and majestic force, like a very symbol of omnipotence, and it was not arrested by the colossal monument and driven back. The stone smote the image on the feet—that is, at its very foundations—and the heterogeneous mass fell down. But it did not lie prostrate in its completeness as when a hurricane wind upheaves a pine tree from its rooting and lays it like a giant on the ground. The stone rolled over it, and broke it in pieces, and ground it to dust, and the wind carried the particles away so that no place was found for them. And the stone ceased not, but rolled on, growing as it rolled, until it filled the whole earth.

I. We see in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar THE GREAT FACT THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, THE KINGDOM OF TRUTH, IS AT LENGTH TO BE SUPREME OVER ALL OTHER KINGDOMS. Other kingdoms have always hitherto represented ideas and forces of evil. From the beginning, even down to the present moment, there has not yet been one kingdom which has aimed supremely at the well-being of the world. All of them, without exception, have been selfish and aggressive, aiming at the accession of territory and the augmentation of power and wealth. There have been men who have aimed at blessing others without dreaming of any blessing for themselves. But there has never been any nation which has been inspired with such noble aspirations. There is not one now. England, as one of the great dynasties of the world, is not contemplating any such purpose. She is seeking trade, wealth, territory, dominion, as other powers have done before her. Nations look at each other with jealousy and distrust and passion, as if they had only to fear danger from each other. But they do not take account of that invisible kingdom which is working behind and through them all, and which, by its secret and Divine power, can undermine their foundations. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw did not fall of its own accord. It was not destroyed by a band of enemies. It did not crumble to pieces by natural decay. It was not upheaved by earthquake or consumed by fire. It was destroyed by miracle, by a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. The same Divine power formed it that made the world, and it rolled along under the same invisible impulse which wheels the planets in their courses. The gospel is always represented as an exotic—a plant brought from Heaven to earth. It is not the offspring of human genius, of human culture, or of human virtue. The grapes of the Gospel could not grow on the thorns of human nature. How little man could do in the way of elaborating a saving system of truth may be seen by what man did actually do in the most enlightened nation of the world. In his wisdom he knew not God. For thousands of years the problem of human redemption through the power of unaided human genius and virtue had a fair trial. But how did it succeed? Men became warriors, statesmen, scholars, philosophers, poets—but redeemers, never. Here and there sprang up in a few hearts the conviction that man was, somehow, far beneath what he should be, but no help came—no help could come unless it came from above. And it came in the incarnation of our Lord. He was the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Men have striven to account for Him without the acceptance of His Divine nature and

mission. It is vain. They cannot account for Him. No man can rise above the essential conditions of the race to which he belongs. Christ was far above them—He was a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. All other men have been born in the ordinary way of succession. Christ was conceived of the Virgin Mary. He was a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Of all the unnumbered millions that have trodden the earth there has not been one who, in virtue of his own power, could escape the stroke of death; but Christ possessed the prerogative of defying the assault of the universal foe, exclaiming, "No man taketh away My life from Me: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He was the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. We do not despise the stones which have been cut out of the mountain with hands; in other words, we despise no true thing, no human work which is beautiful, no human deed which is right, no human word which is noble, no human improvements which ameliorate the condition of the world. All hail inventions, laws, education, which enable the race to rise even by a single step out of its ignorance and degradation and misery; but the great image of evil will stand against them all, firm as the rocky headlands against wind and waves, and will fall only before the majestic movement, and the Divine force of the "stone which has been cut out of the mountain without hands." Such is the origin of the stone. It is supernatural, and it is from Heaven. II. We notice THE APPARENT CONTRAST BETWEEN THE AGENT WHICH DESTROYS EVIL AND THE EVIL WHICH IS TO BE DESTROYED. A stupendous image—that is the evil; a stone, quite small at first, cut out of the mountain without hands—that is the good. That which is to destroy evil is at first little and despised; and men laugh at it, and treat it with mockery, even as David was treated when he stood forth as the foe of the Philistine giant. What was Christ to all appearance, that He should assume the part of the destroyer of evil? He was as a root out of a dry ground. He had no form nor comeliness. He was but a rod out of the stem of Jesse. His cradle was a manger at His birth, and He had no settled home when He had entered on His ministry. Look at Him—this Galilean peasant—with few friends, with no favour from the great, with the hostility of kings and priests and rulers of the people, with a face of sorrow and a heart of woe. He it is who claims to be the light of the world, and who, knowing that He would die on the accursed wood, said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Is that the man who is destined to universal empire—an empire not won by force, but by love; not by wounding, but by healing; not by destruction, but by salvation? Ah! that stone cut out of the mountains without hands, does it not seem small, too small to smite anything, still less the kingdoms of this world? Look at Him when He hangs lifeless on the cross, when He lies lifeless in the grave, dead as the stony sepulchre in which He is entombed! That stone seems harmless now against all evil, hemmed in by rock and seal and soldiery. From that day the stone has rolled on and on, and is rolling still. On the day that our Saviour rose from the dead there was not one man, perchance, in England who had ever heard of His name. Our fathers were then but savages, dwelling in trackless forests; now we are baptized in His name. This day is called after Him—the Lord's day. Our monarchs are consecrated in His name. The symbol of that cross on which He hung is seen surmounting our churches, and glittering on every side as an ornament of person and of home. The nations that believe in Him are rising, the nations that reject Him are sinking; for the kingdoms and the nations that will not serve Him shall perish. But why shall they perish? They shall perish because they have no life in them; because they lack that spiritual leaven which alone can preserve nations from their doom. But this is as true of men as of nations. Sadly should we fail to realise the full import of this dream if we did not bring it home to our own hearts. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain*.—What are we to understand by the stone? Many commentators expound it of Christ's person. Others, with whom we agree, understand it not of Christ's person, but of His Kingdom. We cannot conceive how it is possible, by any known law of exposition, to arrive at the conclusion that the stone means our Lord himself. How, for example, could our Lord be said to become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth? Christ himself cannot become more exalted. He has already ascended far above all heavens. The stone, therefore, must denote the visible Kingdom of Christ upon earth, which is inseparably connected with Christ, but which, at the same time, is neither His mediatorial person nor His mystical body. Let us ask the prophet himself what the stone means, and he gives us a plain, decisive answer. He tells us that the stone signifies a kingdom, which the God of Heaven was to set up, "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." And what is the kingdom which the God of Heaven was to erect? It is just the church under the New Testament dispensation. Hence, both John the Baptist and our Lord came proclaiming "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is worthy of remark that the stone is altogether distinct and

separate from the image. The metals in the image were all distinct from one another, but they were all parts of the same structure. Not so the stone. It was not only distinct from the various metals in the image, it was distinct from the image itself. It had a separate and independent existence. The stone and the image were contiguous to one another, they are represented as having come into contact, but their contact was that of collision, and not of incorporation. In its nature, origin, and privileges, the Church of Christ is distinct from, and independent of, the kingdoms of this world. The existence of the church is contiguous to that of temporal states and kingdoms. They have many things in common. The same individuals may be the subjects of both. The glory of God, and the good of man, are the common ends of both. Conformity to the will of God is the common rule of both. Notwithstanding, all these points of agreement, the Church of Christ and the kingdoms of this world are so distinct from one another that they never can be incorporated, never can be blended into one society, nor subjected to one legislative head, without imminent danger to the best interests of man, and a total disregard of the authority of God. They differ in their origin. Earthly kingdoms derive their origin from God as the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the world. The Kingdom of Christ derives its origin from God as the God of grace, having been instituted with the view of promoting the salvation of that chosen company whom God, from all eternity, purposed to call, justify, sanctify, and bring to eternal life. They differ in respect of their constitution. The supreme power of administration in earthly states is placed in human hands; the supreme power of administration in the church is placed in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no Divinely-given code of civil law, and, therefore, every temporal state possesses a power of legislation. It has authority to make, repeal, and modify its laws; and in so doing it is limited only by the obligation of making them in all moral respects conformable to the will of God, so far as known. Neither is there a Divinely-given form of civil government. While the constitutions of other societies originate in human wisdom, and may lawfully be altered by the sagacity or the taste of man, the constitution of the church, having emanated from Christ's will, and bearing on all its parts the impress of His authority, is unchangeable by man. Every alteration is a defection; every change of doctrine is an error; every deviation from the simplicity of instituted worship is a step towards superstition; every change in government and discipline is a movement either towards anarchy or despotism. The Kingdom of Christ also differs from all earthly kingdoms in the end for which it was erected. The special end of civil government is to promote the temporal welfare of men; the special end of the church is to promote their spiritual welfare. A second thing deserving of notice respecting the stone is the statement that it was "cut out of the mountain without hands." To understand the meaning of this let us reflect that there is no principle more deeply laid in the human intellect than this, that every effect must have a cause. When, therefore, it is said that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, this intimates that the kingdom which the stone symbolizes was to be erected in the world by supernatural influence. This is the meaning attached to the symbol by Daniel himself. "In the days of those kings the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom." This does not mean that the kingdom prefigured by the stone would be set up in the world altogether without the use of outward instrumentality, but simply that the mode of its erection would be such as to demonstrate "that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of man." Go back to the days of the apostles and contemplate the mighty fabric of ancient heathenism. It was congenial in itself to corrupt nature, it was hallowed by the veneration of ages, its roots were struck through all the framework of society, it was ramparted around by the terror of authority and the pride of erudition, by the emperor's sword and the philosopher's pen. From the experience of all the ages that had gone before, the inference might have appeared to be warranted that this system would continue until it was subverted by some great political convulsion. "For, pass over the isles of Chittim and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?" With Christianity, however, a new era dawned on the human race. The avowed design of it was to overthrow all the systems of religion then existing among mankind. Who that contemplated its apparent resources could have supposed that it would succeed. All power, all passions, all interests, all prejudices, all kindreds and classes of men, Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, were opposed to the spread of the gospel. To meet this formidable array it had nothing but seeming weakness. Its author was publicly crucified as a malefactor, its apostles were fishermen, its adherents were poor, its doctrines were humbling, its precepts were at war with human corruption, its privileges were purely spiritual, its rewards lay beyond the present life. The entrance to such a religion was by the gate of self-denial. In this triumph of weakness over power, of persecuted truth over fondly cherished errors, in the grandeur of the result,

compared with the unlikeliness of the original instrument, we discern an effect, to produce which the seeming cause is inadequate, and, therefore, we must admit of apostolic Christianity, that it was "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands." In like manner it could be shown that all the living spiritual churches of Christ upon the earth are like stones cut out of the mountain without hands. They have been placed in the situation they presently occupy by the leadings of Providence rather than by any pre-conceived plan or voluntary choice of their own. The stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands is farther represented as coming into collision with the image. Though it is here predicted that the image will be subverted by the stone, we are not warranted from this to infer that Christ's Kingdom is hostile to the kingdoms of this world. Our Lord, when on earth, yielded obedience to the Roman government, and hath commanded His disciples, after His own example, to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." We ought also to remember that Christ's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and that "the weapons of her warfare are not carnal but spiritual." Far be it, therefore, from us to suppose that the church will have recourse to violent means for the subversion of the civil governments now existing. The stone, as we have already seen, signifies the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ under the New Testament dispensation. But before the erection of Christ's Kingdom, the Babylonian, the Persian, and the Macedonian empires had been already destroyed. Seeing these empires were overturned before the stone was in existence, it could have no direct and positive agency in their subversion. It can, therefore, only be said of these empires that they were destroyed by the stone, in the sense that they were destroyed for the stone—that they were subverted by an all-wise Providence in order to prepare the world for the erection of the church. This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that all these empires are represented as being destroyed at once—whereas, nearly a thousand years intervened between the overthrow of Babylon and the overthrow of Rome. This shows that the subversion of these empires, though accomplished by various instruments, and in ages remote from one another, was done for the same end, was part of the same work. It shows that they were all overthrown to make way for the kingdom of the stone. Their overthrow took place at different times, but it was for the same end. It was for the church that each of them rose, and for the church that each of them fell. It gives us a striking view of the unity and harmony of Divine providence. It shows us that the world does not move at random. It shows us that God has a definite end in view in His government of the human race. That end is the erection of Messiah's Kingdom. This is the centre in which all the lines of Providence meet. Having destroyed the image, the stone is represented as becoming a great mountain that filled the whole earth. Some commentators make a distinction between the empire of the stone and the empire of the mountain. When the Kingdom of Christ is spoken of as first a stone and then a great mountain, this conveys the same idea as the Saviour did when He compared it to "a little leaven" that in due time leavened the whole lump. It is also the same as the idea conveyed by the parable of the mustard seed, which, from the smallest of seeds, gradually expanded into the mightiest of trees. And when the stone is said to become a mountain, and fill the whole earth, this clearly intimates that Christianity will yet be universally disseminated. This, however, is not all. If a mountain were to fill the whole earth, this would be like a new earth taking the place of the old. And Christianity will not only be universally diffused, she will become the predominating influence in our world. In no period, in no place, has Christianity been accounted the predominating power. Politics have always had the ascendancy of Christianity. We cannot point to an era in which the principles of the Bible were practically recognised as the supreme law of nations. But when the image of anti-Christian civil government has been destroyed, the stone will then take the place of the gold, the silver, the brass, and the iron. Christianity will then be the predominating power. Politics will be subordinated to religion. When we think of the subversion of the present civil governments, and that in all likelihood this will be by violence, the prospect is gloomy, but there is brightness beyond. If the image be destroyed, it is because the stone is to fill the earth. This will be a great benefit to mankind—first, because it will be the end of anti-Christian governments; secondly, because it will be the means of abolishing tyranny, oppression, slavery, and war, by which the world has been scourged since the dawn of time; thirdly, because the triumph of Christianity will be the ruin of superstition. And the believers of that time will tower in spiritual stature above those of every former age. Religion will have that place that the world has now, for the stone will occupy the place of the image. And what saints will they be who are as devoted to God as we are to mammon—who are as concerned about the soul as we are about the body. But Christians are required to make efforts for the extension of the church. The stone is here spoken of as possessing an inward principle of vitality, by virtue of which

it grew and became a great mountain. This principle of vitality is nothing else than the grace of God in the hearts of the true members of the church. This is an aggressive principle. No sooner is it implanted in the soul than it begins to war with corruption, and it will carry on that conflict until innate depravity shall be completely subdued. Fed by gracious supplies from above, and transmitted from one generation of the faithful to another, it will never cease to strive till the whole world is Christianised, and civilised, and saved. The want of this aggressive spirit has been the great sin of the church in past ages. Concerning this kingdom, it is farther said that "it shall never be left to another people, but shall endure for ever." Other thrones may fall, but "to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Other crowns may be cast to the ground, but Immanuel's crown will flourish. (*J. White.*) *The Stone and the Image*:—The image was the type of great civilizations. The image has long since crumbled away, but the kingdom cut out by the God of Heaven shall stand for ever. The Divine must supplant the human. Christ supplants Satan; righteousness supplants sin. Christianity cannot be explained by pure reason. It is not the product of human thought and creation. It comes with the stamp of Divinity on it, a Divine, God-given religion. Notice the destructive and aggressive character of the religion of Christ. Christianity entered upon a spiritual warfare against giant errors. It met the world with new ideas of good, of morality, of purity, and political right. The history of the Christian Church is the history of the greatest miracle of the ages. Christianity reconstructed society. The final triumph of Christianity is prophesied in this text. To live in this age of grand opportunities is a most precious privilege. (*Frank W. Bristol, D.D.*) *The Stone that Smote the Image*:—Revolutions among nations are insignificant parts of the vast and wonderful scheme of Divine Providence by which the Almighty is carrying out His own gracious purposes and plans. According to Daniel's prophecy, before the four kingdoms had all passed away the God of Heaven was to set up His throne on earth, which could never be shaken nor removed. As a fact of history, the first part of this prediction was exactly accomplished; and the remainder is now, in course of fulfilment. Our Saviour appeared in Judæa as the Babe of Bethlehem while Augustus ruled the Roman empire, and within fifty years His Gospel had been preached in all the world then known. How was this new kingdom to gain a foothold in the world, and how keep its influence and power? Surely not by force of arms, as other empires had been built up. Not by dealing with philosophical subtleties. The Eternal Son returned to the throne of His glory in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit came down to guide and bless the church until the final judgment shall close her toils and trials. The work went on so silently and gradually that its advance was scarcely noticed. From Jerusalem, as a common centre, Christianity went forth into the heart of a polished and learned world, and laid the wholesome restraints of its righteous laws upon a corrupt and self-indulgent age. By its meek and peaceful doctrines it gloriously triumphed over the force of habit, the craft of an impure religion, the policy of legislators, the genius of poets and philosophers, the charm of oracles and prodigies, the shafts of ridicule, and the fierceness of bloody persecution. Not only did the religion of Jesus spread throughout Asia and Europe, but the midnight gloom of Africa was brightened by its silver beams, and apostolic hands unfurled its banner on the distant shores of Britain. The Almighty has made no covenant that any human institution shall endure; but He has pledged His own word for the perpetuity of His Church. (*John N. Norton.*) *Progressive Movements*:—Here is movement; more, here is advance; here is human history epitomized. Each age is a product and a producer. The ancient geological periods built foundations on which the human age could build. So intellectually and morally. 1. Time past is a progressive revelation of God and right and duty. Divine truth comes in ever widening circles. In the earlier Scripture it is the physical attributes of God and the temporal blessings of obedience which are the more prominently presented, but, as the generations pass, this gradually passes, until in the time of Christ it is the spiritual attributes and the eternal rewards which occupy a larger place in Jewish thoughts. Here is advance. The Bible itself is a progressive development of Christian truth. Nor was the advance movement restricted to one nation. History, in the large view, is a record of the enlightening and bettering of men. The progress is along three lines: the unfolding of religious truth, the comprehension and reception of it, and the order and movement of events. 2. The cost of this progress. Every leader in a good cause has to suffer at the hands of those who have not accepted his advance ground. Heretics they are of yesterday, and canonised saints of to-day. But martyrdom means progress. (*Martin Post.*) *The Succession of Kingdoms*:—1. Daniel regarded the dream as a communication from God. It was common for the Almighty to communicate with men in this way (*Job. xxxiii. 15—17; Num. xii. 6*). Most frequently "a dream cometh through the multitude of business" (*Eccles. v. 3*); yet there are instances in which we have reason to believe that God does still interpose to instruct,

warn, and admonish people through the agency of dreams. We are not to look for illumination in this way where we have the Holy Scriptures to guide us; neither are we to believe or follow our dreams in anything contrary to God's written word. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar the dream was special, and from the Lord. And it is not incongruous that a universal monarch, in the highest glory of the world's original kingdom, should be the veer of the course and end of all secular dominion, particularly when earnestly concerned about the matter. 2. Daniel regarded this dream as very momentous. When it was made known to him he broke into exultant adoration, not so much because he was the honoured servant to whom it was revealed, as for what it signified. It showed such a majesty above all the majesty of earth, such a plan in the course of all human governments and dominions, and such a power to handle and order all the potencies of time, that his soul was ready to break away from him when the mighty showing flashed upon his understanding. It set every emotion and energy within him on fire. 3. The dream gives an outline of the history and destiny of all earthly dominion, from Nebuchadnezzar to the end of the present world, and for ever. The several metals of which the great image was composed designated a succession of universal empires. The head was "fine gold," and Nebuchadnezzar was this head of gold. Babylon was the first and greatest of kingdoms. The breast and shoulders and arms of this image were of silver. This represents the comparatively inferior empire of the Medes and Persians, which stood for about two hundred years. It is chiefly interesting for the personality of Cyrus, its founder. The abdomen and thighs of the image were of brass; this represented the Græco-Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great. The image had legs, feet, and toes. These were of iron, except the toes. This represents the Roman power. Since the Roman there has been no universal empire. 4. In this foreshowing of the succession of earthly administration there is a continuous deterioration from the beginning to the end. Political economists and statesmen claim that the world has been growing in wisdom and excellence through all the ages. And in some respects there has been growth. But with all, in God's estimate, there has been a never-ceasing downwardness, depreciation, and tendency toward the earth out of which man was taken. It is the whole history of the world that is comprehended in this vision. When we find in this book the whole political and social history of our world grandly and truly sketched, just as it has turned out from that time to this living present, how can we construe it except upon the doctrine alleged by the prophet, that it was revealed to him from the Almighty and all-knowing One. Daniel tells us that God, the living God, the God who rules all kingdoms and all history, the God to whose omniscience all things are present, naked and open, the Almighty, revealed these things to him; and the seal to his assertion is inimitably stamped upon all the records of the succeeding ages. There is a God in history, and He hath prophets whom He hath sent to speak His word and will. These living oracles are verily from Him. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 43. **But they shall not cleave one to another.**—*The Law of Unity*:—There is a law of unity, of brotherhood or consolidation. Mechanical association has nothing to do with true unity. Men may sit side by side in the same church and yet have a universe between them. Men may handle the same psalm-book and sing the same words without worshipping the same God. Brotherhood is a question of the soul. We are new creatures, and, therefore, we have new relationships in Christ Jesus. At first, of course, the only possible relationship was a relationship of blood; man and man stood together in a certain sequence; but Jesus Christ came to alter all that; it does not follow that your father according to the flesh is now your father at all, and as for your brothers, they may be the greatest strangers to you on the face of this earth; the great relationship now is a Christian one. We are in relation to one another what we are at the Cross of Christ. The man who is on the Cross is not one with the man who never was crucified with Christ. This is a great mystery, and it goes dead against the first instincts of nature, which must be killed one by one before we can understand the mystery of the new life, the blessed mystery of the new kinship. Thanks be unto God, it is not necessary that a man's father should cease to occupy the paternal relationship; the father and the child may both be crucified with Christ, and thus belong doubly to each other. Nor are we to throw off old relationships frivolously and Pharisaically, saying, I am now a Christian, and, therefore, I can hold no consort with those of my own household who are not Christians. We must prove our Christianity by seeking to make other people Christians; we must evangelize at home. Compromise is never strong. Carry this law fearlessly through and through life. Do not marry into strange faiths, or into no faith. If you are a Christian soul, and shall wilfully marry one who is not a follower of Christ, do not be surprised if vengeance suffer you not to escape. It would be strange, indeed, beyond all reason and all calculation if in this line only law failed. If men could set

up any compacts they pleased in life, and evade the law, why there would be one great province of creation left untended, unwatched, undirected by the God and Father of men. Apply the doctrine also to business. You, a Christian business man, cannot keep a partner to tell the lies of the business whilst you attend to all the religious ceremonies; ye cannot serve God and mammon. Clean the house, suffer loss, but let the morsel of bread that remains be sweet, because it is the bread of honesty. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 44. **Shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom.**—*The Establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.*—The stone being cut out of the mountain without hands, is a phrase used in Scripture to convey to us the idea of spirituality; as, for instance, our present body represented as “the earthly house of this tabernacle,” it is material; but the house in the heavens is “a house not made with hands,” that is spiritual. The cutting out of the stone without hands marks, I apprehend, the spirituality of the kingdom. The material is very unpromising, when compared with the reality. Though the stone is represented here as possessing mighty power, it does not possess that from any inherent property which it possesses, but from the vigour of the arm by which it is employed. The material, too, is utterly contemptible when compared with the others; it is indeed contemptible in the eyes of those who are dazzled with the gold, the silver, the brass, and iron. It is intended by the idea coming under the figure of a stone to be contemptible and despicable; yet to be possessed of such a power as to break the image in pieces. You will look, in the first place, at the circumstances of the increase, which is here predicted. The stone came from the mountain—either impelled through the air by an invisible hand or rolling along the plain—smiting the feet of the image, and destroying it; and then the stone gradually increased. Now, I think, the idea here is, gradual advancement. It did not suddenly start up and fill the whole earth; but I apprehend there is the idea of gradual increase. I do not know that in the dream that increase was represented as always advancing with the same rapidity. I do not know whether it was or was not, very likely it was not; and ere it filled the whole earth its increase might be sometimes gradual, and sometimes more rapid. But the idea presented to our attention is, the ultimate effect of the extent of that increase. Then there is its ultimate extent. It increased and increased until it filled the whole earth. I do not know how that was represented in the dream, but certainly the impression was conveyed to the mind of the man to whom God, by this figure, was setting forth what was to come to pass in the latter days. The ultimate extent of the kingdom was exhibited by the stone becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth, all other kingdoms and nations being destroyed and superseded, as it were, by it. I do not admit that there is to be such an alteration in the character and form of these kingdoms (God’s Kingdom is in the heart alone) as that there shall be no such things as nations and particular forms of government, or secular societies and confederacies; but, I apprehend, they will be very different sorts of nations to those represented by these metals. Men confederate together generally for the purpose of conquest, or tyranny, or selfishness; for their patriotism is selfishness, and the very profession of liberty among the ancients was the liberty of the few over the many, the liberty of the masters over the slaves. I apprehend, therefore, that though nations will exist to the end of time, yet this spiritual Kingdom of God will co-exist along with them; and it will be the unlimited spiritual reign of truth and piety conveyed to all hearts, operating upon all characters, regulating all movements, private, domestic, social, and public; and thus, while the confederacies of human beings will remain, this will be the grand universal reign of truth, godliness, and peace throughout the whole earth. Then the last idea is its perpetuity. It is to be continued for ever and ever. It is not to be left as these other nations successively were, to other people and other forms of government, or to other secular societies and confederacies; but it is to continue for ever and ever, never to be superseded. Now, I think, we should take this idea along with us; this kingdom that is to continue for ever and ever is to be co-extensive with the present system of things, and will continue also throughout eternity. This kingdom which is to last for ever and ever is that very same kingdom which begins in the stone; the kingdom of the mountain is the kingdom of the stone. We learn that this dispensation of ours, the Gospel dispensation, and the Gospel church, as it now exists, is an ultimate dispensation. It is not a preparatory dispensation; it is not to be superseded; it is not introductory to anything else. It is this very kingdom of the stone that is to last for ever and ever. Two or three observations will suffice on the circumstance of its certainty. The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Wherever you find man’s heart and man’s nature, you find something which Christianity is just adapted to meet; adapted to meet its wants, its capacities, and its aspirings, and to satisfy, direct, and cultivate them aright. There is an adaptation to the mind of every individual, and there is an

adaptation to their external affairs, an adaptation to men existing under any particular form of government that may be set up in the world, to any particular form of secular administration. There is, therefore, a propriety in our indulging the delightful thought that the interpretation of the dream is sure, and that the Gospel shall go on conquering and to conquer, increasing and increasing until it shall fill the whole earth. Then there is another thought which lies on the surface of Scripture, which meets us perpetually, and is of great practical advantage, that although we admit, most unequivocally, the work to be God's, we also admit, unequivocally, the mysteriousness of the movement under, as it were, the omnipotence of God, by which the stone is increased. We admit most unequivocally, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." We admit that God set up the kingdom, that God will carry it on, and that God will complete it; and we delight in thus referring everything to God. But we must never forget that God in his sovereignty, his condescension, and his benevolence, has determined that this shall be accomplished by human instrumentality. God could very easily do without us, He could convert the world without preachers; He could convert the world without Bibles; He could edify the church without the recurrence of Sabbaths and ordinances. God does not need to have His omnipotence aided (the very term is absurd) by your instrumentality. But God has chosen—and there is sovereignty, and condescension, and privilege, and kindness towards us in the very choice—to effect and fulfil His purposes by the instrumentality of His church. God is present, positively and personally present, in every scene of idolatry. God is positively present in every heathen temple; He is present at every idolatrous festival; He is actually present in the very midst of the worshippers of all man's absurd and ridiculous superstitions. Aye, He is in the presence of His whole church; He is observing them, and His eye is upon them all; He is listening to their insults, observing their blasphemies, their fanaticism, their absurdity, and yet He does not put forth directly His power to enlighten, to convert, to sanctify, and to make them all that He could delight in. But He could do that, and why does He not do it? Let us remember always that human instrumentality is necessary in order that the little stone may become a mountain, and fill the whole earth. Now, why has not the stone grown larger? Why does it not fill the whole earth? A great many reasons may be found, some of which we have to refer to the Divine sovereignty, to the secret things that belong to God. But there are other things that belong to us, and causes to which we ought to give the most earnest heed. For my part, I have no hesitation at all about saying that I think the connection, alliance, and confederacy, unnatural and improper friendship of the church with the world has been a great obstacle in the past ages of Christianity, and in the present, to the going forth of God's chariot in all its freedom and in all its power. Oh, no, the stone was cut out without hands. The Christian Church, before it was encumbered with wealth, went on with God in the midst of her, and the shout of a king accompanied her; and it will do so again! We exult in the thought—we feel confident in it. This great and delightful object has been impeded by the oblivion of the church. The church forgot both the duty and the privilege of the work; she soon forgot when she fell into luxury and ease the solemn obligation resting upon her from Christ, that so long as there was a corner of the earth in which there was not a preacher the command remained to be fulfilled—"Go into all the earth, and preach the Gospel to every creature." We are not alive to the fulness and the intensity of this obligation yet. We want our sensibilities refined in order that we may perceive all the goodness of God towards us, in making the conversion of the world to rest upon the church. It will be well, then, to remember that the Gospel dispensation is here spoken of under the idea of a kingdom—the kingdom of God, setting up a kingdom. But if you and I are true Christians, as we profess to be, we are subjects of the Kingdom of God. A kingdom implies laws, authority, duty, respect, reverence for the government under which we live, under which we act, and by which we are protected. Let us feel that, and let us act as obedient, devoted, humble, faithful subjects of Him who is the Head and King of that government under which we live, and by which we are protected. There is something delightful both in thinking that we are under the government of God as subjects and that we have the Kingdom of God within us to give us vigour for the work of Christ. Then I think we may feel from this subject that we need have no fears about the ultimate realisation of the intentions of God, all our fear ought to be with respect to ourselves; our fear should be, whether we are faithful to our trust, faithful to our God, faithful to our country, faithful to our church, faithful to the world, faithful to posterity. (T. Binney, D.D.)

On the Nature and Extent of the Kingdom of Christ:—I. We here observe that THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST NOT ONLY IS TO CONTINUE, BUT IS TO EXIST IN A STATE OF PROGRESS TO FARTHER DOMINION; STRUGGLING WITH ENEMIES, BUT STILL PREVAILING. It is in a progressive manner that the ordinary plans of Providence are, in most cases, unfolded and

accomplished. Almost all the objects around us pass through various states before they arrive at their full maturity and perfection. The same rule of progress is also generally followed, not only in regard to the nature, but the extent of the blessings. The discoveries, for example, of science and learning are at first only known to a few individuals. They afterwards extend to neighbouring communities and nations. From one nation they are communicated to another, and at last, in various degrees of fulness and excellence, they spread throughout the world, and affect the general condition and character of mankind. The Kingdom of Heaven is represented as carrying on, in a similar manner, its operations, and accomplishing its grand designs. It exists in various states of power and extent. Its blessings are experienced in various degrees of fulness and excellence, in different quarters and ages of the world; and the number of its true subjects are seen varying even among the same people, in different periods, during its progress to full glory and universal dominion. We cannot explain all the reasons for this part of the Divine procedure. But whatever difficulties may seem to our short-sighted eyes attending it, you will observe they are not confined to the dispensation of the Gospel; they attend the whole plan of Providence in the communication of its blessings. We are very ignorant of the means which are best for securing most extensively, and most lastingly, the ends of the Divine government. And this method of procedure may be found at the termination of the mighty and complicated plan, to have been the most effectual in producing on the whole, and in the greatest extent and degree, that excellence, and that happiness, which are suited to rational and immortal beings. It is obvious, also, that the blessings of Christ's kingdom, being of a spiritual order, the knowledge which it conveys, and subjection of the heart which it requires, necessarily suppose that it may be neglected, perverted, and abused. Nay, the nature and design of the gospel must lead to the expectation that for some period, and on many occasions, it must struggle with difficulties and meet with much opposition. The obstinacy of ignorance; the slavery and errors of superstition; and all the perverted passions, depraved habits, and predominant inclinations of our corrupted race—all of them are opposed to the doctrines, spirit, and precepts of Christianity. In this contest betwixt the empire of darkness and of light, trial is made of the spirits of all flesh. The subjects of the Kingdom of God are trained, and sanctified, and perfected under the Captain of their salvation. The Church of Christ is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The principle of renovation is infused into the corrupt mass; and by the direction and power of God it will spread throughout the world its heavenly influence. Amidst all the disorders and ragings of the nations, the Son of God is pursuing, with undeviating purpose, His mighty plan; nor will He cease from His great undertaking till ignorance and error yield before Him. And thousands, and tens of thousands, are now standing before the throne, whom Jesus hath redeemed, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people. II. But from this mixed scene of opposition and success, which we now contemplate, LET US TURN TO THE VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, BRINGING ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD UNDER ITS POWER; and Gentile and Jew of every country acknowledging His sway, and experiencing the blessings of His reign. The Gospel has nothing in it of a local and temporary nature, and is fitted and destined for all nations, and for all ages. In the accomplishment of this great dispensation of grace, we thus contemplate the downfall of every system which exalteth itself against Christ, and the universal prevalence of that knowledge which is in Him. In the contemplation of this great renovation, the prophets break forth into strains of rapture, and in beautiful and affecting imagery, foretell its glory and its blessedness. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break forth, and streams in the desert. As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Were we to confine our attention to those effects of the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ, on the temporal condition of mankind, we should still see a prospect so sublime, a change and amelioration so great, as should awaken our gratitude and admiration. The depravity and vices of men are the chief causes of the disorders which disturb the world, and lay it waste in every quarter. They have ruined the happiness of our race; they have, in various ways, brought misery even on the inferior beings with whom we are connected. Every mean of amelioration ought to be valued and employed; but never, my brethren, let it be forgotten that no mean will avail for our benefit which is not accompanied with a change and improvement in our moral and spiritual character—which does not tend to rescue us from the power of sinful passions and indulgencies. The Gospel presents the amelioration of mankind in connection with the only method by

which that amelioration can be accomplished—the renovation and improvement of the character. The design of the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ is directed chiefly and ultimately to the salvation and eternal happiness of men. To these all other objects are subordinate and subservient; and faith in the Saviour is the great mean by which His power effectually operates for their accomplishment. In contemplating the progress and power of the Gospel, we contemplate the increasing numbers of our fallen race, delivered from their lost condition, received into the families of God, and raised to the privileges and joys of His children. How worthy are such views to engage your chief affections and your highest admiration! Again, the views which we have been considering should guard against security, and teach us that the progress and final triumph of the Messiah's Kingdom do not prevent the apostasy and the rejection both of individuals and nations calling themselves Christians. But chiefly, and lastly, I observe that we learn from those views the way by which we shall promote most effectually the glory of God and happiness of man. It is by promoting the knowledge of the Gospel, and bringing the minds of men under the dominion of the Son of God. The source of misery is sin, and until Christian knowledge, and Christian holiness, be rendered prevalent among mankind, vain and ineffectual will be every mean to promote their happiness. Let every man do good as God has given him the opportunity—and in his own sphere, and among those over whom his influence extends, promote the cause of Christ's Kingdom and oppose abounding iniquity. (*S. MacGill, D.D.*) *Christianity as a World-Power*:—"A dream, only a dream," is likely to be the mocking language of the so-called practical men of the world, who regard it as an evidence of superior sanity to trust only facts and figures, when this immortal declaration is read in their hearing. True, in the visions of night royal Nebuchadnezzar had seen a gleaming colossus of different metals, not unlike the huge colossi guarding his own palace gates, which had been smitten by the mysterious fragment of rock cut from a mountain without hands, and which Daniel had interpreted in the passage before us. And what then? Are all such disclosures necessarily unworthy of credence? Was not Abimelech Divinely guided through a dream? Was not the immediate future of Egypt accurately foreshown to Pharaoh through the same means? Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions relate the accomplishment of various events that were anticipated in sleep. Thus Gyges, King of Lydia, had been admonished to enter on an alliance with Assurbanipal; and by this method Egypt had been encouraged to unite against the Assyrians. Likewise in Persian history, rulers, such as Afrasiab and Xerxes, were warned and directed when their senses were wrapped in slumber, and the scenes uncurtained were faithful counterparts of approaching realities. And what are all the successes of our modern era, all the conquests over nature, all the triumphs over tyranny, all the vindications of human rights, but the fulfilment of dreams dreamed by saints and sages, poets and philosophers, for the announcement of which they were derided and cursed, were shut up in prison and thrust out of life? My own opinion is, as far as chronology is concerned, that we are taught that during the rise and fall of ancient nations God was cutting out of the mountains a stone, was setting up a kingdom, and is still setting up a kingdom, which, in the fulness of time, shall prevail over all empires and shall fill the entire earth. But I am inclined to believe that the prime intention of the writer was not so much to fix times and seasons as to bring into relief the eternal antagonisms that exist between what the mighty image represents and what the stone denotes; and to create a just conception of the nature and history of Christianity as a world-power. The originality of Christianity as a world-power is worthy of serious thought. 1. This originality appears in the source of its inspiration. Whoever reads carefully the New Testament must have observed the prominence assigned the Holy Spirit. His presence and potency constitute likewise the distinguishing excellency of our faith. With the day of Pentecost came His advent and His incarnation in the church. Revivals of religion are not fresh processions of the Comforter from the Unseen. They are distinct manifestations of what is the perennial possession of God's people. There are times when the tides of the sea rise higher, but we are not to suppose that there has been a new or larger supply of water, only a peculiar concentration and elevation. So revivals are only higher tides, more over-mastering demonstrations of power, and greater exhibitions of fervency; they are not a new descent or coming of the Paraclete. They are often needed, and are needed now, to recall the church to the source of her inspiration. Political world-powers are impelled onward, sometimes by lust of conquest, sometimes by desire for gain, sometimes by glory, or by what they vaguely term "manifest destiny." They are at times governed by the spirit of the Chauvinist, of the French soldier, who could not conceive of anything wrong in the great Napoleon; and thus become fatuous idolaters of country and party. Frequently they are dominated by a Machiavellianism, which seeks, as Richelieu stated, to preserve the unofficial conscience separated from the state conscience, and which forms the habit of acting indirectly

and crookedly so that nothing can be done without deception. Their statesmen are often incapable of the great thoughts which are necessary to precede great actions, and listen with ear to the ground for the whisperings of the crowd; or they are unpardonably indifferent to the needs of the people, and betray them when concentrated wealth demands the sacrifice and offers its dirty thirty pieces of silver. And whenever churches, in the remotest degree, approximate to such motives and methods, they lose their unique character. Then their originality is obscured, and the world treats them as they deserve, as mere lath and plaster. The Kingdom of Christ should always be moved from within, from the impulses of the Spirit who hath descended from above. Throughout the New Testament, from the birth of Christ to the separating of Paul and Barnabas to the ministry of missions, the Holy Spirit is the chief actor. Nothing is more impressive in the post-resurrection life of our Lord than His constant breathing of the Spirit on His followers. Without Him Pentecost would have been impossible, and without Him there would have been no adequate momentum toward the evangelisation of Samaria and the regions beyond. Almost every departure in new and aggressive work has been preceded by a spiritual quickening somewhere. It was so when the great missionary organisations came into being. They were not called into existence by human ingenuity to serve as organs for the work of the Holy Spirit; they were themselves begotten by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, I fear, we forget this. Sometimes we approach the work of the kingdom as though it were identical with that of the world. And soon we are tempted to boast that we administer churches and missions as leading business men manage business. In a sense this is very well; but after all, the kingdom cannot be administered merely as a vast corporation. Indeed, were this ideal paramount, corporations being what they are to-day in fact and in the popular estimate, the sympathies and prayers of the Christian masses would speedily be detached from the cause of Christ. No; it must seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit, to follow His leadings, yield to His inspirations, and become more and more a pliant instrument in His hand; and where this is done, the unique glory by which its Founder designed it to be for evermore distinguished will be displayed and recognised. 2. The originality of Christianity also appears in the power of its assimilation. Usually national types are fixed and definite. It is not an easy thing to overcome them, and after generations of intermarriages they are not always obliterated. What has been accomplished to render homogeneous this heterogeneous mass has been largely the work of the evangelical faith. That faith is like a magnificent furnace in which the representatives of various nationalities are melted down, fused, and are made capable of being moulded. What it has wrought in Fiji, in Polynesia, in Burma, in China, and Japan would have been impossible if Christianity were not wonderfully adapted to all races and tribes, the lowest and the highest. If the day ever comes when differences shall disappear and humanity be as one, it will be in consequence of the transforming grace of the Spirit. This religion alone seems to be gifted with the universal quality. It is broad enough, it is wide enough, it is deep enough. It knows the needs of the common heart of man. In it kings and princes find comfort, and in it barbarians and outcasts find hope. To confer its blessings it asks no man of what house, family, or clime he comes. His needs are recognised, and the provision is sufficient and abundant. This cannot be said of Hinduism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, and the rest. However numerous their adherents, these creeds nevertheless are provincial and narrow in their scope. They are only accepted by kindred peoples; and the more they are known the less charm they have for the European and American. By this test, if their claims are judged, they must yield to the superior merit of Christianity. 3. The originality of Christianity appears in the benevolence of its aspirations. This cannot be affirmed of worldly empires of the Babylonian or Roman type. Doubtless some among them in our day justify their interference in the affairs of inferior races on the ground that they would do them good. But every competent judge perceives that all this is reversed in the case of Christianity. Wherever she goes she blesses, and in pagan lands it is only her spirit and influence which mitigate the evils of foreign occupation. Sir Herbert Edwardes testified years since, as the result of his observations in the East: "That secular education and civilization will ever regenerate a nation I do not believe; as an able missionary once said, 'He alone can make a new nation who can form a new man.'" In the same direction I quote Mr. Hawthorne: "The only salvation of India, even from an economic point of view . . . is its Christianisation." And with him the Hon. Mr. Bryce evidently agrees, for he is quoted as saying that the Indian Empire could not last unless it were Christianised, and that nothing else can hold it together. Captain Mahan likewise perceives a peril in bringing together the East and the West on the basis of common material advantages without a correspondence in spiritual ideals. Men like Schwartz, Livingstone, Carey, and Ashmore are the real saviours of pagan lands. When their disinterested labours are understood, a new

and regenerating idea begins to dawn and an uplift is experienced. Here lies the secret of Christian power. Religion asks for no man's silver and gold, attempts not to rob him of his wealth, brings to bear on him no violence, does not shoot down his children or burn his villages; and the method is so novel, the intent so unselfish, that the hearts of multitudes are moved to repentance and faith. Sovereignty means right, authority, chieftaincy; the right to subdue, overcome, and sweep away whatever wrongfully is arrayed against it. But Christianity has no authority to fall on, to crush and annihilate by sheer force what she may regard as antagonistic to her reign. She is not permitted to appeal to the sword. Christ Himself decreed that the servants of the kingdom should not fight. They were not authorised to invoke the weapons of war for the advancement of the Cross. This inhibition likewise forbids them to encourage others, the secular powers, for instance, to invade distant lands, seizing them and occupying them for the sake of Christian evangelisation. Then the paucity of language appears again in the dream when the idea is suggested that these various empires are so blotted out as to obliterate their inhabitants, and that all human governments are to be supplanted by the church. Interpreting Scripture by Scripture, and symbols by common sense, I understand the action of the stone in falling on the huge form to denote the right of the church to efface and expunge everything in the State that is ungodly, unrighteous, and unjust, so that the actual administration of affairs will come to harmonise with her ideals. In other words, she is to incarnate herself in human society and in all of its mechanism, whether it be the machinery of government, of education, of commerce, or industry. She is not to remain for ever outside, a something distinct from the secular; but she is to take possession of it, transform it, become its very soul, and direct all of its movements from within. As Christianity is not to take the sword, the expression and action of her sovereignty must be moral; and we are to learn from the scene before us that this exceeds all other weapons in potency. We are all slow to learn this truth. And yet not an age passes without being demonstrated anew. A nation rushes into speculations which imperil industry, and encourages business methods which are pernicious, and dazzled by her successes sneers at the conservatives and the moralists. But the day of judgment comes. Some stone—the hard, inexorable law of rectitude asserts itself—falls on the entire mass of chicane and deceit, and collapse follows. It ought also to be noted that these indications which are making for the final triumph of Christianity are usually characterised by suddenness and occasionally even by violence. This violence is the natural overflow of the moral principles which have been generated through religion in the volcanic soul of humanity. The humiliation of Spain is a case in point. The Reformation under Luther was another illustration of what we should learn from this theme. What a crash it was? How unexpected though inevitable? What cruelty and horror it occasioned. And yet what marvellous progress it inspired. It was blowing up the barrier that impeded freedom of thought and the advance of civilization. Thus Christianity goes on demonstrating the sovereignty of the ethical and spiritual over the political and the commercial, developing moral crises in which her own influence comes to be recognised as potent. And it is questionable whether any vast upheaval has occurred since the birth of Christ which has not been in some real sense the result of His teachings and has not contributed to their wider dissemination. This I hold to be alike true of the convulsions that crushed the Roman Empire, of the agitations and struggles that wrecked the dominance of feudalism, of the catastrophes that characterised the French Revolution, and of all the strange and violent antagonisms which have led to the unity of Italy and to the conquest of the Soudan. But it may be asked, Is there to be a final and widespread crisis involving, not isolated nations, but the existing civil order everywhere, both east and west, among civilized and barbarous people alike? The probabilities point in that direction; and the Scriptures seem to be decisively on its side. "Sun and moon are to be darkened, the stars of heaven are to fall before the great and notable day of the Lord." Armageddon precedes the millennium. Scenes of conflict and anguish are announced as opening the way to the final Gospel triumph. Anyone can see the utter impossibility of realising the reign of righteousness under present social and political conditions, whether in America or Europe, in lands civilized or lands blighted by heathenism. And there seems to be a growing consciousness that something critical is about to take place, because it ought to take place; and governments and leaders are apprehensive lest they should go down in the crash. They are voting more cannon, new explosives, fresh levies, stronger fortifications, and are encouraging inventors to devise novel means of destruction; but they are not adopting the true defence—"righteousness exalteth a nation"; "God is our refuge, a present help in time of trouble." And yet with all their expenditures and preparations they are not at ease. "The hearts of the nations are failing them for fear." Moreover, in all these lands, grave solicitude is felt regarding social inequalities. The control of

business is rapidly passing through trusts into the hands of relatively a few chieftains in America, and the result is that opportunities for employment are diminishing, not increasing. Anyone can see that things cannot continue as they are. The social Vesuvius is already in a turmoil, and its fires and lava cannot be eternally suppressed. A crisis is inevitable. Some of the most passionless students of our times perceive the imminence of the danger. They work out this result as coolly and scientifically as a mariner works out his reckoning, and as deliberately as the weather bureau forecasts the atmospheric changes. With them it is not a question of feeling and sentiment, but of strict reasoning and logic. Given rapaciousness, heartlessness, and cold-blooded selfishness on the part of employers as the major premise in the social syllogism, and discontent, discouragement, and the ever-increasing sense of wrong on the part of the employed as the minor, and the outcome can hardly be anything else than chaos, though it may be chaos leading to a new industrial creation. I know that the taunt will not be lacking that I am preaching pessimism. No, I am an optimist and proclaiming optimism. Were I a pessimist, I should now be declaring that the image seen by Daniel's sovereign never could be destroyed; and that it would go on trampling beneath its feet of iron and clay—a mixture of militarism and materialism—the best hopes of humanity. But I have no such doleful message to deliver. My song is that of the lark; I herald the day, not the night; but I dare not hide from myself the fact that night precedes the day. "The stone which the builders rejected," ay, "the stone cut out of the mountains," shall finally bring to an end all of these mischievous evils, and shall "fill the whole earth." But not without a scene of conflict and experiences of sharp agony. Let us hope and pray that it may be without anarchical riots, incendiary outbreaks, and bloodshed, and may accomplish itself in one of those wonderful upheavals wrought by the patient determination of free peoples, who, enlightened by the Gospel, by their principles and convictions expressed at the polls, will bring down the lofty and exalt the lowly. Thus it may be; but however the result shall be accomplished, the spirit that shall compass it, that antagonises everything wrong at home or abroad, has been engendered by Christ's Kingdom, and the ultimate deliverance will furnish the crowning evidence of its victorious sovereignty. The responsibility of Christianity as a world-power must now claim our attention, or this discussion would fail of its purpose. The prophet tells us that in the days of the ancient kings God set up a kingdom. To me the beginnings of this creation antedate the appearance of Christ. Every prediction that announced it, every psalm that chanted its glories, and every providence that prepared the world for its manifestations, were as the digging of foundations; or, better still, as the felling of timber in the forests, and the disinterring of rocks in the quarry for the construction of this everlasting sanctuary. And I believe that still the God of Heaven is setting up a kingdom. Generals and soldiers are lauded and rewarded as the builders of empires; but the missionaries and evangelists, with all the lowly souls that are helping in their enterprise, are usually ignored or are misunderstood by society that still walks by the light of its carnal vision. And yet these obscure labourers are building up a kingdom that shall not be moved, and are establishing a world-power whose beneficence and beauty transcends the highest excellencies of all earthly imperialisms. May I not remind you by what God has already wrought through His people that there is a responsibility resting on the kingdom to yet further fall in with His plans, and to co-ordinate itself to His Spirit? If the claims of humanity can appropriately be pressed home on the conscience of a secular power, how much more are they entitled to weight by the spiritual. Responsibility is an attribute of sovereignty. Do we, as Christians, realise ours? What we need to-day is a quickened conscience in our churches. An aroused conscience would solve all difficulties; provide adequate missionary income, supply the brightest type of workers, and provoke an activity at home and abroad which would speedily bring to an end the reign of darkness. 1. This responsibility can only be met by liberality, and not by retrenchment. The church should be as wise as the state. Alas! her financiers have too frequently been given, when financial emergencies have arisen, to talk approvingly of retrenchment. If there is a spectacle offensive to Heaven and contemptible before men, it is that of professed disciples living like Dives and begrudging the crumbs which fall from their affluence into the missionary collection for poor Lazarus. Let us recognise the truth. The truth is, the church has money enough to fulfil her responsibilities at home and abroad. She has not enough for wastefulness or extravagance, or even for sentimental experimenting; but she has ample resources for the evangelisation of the entire world. But this wealth was not bestowed that it might shut God out; and yet it will assuredly do so if it is not expended as He has planned and directed. Its accumulation ought once and for all to teach that the church is bound to prosecute her work, not by the measure of her offerings, but by the measure of her possessions. 2. But more than this, our responsibility can only be

honoured by combination, and not by isolation. The unsocial communities have been violently disturbed of late. China's great wall has fallen; Japan has emerged from her solitude; and it is claimed that the United States can no longer refrain from joining the European Powers in their confederate activities. The progress of this race is wonderful. It controls over one-third of the earth's surface. Prof. Marsh has said: "More than one-half of the letters mailed and carried by the universal postal system are written, mailed, and read by the English-speaking populations"; and they distribute more than two-thirds of all Bibles and Testaments published; and in literature and general intelligence they excel all that is found among other people. But it must not be supposed that every aspect of this great branch of the human family is attractive or promising. Far from it. Even now, after centuries of training, it displays much of the spirit of the Vikings and of the Heligoland pirates, and it is constantly in danger of deifying force. For the history of its progress and aggrandisement is in no small measure the history of violence and aggression. If isolation is fast becoming impossible between nations, and particularly between Great Britain and the United States, it ought to be equally impossible between denominations. Fast is it becoming so. Missionary congresses and federation of churches are helping to draw into one holy alliance the diverse and separated forces of the living God. Something more than independency of action and enthusiasm of spirit is demanded, if the claims of Christianity as a world-power are to be substantiated. But while I speak thus, I realise that organisations, however complete and indispensable, can never supersede the zeal and personal endeavour of the individual. Man is grander than a machine, and the religious machine is, after all, only a supplement to the man. What we need to-day is, that while we sustain our missionary societies we likewise develop all the resources of the individual. Obligations cannot be vicariously met. The hour has arrived for personal decision and consecration. Two tendencies are observable to-day. The one is toward secular imperialism. It is the dream of nationalities in the old world, and is not without charm for ourselves in the new. Success along this line apart from religion is freighted with ultimate mischief and peril. But the other trend is more encouraging and more ennobling; it is toward the triumphant imperialism of Christianity. For which shall we labour? I am not saying that they are necessarily inconsistent with each other; but so far as grandeur and sublimity are concerned, I would rather devote myself to the second than to the first. Would not you? As for me, I would rather stand with Livingstone, Carey, Marshman, Judson, than I would with Clive, Hastings, and Lawrence; and I would rather in the end be associated with Christ and His apostles than I would with Cæsar and the legions thundering at his heels. (*J. G. Lorimer, D.D.*) *The Kingdom of Christ*:—This image, then, represents to us the kingdoms of the earth, such as they are without the fear of God, in all their pride and stateliness. You see them, in it, condensed and combined into one vast body, glittering, as we behold them with our eyes, with silver and gold, and lifting up their heads to Heaven itself, with the insolence of a giant strength and the godlessness of an unrebuked security. The eye of flesh and blood, obedient to its instincts, and, ignoble, like them, is dazzled at their looks; and the heart of man, like that of the Babylonish king, is not only moved with a momentary awe, but crouches down with a real servile terror at their outward grandeur. But all this has nothing substantial in it, notwithstanding—no more than the show of solidity which you see in the summer clouds—how suddenly, like them, do they dissolve, nay, consume, perish, and come to a fearful end! The reason is that, being unbased on that reality of power which belongs to God alone, they have no essential and true strength; they stand on feet of iron and clay, unharmonizing materials, ill mixed, and uncompacted. And they break away into a thousand fragments the moment they come into collision with the Almighty's purposes, and the smiting of His avenging rod. "But," you say, "it is difficult to draw a practical lesson from so mystic a warning"; true, but the whole Bible is full of such warnings, as well as its great interpreter, the history of the world. When, therefore, learned and worldly men talk of this great kingdom and of that, as being ruined by a mistake in policy, or a mismanagement in war, and so on, and puzzle themselves and others in the vain attempt to unfold, by external and secondary events, what they are pleased to call the real causes of this great ruin; the humblest Christian man, with the Bible in his hand, may say, "I cannot deny what you tell me, nor can I, indeed, understand the difficult operation of those fine-sounding things on which you make the adversity or prosperity of kingdoms to depend; but I know this, which is far better than all your science and philosophy put together, that nations, like individual men, only prosper while they love and obey God; and that when they refuse or cease to do so, He punishes and destroys them for their sins. And if you ask me why I dare contradict one so much more learned than myself, and am so sure of this conclusion, touching, as it does, the very mysteries of politics, I have but one reason to give,

though that is the best of all—God says so—I find it plainly written in the Bible.” Well, then, all the kingdoms of the world are represented by the prophet Daniel as finally crushed beneath the weight of that everlasting kingdom which God shall set up among the nations, and which they shall resist—not recognising as Divine a power so unlike their own, nor discerning that penal ruin, which, by ways beyond the scan and compass of the carnal politician, its rejection necessarily involves, even during this earthly dispensation. But is not God love, and the Gospel merciful, and Christ, the Saviour, meek and gentle beyond the meekness of man, not so much as quenching the smoking flax, or breaking the bruised reed? it is not to be denied, so He is; yet He shall tread out, notwithstanding, in His wrath, the wine-press of Almighty God. And, if you will think for a moment of God’s goodness and of man’s wickedness, and the exceeding guilt of rejecting such great salvation, you will no longer marvel that the Gospel, with its revelations of unspeakable love, and the blood of the cross, whose sprinkling cleanseth from all sin, should be presented to us under an aspect so tremendous, or should exercise in the world at large, in its final development, a condemnation so awful, and a ruin so sweeping! And I say a ruin so sweeping, because the words of the prophet seem to indicate that all nations, from the empire of the Chaldees downwards, shall, in their turn, share the same fate; and that our native land, therefore, with all its privileges, may ultimately be added to the catalogue of nations blotted out or tormented in fire for incorrigible wickedness. Our Lord himself, perhaps in intended allusion to these very words of the prophet, describes thus the result of resistance to His eternal kingdom: “Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.” “A stone cut out without hands”; that is, without human and visible agency, any power measurable by carnal calculation, but by the power of Almighty God himself, operating when and where He wills, with or without the instrumentality of subordinate agents; a stone so guarded and so blessed by all Heavenly graces, as to lay a meet foundation for an everlasting church. Such, then, is the Christian kingdom, coming out from God, and of God; it goes forth, from age to age, in spite of evil spirits and evil men, conquering and to conquer. What though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? Nay, but I put it to yourselves; have not the prophet’s words been gloriously fulfilled? Has not the stone become a mountain, and filled the whole earth? it is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Who would have ventured to pronounce that the crucified Jesus, hanging between two thieves, on the accursed tree, the despised and rejected of men, would, after a few years had passed, have been worshipped as a God and a Saviour from one end of Heaven to another? “O the depth of the riches both of the power and the wisdom of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” Now, all that I have been laying before you of God’s eternal purpose to raise the Kingdom of His Son on the ruins of an unbelieving world, is the clear word of God; so clear that they who run may read, confirmed, too, in the history of the world, by many infallible and terrible proofs; and, therefore, it is as certain to be fulfilled in what is to come, as it has been in all that is past. Moreover, there is not an attribute of Almighty God which is not pledged, and actively engaged in the issue of it. There are His unchangeableness and truth—for, from all eternity He has planned this spiritual kingdom to be carried on in the midst of the kingdom of the prince of this world; and, by no less an oath than His immutable self, hath He sworn to preserve it unto the end. There is His justice, for by the same solemn engagement, He has announced in the ears of Heaven and earth, that He will punish all the guilty, and cast out from that presence, in which alone is light and life, the enemies of Him who reigneth on His hill of Zion. There is His love, and with it, His abhorrence of sin; for with such incredible earnestness, and love for man, has He wrought for the establishment of this kingdom that He has given His blessed Son to die for us, and by His death, to open the gates of life. (*J. Garbett.*) *The Kingdom of the Saints*:—Daniel’s interpretation is: “In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” This prophecy is fulfilled among us at this day. Look into the details of this great providence, the history of the Gospel dispensation. 1. Observe what it was that took place. Many kingdoms have been set up and extended by the sword. This, indeed, is the only way in which earthly power grows. But the propagation of the Gospel was the internal development of one and the same principle in various countries at once, and, therefore, may be suitably called invisible, and not of this world. Apostolic efforts do not provide adequate explanation. See what really happened. In the midst of a great empire, such as the world had never seen, powerful and crafty beyond all former empires, more extensive, and better organised, suddenly a new king-

dom arose. Suddenly, in every part of this well-cemented empire, ten thousand orderly societies, professing one and the same doctrine, and disciplined upon the same polity, sprang up as from the earth. This was a new thing, unprecedented in the history of the world before or since, and calculated to excite the deepest interest and amazement in any really philosophical mind. When men began to interrogate this enemy of Roman greatness, they found no vague profession among them, no varying account of themselves, no irregular and uncertain plan of action or conduct. They were all members of strictly and similarly organised societies. They all refused to obey the laws of Rome, so far as religion was concerned. At the same time they professed a singular patience and submission to the civil powers. They did not stir hand or foot in self-defence. They avowed, one and all, the same doctrine clearly and boldly, and they professed to receive it from one and the same source. They were bound to one another by the closest ties of fellowship. And, in spite of persecutions from without, and occasional dissensions from within, they prospered. . . . If there be a moral governor over the world, is there not something unearthly in all this, something which we are forced to refer to him from its marvellousness, something which from its dignity and greatness, bespeaks his hand? 2. Consider the language of Christ and His apostles. From the first they speak confidently, solemnly, calmly, of the destined growth and triumph of the kingdom. Christ contemplated the overshadowing sovereignty of His Kingdom. He spoke also of the disorganisation of society which was to attend the establishment of His Kingdom. In like manner, St. Paul takes for granted the troubles which were coming on the earth, and the rise of the Christian church amidst them, and reasons on all this as if already realised. 3. If the Christian church has spread its branches high and wide over the earth, its roots are fixed as deep below the surface. The intention of Christ and His apostles is itself but the accomplishment of ancient prophecy. (1) There was an existing belief among the heathen, at the time of its rise, that out of the east a new empire of the world was destined to arise. This rumour was known in Rome, the then seat of dominion; and it is recorded by a Roman historian. It became matter for heathen poetry. Full and varied are the predictions of it delivered by the natives of Judæa themselves. What would be our surprise if we, in the course of our researches into history, found any resemblance to this prophetic forecast in the annals of other kingdoms. 4. The course of providence co-operated with this scheme of prophecy. God's word and hand went together. Notice the strange connection between the dispersion of the Jews and the propagation of Christianity. Does not such a manifest appearance of cause and effect look very much like an indication of design? (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *God's Everlasting Kingdom*:—All that was foretold in this remarkable prophecy in due time came to pass. This universal and everlasting kingdom is distinguished by certain infallible marks and evidences which prevent it from being confounded with human institutions, which may resemble it in some respects. I. THE FIRST NOTE OF THIS KINGDOM IS ITS VISIBILITY. It has a visible ministry; visible scriptures; visible forms, and ceremonies, and observances; visible sacraments. The very idea of a kingdom implies its visibility. II. ITS PERPETUITY. It is expressly foretold of it in the text that it should "never be destroyed." But that it should "stand fast for ever." All temporal kingdoms are exposed to changes and decay. That kingdom, complete in all its parts, and vigorous and active in its operations, must now be found upon this earth. There does exist a great and Divine system, having the properties of vast dominion, distinguished privileges, and eternal endurance. III. ITS UNITY. This is a distinguishing mark of God's Kingdom, and good men should never cease to pray that "all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the Faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." IV. ITS SANCTITY. The Divine Head and Founder of the church gave Himself for His people that he might "redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." V. ITS APOSTOLICITY. In other words, it must have a history, and be able to trace back its origin to the days of the Apostles of Christ. (*John N. Norton.*) *The Kingdom of Christ*:—1. The mediatorial action of the Son of God is of the nature of kingly rule. Christ rules in the first place within the church. He is King of Saints. His subjects are hearts willingly submissive to His sway. He rules by His word and Spirit. His dominion extends beyond the church; beyond even the world of men. Nature and the invisible world are beneath His feet. 2. The kingdom is of supernatural origin. The kingdom is one which the God of Heaven set up. It was Divine in its origin, so it was endowed with inextinguishable life. 3. The kingdom was insignificant in its commencement. The stone was small. Look at the Messiah himself, at the veil of obscurity which He assumed. He was "of a decayed and delapidated house; was ranked with the poor; was without powerful friends or political connections; of no uncommon advantage of learning; and was regarded with contempt and scorn by the great mass of His country-

men." 4. The kingdom is destined for universal prevalence. It began by casting down that which would and did oppose its way. Significant as the destruction wrought by the stone may be, even more so is the displacement of the image by the stone. Man-created universal empire gives place to a universal empire God-created. The worldly rule gives way that Heavenly rule may speedily appear. That the stone which smote the image will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth we devoutly believe. The truth might be argued from the essentially aggressive character of the Gospel. 5. The kingdom is to be everlasting. It has stood for eighteen hundred years. Not, however, because no attempt has been made to annihilate it. Physical force, mental power, transcendent genius, have each and all done their worst. It is the great fact of the world still. (*H. T. Robjohns, B.A.*) *A Contrast between Paganism and Christianity*:—You will recall to your minds King Nebuchadnezzar's wonderful dream, and the interpretation of it by Daniel. God can touch the heart of a person in sleep. He can touch the heart of a man dead in sin. How easily He gains His purposes—the forgetting of a dream raised Daniel next to the throne. In the dream we find revealed a contrast between paganism and Christianity. 1. Paganism is constructed; Christianity is a growth. The image was builded of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of clay. But the little stone grew. 2. Paganism is of human origin; Christianity, like the little stone, is made without hands. 3. Paganism divides men; Christianity unites. Disorganisation is inherent in paganism, and it cannot but crumble. How different with Christianity! Its centre is God, and that Centre is everywhere, and its circumference is nowhere. Every individual in this kingdom is at the very centre of power. We have even no need of one to stand between us and this Centre, for Christ is God. The advance of civilization is destructive to error; but Christianity is fitted for the highest civilization. The greater the advancement, the more irresistible becomes this stone cut from the mountain. Its development is the crowding out and destruction of all false systems. There need be no fear that science will harm Christianity; it will, in the end, help it, not harm it. Literature is on this side. Never has Christianity exercised so great a power over the press as to-day. Education is also helping, not hindering, religion. Our colleges are nearly all in the hands of Christian people. Nine-tenths of all educational endowments are the gifts of Christian men and women. Art is not hostile to Christianity. The best of painting, the best of sculpture, the best of architecture, the best of music, is helping to roll this stone that is filling the earth. 4. The power which makes this stone irresistible is God. It is omnipotent as is the throne of Jehovah. No man-made power can resist it. Gold, brass, iron, are crushed beneath it. The great movement for the purification of the earth is going forward. God wishes us to join in this work. Blessed are we if we are found co-workers with Him. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *The Fifth Monarchy*:—I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM? By the kingdom we understand the gospel church or Christian dispensation. When John the Baptist commenced his ministry in the wilderness of Judæa, he preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In this passage we evidently find the church represented as a kingdom. There are, we apprehend, sufficient reasons why she may be so represented. She has all the qualities peculiar to a kingdom. A kingdom consists of a number of men associated for purposes of mutual benefit, who have ordained a certain code of laws for the regulation of their lives, and who have elected a ruler to preside over their interests—to dispense law and preserve order—to act as "a terror" to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well. Similar in all these respects is the church. The revealed and written word of God contains the constitution and rules of their society. It contains laws for the regulation of their lives, as individuals, as congregations, as churches, and as nations—rules for all the relations into which man in this life of change can possibly enter. Christ is their King, Lawgiver, and Judge—"King of kings, and Lord of lords"—"Head over all things" to the church are titles conspicuously written on His vesture and on His thigh. II. SOME OF THE MORE OBVIOUS QUALITIES OF THIS KINGDOM. Every man has his distinguishing characteristics. In like manner, every community, every kingdom is distinguished by some special properties. Thus we find Russia, notorious for despotism; Spain, for bigotry; France, for fickleness and instability; Christ's kingdom is distinguished by: 1. Its spirituality. (1) It is entirely spiritual—spiritual as to its Author, spiritual as to its origin, spiritual as to its laws, ordinances, rewards, and punishments. The founders of all kingdoms of this world have been mere men, inheriting the same nature with ourselves. The founder of the kingdom under review is God; and "God is a Spirit." Most kingdoms of men have been established by carnal means, by force, by rapine, and by blood. By the same means all false systems of religion. How different from this the manner in which the Prince of Peace extends his regal rule. He establishes His empire by the exhibition of love, by the manifestation of truth, by arguments and persuasion, adapted to operate on men's mental and moral nature. "Not by might, nor

by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (2) The laws also of this kingdom are spiritual. They take cognizance more especially of man's moral nature. Human laws can take cognizance of the external conduct alone. The greatest tyrant on earth cannot command the sentiments of the mind, or desires of the heart. God requires the heart: "Son, give me thine heart." (3) The ordinances of this kingdom are spiritual. They are intended and adapted to remove the vices of sin from our nature, and to effect a spiritual change. Ordinances the result of human wisdom, or political sagacity, cannot correct an evil bias nor remove a sinful tendency. Human ordinances are powerless for such purposes. The ordinances of Christ's Kingdom exert a higher and more potent influence. When accompanied by the blessing of the Spirit they can transform the whole soul. (4) The rewards and punishments of this kingdom are spiritual. Earthly rulers can confer only a material or temporal reward for obedience, or inflict a temporal punishment for disobedience. If we obey their mandates, they may confer riches, honours, something agreeable to our sentient nature. If we disobey, they may kill the body, but cannot destroy the immortal spirit. The rewards of Jehovah infinitely transcend temporal advantages however great or desirable. There are pardon of sin and acceptance in His sight, peace and joy in believing, and the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Similar also His punishments. Is not Messiah's Kingdom, therefore, spiritual and consequently different from all worldly monarchies? 2. Light. Scripture informs us that "God is light." Being light in himself He can never be the author of darkness. The kingdoms of men are kingdoms of darkness. Satan is the god of this world, and he is the prince of darkness. He knows that "Where there is no vision the people perish." Hence he endeavours by all means to keep those subject to his sway in gross moral darkness. Whilst we doubt the Divine existence, or entertain wrong views of His character and law, of our present condition—our wants and requirements—we will never come to God that we may have life. Hence, when Jehovah wills the salvation of any sinner, he commences the work of grace on his heart by spiritual illumination, by opening the eyes of the understanding to see the wonderful things contained in the law. Thus, every believer, on receiving Christ, though formerly darkness, becomes light in the Lord. His soul is filled with light on all subjects affecting his interests for time and eternity. 3. Liberty. Freedom is sweet to every living being—to everything "in whose nostrils is the breath of life." The entire animate creation rejoices in the free and unrestrained exercise of every power conferred by the Author of life. By man more especially is liberty prized. The mere mention of its name fills his soul with pleasurable emotions. Christ confers liberty in the highest and most extended sense of the term—liberty infinitely superior to that for which philanthropists have oftentimes sighed and patriots bled. Jesus confers spiritual and a right to temporal liberty on all His followers. These two kinds of freedom are intimately connected. When the former obtains the latter will in due time be sure to follow. When the former has no place the latter cannot possibly exist. When men are spiritually slaves they can neither understand nor enjoy temporal freedom. Jesus delivers all His people from the thralldom of sin and Satan. When Messiah "reigns in Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously," "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper." A bright future is, therefore, in reserve for the oppressed nationalities of Europe; for the persecuted and oppressed of every clime. 4. Peace and happiness. Peace and prosperity are intimately connected. Without peace there can be no progress, no enjoyment, personal, domestic, or social. There can be no happiness to the man whose soul is filled with the tumult of contending passions, whose mind is agitated by fear, or distracted with doubt. There is no enjoyment in the family where alienation and strife reign. The kingdom or nation divided against itself will assuredly fall. Peace is thus of paramount importance; but unhappily it has long been banished from the world. The world has long been a scene of violence, of rapine, and of blood. There is no peace on its wide extent but that which prevails in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ gives peace to all His subjects—peace with God and peace with man. The enmity of the carnal mind is slain and a spirit of love imparted—love to God as Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and love to all His people. Such a disposition obtaining in the mind—such a spirit pervading society—peace will prevail, and harmony reign. 5. Universal. It has at all times baffled the highest efforts of human genius to establish a universal empire. The experience of Alexander in ancient, and of Napoleon in modern times, is proof positive on the point. The honour thus denied the most gifted of our race is reserved for Him who is "Prince of the kings of the earth." There will never be a universal kingdom but that of Immanuel. We learn from the context, and kindred portions of Inspired Writ, that His empire will embrace all the kingdoms of men. 6. Eternal growth and decay is the order of nature. This holds good both in regard to the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Every plant and every

animal, every species of organic existence has its period of development, its period of maturity, and its time of decline. The majestic oak, monarch of the forest, once grew as a tender sapling; gradually and slowly it attained its noble dimensions; after having lifted on high its head for ages, and shaking out its green drapery to the breeze, seeming to bid defiance to the lightnings of Heaven and fury of the blast, at length it becomes gnarled and bare, and yielding to the violence of the storm, falls prostrate on the ground. In like manner with man, lord of the animate creation. As with man individually, so with man collectively, so with nations. Nations as such have their rise, their growth, their maturity, and decline. Thus with all the celebrated kingdoms of antiquity. They all prevailed for a time, and maintained their proud supremacy, but at last the elements of decay contained in their constitution wrought their ruin. Christ's Kingdom, however, though it had a commencement, and an increase, will never be destroyed, nor suffer a decline. It is free from all elements of dissolution. Sin is the cause of all death, national as well as individual. The Redeemer's Kingdom is distinguished for holiness, hence it "shall never be destroyed," but on the contrary, "shall stand for ever." The wicked may plot its overthrow; but their devices will redound to their own confusion. Observe: (1) This kingdom, though long organised, is still in a very immature state. It is still in its infancy every way considered, as regards extent, knowledge, liberty, in all the qualities that give dignity and importance to any society. When it may attain its complete development is a subject of uncertainty. (2) If the last dread conflict between Christ and Belial, light and darkness be not far distant, it is our duty to be preparing for the contest. Jehovah calls all to whom His gospel comes in its fulness and freeness to His help "against the mighty." He works by human agency in the prosecution of His plans. (*G. Stewart, M.A.*)

Vers. 44, 45. And that it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold.—*The Image Destroyed*.—Looking at the image as a whole, notice: I. ITS UNITY. Four successive empires were not represented by four colossal images, but by one. The figure stood entire to the end, the brightness excellent, the form terrible. The image was the symbol of human power in its highest manifestation, an imperial despotism all but commensurate with the inhabited world. The dynasties, differing in form, were, nevertheless, one and the same in spirit and genius—particularly in alienation from the life of God—and, therefore, in hostility to His Kingdom. This need not have been the case. Civil government may be a reflection of the Divine government. It may be rooted in Divine principles. It may be administered in the fear of God. II. ITS MAJESTY. Just as there may be a certain majesty in mere intellect, apart from its consecration, so may there be in an empire over men, notwithstanding its prostitution to sinful ends. Man was made in the image of God. The dominion of man over nature, over other men, is a shadow of Divine dominion. Of this dominion the image of a human form was a fit symbol; but the image was not of a mere man, but man in colossal majesty. No particular form of government can claim to exist as exclusively of Divine right; but government of some kind, government in the abstract, magistracy of some order, is undoubtedly Divine. III. ITS WEAKNESS. There is grandeur in this image of worldly power; but the colossus of metal stands on weak feet of clay. It may have been God's intention that we should note this—how all things human deteriorate unless redeemed from corruption by the saving power of religion. This is as true of government in general, and of particular dynasties and races of kings, as of anything else whatever. Then we may expect Divine intervention to save society by the quickening and regeneration of its members. The process of deterioration is not inevitable. (*H. T. Bobjohns, B.A.*) *The Spiritual Kingdom*.—As in the symbolical language of the prophetic writers, we have an earthquake for a revolution, a mountain for a kingdom, a star for a prince, a forest for a great city, the treading of the wine-press for desolation and slaughter, and a censer with incense for the offering of prayer; so, in our text, we have the four great empires of the world, like the four ages of the poets of ancient Greece and Rome, represented by the precious and useful metals—gold, silver, brass, and iron; while the enduring empire of the Messiah is expressed by the mountain-stone—that stone which the builders of worldly empires, and of worldly policy, despise. The empire of the Messiah differs from all the others in its nature, origin, extent, and duration. Its spiritual nature our Lord himself signifies, when He says that "His Kingdom is not of this world." This empire "shall never be destroyed." Corruption, it is true, in the west, and delusion in the east, have marred both the beauty and extent of the present visible kingdom of the Messiah. But notwithstanding these, we must not falsely estimate either the extent or purity of the Kingdom of Christ. Wherever, therefore, our varied lot of life may be placed by the disposal of providence, whether under our native skies, or in lands the most distant from our own; let us all so live

as it becomes the subjects of that empire which shall survive in glory when all earthly empires shall have passed away. (*T. Ailken, M.D.*) *Reserve Power of Christianity yet to be Manifested*:—All the oxygen breathed into our lungs is not at once expended again. By the complex processes of our human system, no remotest corner of the body but is supplied with this element of the air against such uses as may require it throughout a future more or less extended. Vigour of body, vigour of mind, vigour of soul, are but other expressions to denote the sum of energies which are in reserve in the respective realms of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Christianity's power, even at present, it is not possible to estimate, and never will be known unless we can know the reserve of soul which God's heavenly grace has stored in His children's hearts. In the final conflict between good and evil, this reserve will doubtless be called upon. Thus, against that day, let us preserve and reserve His grace. (*Quiver.*)

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, made an image of gold.—*Gigantic Idols*:—We are not without historical confirmation of the narrative as to the existence of gigantic idols of gold among the Babylonians. Herodotus writes that in his day there was at Babylon an idol image of gold twelve cubits high; and, what is still more remarkable, another authority, obviously speaking of the same statue, mentions that every stranger was obliged to worship it before he was allowed to enter the city. Diodorus Siculus mentions an image found in the temple of Belus forty feet high, which some think was the same as the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. Other images almost parallel in magnitude are mentioned in history. The Colossus of Nero was one hundred and ten feet high. The Colossus of Rhodes was seventy cubits high, and was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. According to classic story, it took thirteen years to construct this colossus; and on its being thrown down by an earthquake, so great was its weight, it ploughed up the ground, and buried itself under the ground. These historical facts show that such images were not unusual, and that it was not impossible to construct such by ancient art. The Colossus of Nero and of Rhodes were not, however, of gold; nor do we suppose that the image of Nebuchadnezzar was of solid gold. It must have been either hollow, or made of wood and covered with gold. It does not appear that the ancients made any but small images of solid gold. The proportions of this image are out of order, unless we understand the height to include the thickness of the pedestal, which it seems to me we should do. (*W. A. Scott, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, sent to gather together the princes, the governors.—*Society*:—Society, the union of the many for the interest of all, seems ever to have been a principal object of God's care and protection. His providence, in the order of nature, is manifestly directed to gather men together, to bind them to one another by the powerful bonds of mutual responsibility, and by the ineffaceable sentiments of justice and humanity. In the revealed or written law God has caused religion and society to advance together. He has, in a manner, amalgamated them with each other. In defining our obligations with respect to Himself, He has defined our mutual engagements towards each other. All the precepts of the decalogue tend to the general utility of mankind. The object of the Gospel is to make of all the inhabitants of the world but one single people—of that people but one family; and to imbue that family with but one single aspiration: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are." And we may assert of Jesus Christ in reference to Society, what He asserted of Himself in reference to the ancient law, that He "did not come to destroy, but to fulfil." In fact, the intercourse which we carry on among ourselves gives birth to four descriptions of duty essential to the happiness of mankind, and to the tranquility of the social condition. Political duties, which are the foundations of society; magisterial duties, which are its security; charitable duties, which are its bonds; conventional duties, which are its elegancies. Now, it is religion alone that enforces and sanctifies those duties, and, therefore, it alone really protects the interests of society. Now, the error of all others prejudicial to society, and nevertheless an error which is very common, is to imagine that the various conditions existing in the world are no more than the result of chance or of necessity—that it is not necessary to refer to Divine wisdom for the explanation of the fact, that our wants once ascertained, it is perfectly natural that we should seek in the industry

of others for those resources we cannot discover in ourselves—that this exchange of services has produced that variety of conditions into which society is divided—and that independently of Providence, nature has conferred authority upon the father of a family, strength given rule to kings, adulation created the influence of the great, the public safety suggested the office of the magistrate, luxury and appetite have been the parents of all the elegant arts. Would a father (and this is the title by which He delights to be called) forget his children, and leave their future prospects uncertain and wavering? No; and, therefore, religion displays to us His providence directed to abundantly supplying our wants and even luxuries. And how? Why, by means of that variety of social conditions, of which He alone is the Author. For what other Being than He, who from the discord of the elements called forth the harmony of the universe, could bind together and incorporate so many opposing influences, and direct them towards one only end? What other Being than He, who by means of a few grains of sand arrests the fury of the waves, could discipline so many furious passions, and fix the invisible limits which they cannot pass? Nevertheless, I cannot deny that there is a specious objection often urged to this fundamental truth; and that is, the great inequality of conditions among mankind. “Wherefore,” it may be said, “wherefore is it that of the same clay are fashioned vessels of honour and vessels of dishonour? Why that immense distance that separates one man from another? Why so many enjoyments and so much liberty on the one hand, and so many privations and so much bondage on the other? Is God an acceptor of persons?” What do you require Him to do? That He should establish complete equality amongst us? Let us suppose that He has done so, and now mark the consequences. We are all equally independent, equally powerful, equally great, equally rich. And now tell us of what advantage would that independence be to us. Should we be competent to supply all our own requirements, and should we have no need to apply to others to assist us in our necessity? Of what advantage would our power be to us? To what use could we apply it? Of what advantage would our grandeur be to us? Would it attract towards us one single particle of homage or of respect? Of what advantage would our riches be to us? how could we employ them? That complete equality once established even, would it last long? Would our ambition continue to be satisfied? Would it patiently endure so many equals? Would it not aspire to domination? And what restraint would be applicable to control it? We should all be rivals, and continually in a state of civil war. That complete equality once established, who amongst us would undertake to cultivate the ground, to supply the most pressing wants, to procure the ordinary necessities of life? What law, what authority would there be to compel us to do so? We should perish in consequence of our greatness and abundance; we should obtain nothing but worthless superfluities while we were requiring actual food and shelter. In short, to make men all equally fortunate is but another term for rendering them all equally wretched. There must be a head of a state, that the state may escape the infliction of many tyrants; there must be great men, “princes and governors,” to protect the weak; there must be warriors “and captains,” to defend the country; there must be magistrates, “judges,” “counsellors, and sheriffs,” to prevent injustice, and to punish crime; there must be the rich, “the treasurers,” to employ labour and to reward it; there must be the poor and needy, that the inconveniences which poverty entails may serve as a spur to indolence and a warning to sloth. Society rests upon these different states as upon buttresses that support it. Now, it would be perfectly superfluous in me to prove to you that labour is the condition on which society exists—that in certain respects even political commotions themselves are less dangerous than apathy and sloth—that happiness consists in the mutual understanding which should exist between various classes, who, acting in concert, and depending upon each other for an interchange of good offices, meet together by different roads which converge towards the same centre. Well, it is religion alone which imparts a true impetus to that activity, by the peculiar stress it lays upon the conscientious discharge of the various social duties—duties so peculiar to each separate condition, that every individual is required personally to fulfil them—so essential, that they will hold the foremost place in the examination, which at the last great day the Sovereign Judge will institute—so indispensable, that their absence implies an absence of piety as well, since “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Does human policy watch as carefully over the interests of society? Does it rise up to protest with equal sternness against those indifferent spectators who reap abundantly in the field wherein they have not sown? Of the vast multitude of men of whom society is composed, how few serve it from other motives than ambition or emolument! The love of glory urges on the former, the thirst of riches influences the latter. Fortunately nature condemns from their very birth the greater number to struggle and to toil. And now observe the distinguishing glory of our holy faith. Not content with enjoining the

fulfilment of the various social duties, it sets forth as well the manner in which those duties should be fulfilled. Is it no service to society that religion enjoins that the duties of the state be discharged with intelligence? "Abound in knowledge and in all diligence." And who can fail to feel how fatal to the interests of society would be the influence of those in power if destitute of the necessary knowledge? If they be warriors, in spite of their valour and intrepidity, to what dangers would they not expose their country? Or is it no service to society that religion enjoins that the duties of the state be discharged with decorum? "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without." Or does religion confer no benefit on society when it enjoins, that the motive of action when we are serving our fellow-men should be a desire to please God—"not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?" No other motive would be pure enough nor noble enough to elevate us above human considerations and our own self-interest. Were Christianity universally practised even there only where it is professed—were all mankind to regulate their conduct by the maxims of the Gospel, and careful to be guided by heavenly motives only; with God over all disposing everything according to His wisdom, regulating everything by His will, animating everything by His Spirit, enriching everything by His liberality, sanctifying everything by His grace, sustaining everything by His power—at the sight of a state of society like this, who would not be tempted to exclaim with Balaam, as he contemplated the camp of Israel, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel?" (*J. Jessopp, M.A.*)

Vers. 4, 5. To you it is commanded, O people.—*The Importance of the Imperative:*—We cannot do without this word "command" in our religious education. It is a Divine word. It would be instructive to trace the history of that term, and to study its meaning in the various relations which it assumes. The Bible is full of commandments; in Genesis the Lord commands, in the Apocalypse there is a commanding voice; and Jesus, gracious, meek, patient, tender Jesus, commands—He says, "A new commandment give I unto you." How, then, can Jesus give commands? Because of what He is. God can give commands because He is God; and not only so, but being God, He knows human nature, and can address it in its own terms, and according to the line of its own instincts and necessities. When He thunders down His commands there is nothing that offends the mental or moral constitution on which the commanding voice falls with ineffable authority. The command awakens something that is already slumbering in the nature. We must have our duties in the first instance in the form of commands, but only God can tell what commands are not arbitrary, but are natural, and operate in the line of instinct and Divine intention. What is a commandment to one man is an easy task to another. Some hard and all but impenetrable natures require to be commanded, stirred, roused; and others hear the word of the Lord and spring to it in obedience that seems to understand it all ere it be fully spoken. Many have sweetened the bitterness of their lot by an ample and proper use of the promises who have forgotten that every promise has behind it or near it a corresponding command. The imperative mood has never been allowed to fall into disuse in the Bible; it is, "Son, give me thine heart"; it is, "Love one another"; it is, "Hear my words and do them." We draw the line, then, as between human authority and Divine sovereignty, as between an arbitrary decree and a command that is in harmony with the wisdom and love of God, and in harmony with the peculiarity of human constitution and capacity. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. The sound of the cornet, flute, harp.—*Eastern Musical Instruments:*—The instruments enumerated here are mostly still in use in the present time, but some of them have become obsolete. The cornet is a brass trumpet manufactured in the country, and used in martial music. There are several kinds of flute, both single and double. The harp is no longer in use, nor the "psaltery," which is a similar instrument of the same kind; they have been replaced by the ood, which gives a richer sound, and is more portable. The "sackbut" is a tamboora, a sort of guitar, of various shapes and sizes; in its most complete and perfect form it is three feet nine inches long, has ten strings of fine wire, and forty-seven stops. It is played with a plectrum, and is often inlaid with mother-of-pearl and valuable woods. It is often, however, of smaller size and less costly materials. The "dulcimer" is a kanoon, or santûr. The "kanoon" is the original of our piano, both being probably derived from the lyre and the harp, whence the piano was first called a harpsichord. This instrument consists of a box two inches in depth, and of an irregular form, its greatest length being thirty-nine inches, and its width sixteen. There are only twenty-four notes, and, like the piano, each note has three strings, which are tuned with a key. The sounding-board lies under the

strings, and is perforated, and covered with fish-skin where the bridge rests. The performer lays the instrument on his knees, and strikes the chords with the forefinger of each hand, to which is fastened a plectrum of horn. Another form of this instrument, called "santûr," is a double kanoon, and comes still noiser to our piano; the strings are of wire, and only double; they are struck with wooden hammers held in the hand. When used in a procession, this instrument is suspended from the neck by means of a cord. (*H. J. Van Lennep, D.D.*) *The Religion of Ceremonial*.—Are all the coloured garments so many visions of beauty? Is there some strain religious in the blare of brazen trumpets and the throb of military drums? Most of the people that we see gathered together around great sights would gladly be at home, listening to the voice of child, or friend, or bird. Do external images fill the soul? Is it enough to have a painted God? What wonder if we begin by worshipping things that are seen? That course would seem to be natural, and would seem to be able to justify itself by sound reasoning of a preliminary kind. Who could not in ignorance of other deity worship the sun? Sometimes he seems to be almost God! How multitudinous are his phases, how manifold the apocalypse within which he shows his uncounted riches; now so pale, as if he were weary, an eye half closed in sleep long needed, long delayed; and then in full pomp, every beam, so to say, alive, and the whole heaven amazed and delighted at this vision of glory, as if hidden within that fount of flame and heat there lay ten thousand times ten thousand summers, and ten thousand times ten thousand purple autumns, with all their largesses of fruit and flowers and benison, for the sustenance and the nutrition of men; then lost among the clouds, where, indeed, he seems to be disporting himself in painting a thousand academies by one look of his eyes; see how he fills the clouds and seems to shape them, or fall into their shape, making them burn and sparkle and glitter, and invests them with unimagined and untransferable colours; a marvellous, glorious sight! Who could not uncover his head in presence of such glory, and say, Surely this is the gate at least that opens upon the palaces of God. To worship nature would seem in certain stages of development to be right. God made it; God made the green grass and the blushing flower; the great hills, stairways to heights which man never scaled; God made the valleys and the mountains; and what are these fountains saying to the hearing ear? Only the true listener can tell; the vulgar man hears nothing in that splash of water, but the refined soul hears in it melody and song, music religious, and hint of other music that might please the ear of God. As we grow in wisdom, in capacity, in understanding, in sympathy, we close our eyes upon the universe, and say it is no more to us an image that should be sought unto for purposes of worship; but we see within, by a Divinely directed introspection, the true altar, the true sanctuary, the true centre of acceptable worship. Thus we grow from the natural to the spiritual, and when we have obtained the measure of our growth we say, "God is a Spirit"; if we still preserve the image, it is as we should preserve a symbol, that was helpful to us before we saw the thing signified. If our religion is in colour, form, æsthetic attitude and motion, our religion will surely come to nought; but if our piety live in eternity, if it feed itself upon the almightiness and the grace of God, as shown in the Cross of Christ, then it will abide for ever. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **O king, live for ever.**—*The Golden Image Set Up*.—These last words, "O king, live for ever," were designed by those who uttered them as the expression of the most gross and servile adulation, and they were doubtless regarded by the monarch to whom they were addressed as the spontaneous effusion of a reverential and devoted loyalty. I. First, then, THE WORDS OF THIS SALUTATION, "O king, live for ever," were, in the mouth of the Chaldeans, manifestly uttered with a twofold purpose; to dissemble the malignity of the courtiers, and to flatter the conceit, if not to impose on the credulity of the king. Now, we do not take upon ourselves to determine whether these Chaldeans had any notion at all of a state of existence after death, or if so, what those notions were; but we can hardly conceive that those who believed the Godhead to be of the substance of silver and of gold could have any reasonable conception of the spiritual essence, the immaterial, intellectual part of man. Judging from this, they could have hoped for nothing more, and could have looked for nothing better after death, than to be resolved into their primal element of dust, and become even as the brutes that perish. Their salutation, therefore, must have been the climax of absurdity, because it bare on the face of it what was to them a perfect impossibility—the violation of a fundamental and universal law of our being. They knew that the king could not, in the course of nature, "live for ever"; they knew, that as the ancient monarchs of the nations lay down every one in his own house, so Nebuchadnezzar's ample territory must ere long contract itself to the narrow coffin. But they flattered the proud, in order to betray

the innocent; they deified a blood-stained and capricious tyrant, that they might doom to death three unoffending strangers and captives, whom they hated. Now, this is a true portraiture of the world in every age. It exalts the oppressor, and tramples on the innocent. We may look upon Nebuchadnezzar, then, in this stage of his career, as a consummate specimen of the favourite of this world, the courted, the envied, the admired, the adored. The universe lay prostrate at his feet. This, then, is a specimen and a sample of the world's lie. It promises the ungodly what it never can bestow, and threatens the servants of the Lord with the loss of that which it cannot take away; so that while it deludes Nebuchadnezzar into the infatuation of believing that he, because he was a monarch over men, might become a manufacturer of gods, it binds the servants of the one true and living God hand and foot, and casts them into the devouring flame, because they fear not those who can only kill the body, but rather fear Him who is the arbiter of life and death, and who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. II. And now let us turn from the humbled king of Babylon, TO TRACE THE PRACTICAL BEARING OF THE SUBJECT UPON OURSELVES. True it is, that in our own age and country persecution for religion's sake hath ceased, and with it the miracles that of old wrought strange deliverance, and the spiritual consolations and supports that suspended the laws of nature, and sustained the confessor beneath the scourge and the martyr amidst the flames: but there is no change in the enmity of the flesh against the Spirit, or in the hatred of the world to God. True it is, that the oppressor hath no longer at command the burning fiery furnace, nor the lions' fearful den; but the evil one still does what he can, though he can no longer do what he would. If the weapon of the world is no longer cruelty, it is contumely; if it is no longer torture, it is ridicule. "Live for ever," these words are a memorial of our own immortality, and they should call upon every one to consider, on the principles laid down in Holy Writ, whether he who is born for eternity is also living for it. Now we, like these intrepid and devoted children of the faithful Abraham, cannot at one and the same time bow down before the golden idol and adore the living God; we must be equally decided in our service with them. "Examine yourselves," then, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." (T. Dale, M.A.)

Vers. 12—18. They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.—*The Golden Image*.—In last chapter we read of an image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision. In this chapter our attention is directed to an actual image which that monarch erected in honour of his gods. This image was made of gold. We cannot suppose the whole structure to have consisted entirely of that metal. Rich as Nebuchadnezzar was, neither he nor any other prince possessed so much disposable wealth as would have been required in order to construct a figure of solid gold of equal dimensions with that mentioned in this passage. We should suppose that the structure consisted of a pedestal or shaft surmounted by an image, that the image properly so called was made of gold, that the pedestal was formed of some baser material, and that the height refers solely to the elevation of the image from the ground, and not to its size. This image "was set up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon." Some suppose that Dura was the name of an extensive plain in the neighbourhood of the capital. Others, of high authority in Scriptural geography, are of opinion that it was some enclosure within the city adjacent to the temple of Belus. From the passage itself we would be disposed to infer that it must have been without the city and at some distance, for if it was within the walls of Babylon there was no need of stating, as is here done, that it was "in the province of Babylon." Various opinions have been entertained respecting the end that Nebuchadnezzar had in view in the erection of this image. Some are of opinion that he wished to claim for himself a place among the gods, and that the image was erected as the outward symbol of his deification. Nebuchadnezzar was evidently an aspiring man. We see no reason to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar intended by this image, publicly, avowedly, and formally, to claim Divine honours for himself. If such had been his intention, it would, doubtless, have been distinctly announced in the proclamation by which his subjects were enjoined to give it worship. The refusal of the three children to worship the image is spoken of by their accusers as a refusal to worship the king's gods. It is thus apparent from the testimony of all the parties concerned in this matter, that the image was erected in honour of the king's gods. In all ages, and in all lands, whose political history is known to us, religion has been degraded into an engine of state and an instrument of tyranny. Hence professed atheists have affirmed that religion is a mere invention of rulers to hold mankind in subjection. This assertion is self-destructive. The fact that rulers made use of religion as a means of upholding and strengthening their government, evidently implies that religion had a previous existence, and that they had re-

course to it as an instrument of policy on account of the great influence which they had perceived it to possess over the minds of men. National uniformity in matters of religion has ever been the idol of politicians. Conformity to the established religion has been one of the most common tests of loyalty. There can be little doubt that in setting up this image Nebuchadnezzar had a similar end in view. It was not erected simply as a mark of reverence to his idols, but also, we may conceive, as a political expedient to strengthen and consolidate his government, by promoting uniformity of religion among his subjects. To him it would probably appear that this step was not only warranted by the ordinary reasons in behalf of uniformity, but demanded by the peculiar state of the Babylonian empire. A great part of that empire had been newly acquired. It was composed of many nations, Jews, Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites. Posts under his government and places in his army would be held by persons from all these countries. To unite a kingdom so variously composed, and obtain the permanent ascendancy over countries so newly acquired, nothing would appear more likely than to bring all his subjects to be of one religion. The religion, whether of an individual or a nation, is the most permanent link of connection between the present and the past. Religion exerts a powerful influence in the formation of character; so long, therefore, as these varied nations retained a diversity of opinions, they would never be thoroughly amalgamated into one empire. The image being erected, Nebuchadnezzar commanded all in authority under him, princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to his dedication. Being convened, "An herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." In this proclamation there are two things: First, The command to fall down and worship the image; which extended to all persons specified, without exception. Secondly, The penalty denounced against such as refused. Viewed in the light of the Divine law, this proclamation was most tyrannical. It was a violent outrage on the most sacred rights of human beings. But by this proclamation, Nebuchadnezzar constituted himself supreme dictator in religion to his whole realm; thereby he usurped the prerogatives of the Godhead, by interposing his authority between the conscience of the creature and the will of his Creator. To command his subjects to fall down and worship the image, was to convert law, the bulwark of liberty, into an engine of oppression. But how much more odious and detestable does his conduct appear when we think of the dreadful penalty annexed to the proclamation! In this case, penal laws are always criminal, in the sight of God. It is always wrong to attempt to propagate religion by force. It is contrary to the nature of religion. It is contrary to the nature of man. It is most foolish and inexpedient in point of policy. To attempt to propagate religion by force is to make might the standard of right, which is opposed to man's nature as a reasonable being, and to the worship of God as a reasonable service. And what could be more foolish? It is attempting an impossibility. Force cannot reach the mind. Force may make cowards, it may make dissemblers, it may make hypocrites and apostates, but it never did, and never can make a convert. What, therefore, can be more inexpedient in a government than to persecute men for adhering to their religion? Is not the success of such a measure the memorial of a nation's ignominy? For, when persons are thus induced to fall down and worship what they believe to be wrong, do they not proclaim that they are sacrificing their integrity, that they are violating their consciences, that they are time-servers and apostates, and that they are men in whose principles no dependence can be placed, when interest and duty are disjoined. The law enacted by Nebuchadnezzar was most tyrannical, most unreasonable in itself, and most inexpedient in point of policy. The command of Nebuchadnezzar met with the most prompt compliance. What a lamentable spectacle was this, to see the rulers of a great nation bending before tyranny—to see rational and immortal beings doing homage to a figure formed of inanimate materials—to see the creatures of God worshipping a creation of man! And yet, with three exceptions, the whole assembled mass fell down and worship it as one man. The three exceptions were the excellent companions of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Unawed by the presence of the king, unseduced by the terrors of the burning fiery furnace, they refused to fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. This act was warranted and demanded by the moral law. In the second commandment it is written, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c. In the bustle of that extensive scene, the king of Babylon saw not their neglect. But despotic kings are always encompassed by minions, who, in such a case, are forward to act the part of spies and informers. "Then certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews."

incapable of accounting for their conduct on any known principle of court politics, they endeavoured by artful insinuations to represent their conduct to the king in the most odious light. Nebuchadnezzar probably felt proud of the fine spectacle which the plains of Dura that day presented. His spirit, we may conceive, rose within him with the swell of the music and the plaudits of the worshippers. His pride would be flattered by the reflection that he was the lord of this assembly of rulers. This information, therefore, came upon him like a thunderbolt out of a cloudless sky. And how did these Jews act when their God is thus insulted, and the alternative imposed upon themselves of bowing to the image or burning in the furnace? They quitted themselves like men. Many valuable lessons may be deduced from this passage, particularly in regard to the manner in which we should adopt, and the spirit in which we should adhere to a profession of religion. There are few things in which men act with greater frivolity than in regard to the solemn matter of making a profession of religion. There are many who fall in with whatever is most popular. Others adhere to whatever is most fashionable among the upper classes of society, and would rather walk on the broad path of destruction with fashionable men than on the narrow way of life without them. How often have human laws enjoined what the Divine law prohibits? How often have God's people been persecuted because they were unwilling to render unto Cæsar the things which are God's? There are seasons when it is no easy matter to obey God rather than man. It may bring ruin on our fortunes and reproach upon our names. It may expose us to a violent and untimely death. But even in these cases we ought to surrender our lives rather than part with our conscientious convictions. In such an emergency natural courage will "faint and fail." The formalist will become a coward; the hypocrite will become an apostate; and no man can stand securely but he who has confidence in the Divine character, and on the ground of this confidence is able to resign himself implicitly to the Divine management. (*William White.*) *Pious Youth*:—First we have a state religion persecuting the people for their religious opinions, and threatening them with death if they do not comply with its decrees. The second thing that strikes us is the measures taken to popularise the king's religion, and persuade the people to embrace it. These measures were two-fold. They were seductive and minatory. They were directed to the sensual tastes and natural fears of man. If the voluptuous swells of music from all kinds of instruments could not cause the people to fall down and worship Bel, why then the furnace was to do its work. And have we nothing like this in our times? The king desired these young men to conform to his decree, but did not prove to them the truth of his religion. There were many flattering arguments which these young men might have urged against the conviction of their earlier education, and in favour of complying with the king's command, which they did not urge, nor even seem to have allowed to have so much as a moment's consideration. They might have said—but they did not so say—that it was their duty to obey the king, and worship the image, for this was the established religion of the empire. They chose to obey God rather than man. God alone is Lord of the conscience. These young men might have urged also—but they did not do so—that it was most expedient to bow down and worship the image. Mark their situation. They were captives in the hands of an absolute Oriental monarch, who could take off their heads at any minute, and no one ever ask why or wherefore. They were, moreover, advanced to places of power, where they were able, perhaps, to do many kind things for their suffering countrymen. They remembered their old Hebrew Catechism, which had taught them that God had said to them, "Thou shalt not bow down to any idol gods, nor worship them." It is plainly taught in God's Holy Word that right is always true expediency. It may not seem to be so; but it will always be found so in the end. Nor did these three Hebrew youths urge that they were compelled to obey the king's commandment because they were under great personal obligations to him. He had shown them much kindness, and heaped honours upon them; but their duty to God was stronger than gratitude to the king. Employers, parents, teachers, and benefactors may lay you under great personal obligations; but you must follow your conscience in the matter of religion. "He that loveth father or mother more than me cannot be my disciple." Nor did they urge that they would be out of fashion, and marked for their singularity, if they did not worship this golden image. Singularity assumed for the sake of being singular or famous is contemptible, and indicates a weak mind; but to be singular as a necessary result of not sinning as others do, is worthy of a Christian. When duty requires us to be singular, then we must not hesitate. Do not mind that the multitude are against you, if God be with you. "If sinners entice thee," God says, "consent not." "Follow not the multitude to do evil." Nor did these young men urge the terrible penalty to which they were exposed by disobeying the king's commandment. Is there any young man here who is saying to himself, "I would become a Christian; I wish to save my soul; but if I do, I must give up

such and such pleasures: I must shut up my shop on Sunday, and quit my lake rides on the Lord's day?" And what if it does cost you all these pleasures to save your soul? Would it not be better to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to have both body and soul cast into hell for ever? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Your privileges are greater than those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. The Gospel has unfolded to you its grace, glory, and riches. How then can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? But why, think you, did these young men refuse to obey the royal decree? 1. They could not obey it because of the force of their religious impressions. 2. Consistency of character and of profession forbade them to worship idols. They were Hebrews. They had avowed Jehovah to be their God. They could not obey the king without denying the God of their fathers. What satisfaction would it have been, think you, to their pious parents, who in their homes at Jerusalem had taken so much pains to instruct them in the law and in the worship of the true God, could they have seen how firmly their sons adhered to the principles they had implanted with so many fears, and tears, and prayers? Never allow yourselves to imhibe any creed or do anything inconsistent with your birth, education, privileges, and destiny. 3. These Hebrew youths refused, because they were sustained by the hope of deliverance. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." They believed that God would make all things work together for their good. The special lessons from the fiery furnace of Dura to the young men of the nineteenth century are: 1. IN THE COURTEOUS BUT FIRM REFUSAL OF THESE HEBREW YOUTHS, WE HAVE A MODEL FOR THEM IN LESS PAINFUL CIRCUMSTANCES. When God's providence calls for martyrs, then He will give grace sufficient for the crisis. The principle, however, must be well settled, that if the day comes when you are required to give up your liberty or religious freedom, or perish in the field of battle or at the stake, you would firmly prefer the latter. The prior point, in our times of freedom from persecution, is to become the true followers of Christ. There are not wanting authors and public teachers who argue that these young men should have complied with the wishes of the king, because the religion of Bel was the established religion of the empire. As loyal subjects, they should have embraced the same religion that was professed by their king. This is the old worm-eaten effete doctrine, that the government or the king is the head of the church, and the keeper of the consciences of the people. Such is not the teaching of the Bible. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world; nor has He given to any human power the authority of enacting laws for Him. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith. Mormonism prevails in Utah; if I go to the Salt Lake, must I turn Mormon? Brahminism is the established religion of certain parts of India and China, must the English and Americans that go thither become Hindoos? If you live in Constantinople, must you, therefore, become a Mohammedan? If you live in Paris, is it right for you to become an Infidel, Papist, or Socialist; or if in Germany, a Pantheist or a Protestant, simply because any one of these may be the established or prevailing creed around you? It is monstrous to suppose that a man's duty to his Creator is to be decided by any such standard as this. The only authority binding on the conscience is the authority of God. It is the most potent element of social or individual life. It may be tossed upon the hillows of popular fury, or cast into the seven-fold heated furnace of persecution, or be trampled to the dust by the iron heel of despotism; but it is absolutely imperishable. "Hers are the eternal years of God." Nor can those die who fall in her great cause. II. AS CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN YOU HAVE, THEREFORE, THE GREAT CONSOLATION OF KNOWING THAT THE GREATEST EFFORTS OF THE MIGHTIEST MEN ARE UTTERLY UNAVAILING AGAINST THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. All the power of earth and hell cannot burn out one single truth from God's word; nor can all the popes and assemblies, cabinets, and armies on the globe add one single doctrine or precept to the Bible necessary to salvation. III. Learn then, and though this lesson has been taught before, I must repeat it, that true expediency is true principle. "The path of duty is the path of safety." "Honesty is the best policy." It was so with Joseph. It was so with Daniel and his three friends. It has always been so with the great and the good. Whatever God calls you to do or to suffer, fear not to obey. He will be with you in whatever He calls you to. If He calls you to enter the fiery furnace, hesitate not one moment. He will be with you, and either sustain you or deliver you, or make it conducive to your higher and future good. (W. A. Scott, D.D.)

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image:—In the second chapter, which immediately precedes the history of the golden idol, we have an account of a prophetic vision granted to Nebuchadnezzar, and in which were foreshadowed the destinies of the four great secular empires whose foundation succeeded the foundation of the kingdom of Israel, and pre-

ceded the foundation of Christianity. Now in this vision it is to be remarked that these empires were exhibited to the king under the guise of a great statue or image. And explaining the meaning of this strange and tremendous apparition, Daniel addresses the king thus: "Thou art this head of gold." Now there is a circumstance in the description of the golden idol set up in the plain of Dura in the next chapter which has greatly puzzled commentators, and has been used by some critics to throw discredit on the whole narrative. This circumstance is the utter disproportion of the idol. Assuming it to have been a human figure, how can we imagine a statue representing a human figure sixty cubits high and only six cubits broad? a statue, the height of which is exactly ten times its breadth? Now to me, this monstrous disproportion seems at once to hint at a different conception of what the idol was. I believe it to have been a representation of the image the king had shortly before beheld in his prophetic dream. But, mark you, not of the whole of that image. The other parts of the terrible apparition had been explained by Daniel as denoting other kingdoms less exalted by nature, less glorious in appearance than that of the Babylonian monarch. He was "the head of gold." Accordingly the image he set up in the plain of Dura was, I conceive, a representation not of the whole image of the vision, but simply of the head of gold, elevated on a pedestal of the same metal, tall enough to exhibit it completely to the whole multitude convened to worship it. The image of the plain of Dura was, in other words, the image of the prophetic dream, so far as it concerned Nebuchadnezzar's self; it was the representation of himself as the mightiest sovereign the world had ever seen, or ever was to see; and the adoration he demanded for it was a deification of mere worldly power and grandeur in his own person. This hypothesis will appear less startling when we recollect that Oriental kings were often—indeed, generally—considered as emanations from the Deity, incarnations of His attributes; and were approached with exactly the same forms of adoration as were used to the Deity they represented or embodied. And in this case, the representation of the king's superhuman power and grandeur might actually seem to be authorised by the prophetic vision from which Nebuchadnezzar had adopted it. Viewed in this light, we can at once perceive why all the great officials of the empire, the princes, captains, judges, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled to its dedication—of the people at large nothing is said—and why such an extraordinary and terrific punishment was denounced on those who might refuse to prostrate themselves before it. The official who would not adore the consecrated representation of his own monarch's power and place in the history of the world might justly, according to Oriental notions, be regarded as a traitor. Nothing but disloyalty could refuse the worship demanded. Why should he not display to all his officers of state the disclosures made to him by the Divinity and explained by the master of the magicians? Why not require Divine honours to be paid to the Divinely revealed representation of his own great place in the destinies of the world—in the history of the human race? Assuming this conception of the connection between the vision of the second chapter and the idol of the third chapter to be correct, how significant a hint does it not give us of the propensity of the human heart to turn even God's benefits into poison! Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, like Pharaoh of Egypt, had been made the recipient of superhuman knowledge, though on a far grander scale than Pharaoh. He had been favoured with a disclosure of the destinies not of one single kingdom, but of all secular power whatever, previous to the advent of the Christ. But, instead of giving heed to the impressive warning, instead of a salutary lesson of humility, a conviction of the nothingness of all mere worldly power, he had been so puffed up with being told that he was the first and the greatest of those temporal powers that were so soon to be destroyed by the great spiritual Power, as to convert the very emblem of warning into an emblem of daring and blasphemous impiety. God interposes by miracle, not in every case where such interposition might seem desirable, but only in cases peculiar and critical—cases which mark epochs and decide great destinies. Now such an one was pre-eminently the case of the three youths in the burning fiery furnace. God's people had been completely subjugated by the mighty autocrat of Babylon. Had the three Jews perished in the furnace destined to annihilate all who would not pay Divine honour to the embodiment of human power, the cause of God might, perhaps, have been lost; His people might have been so discouraged that not a remnant would have maintained the truth. Here, then, was a worthy case for Divine interposition. 1. Individually we learn from the behaviour of the three Jews before the terrible King of Babylon, that we have nothing to do with expediency when principle is at stake. How plausibly might they not have reasoned themselves into compliance had expediency been consulted! They were no politicians. They simply asked, Hath God forbidden His people to bow down and worship idols, or hath He not? If He hath, no reasoning can make that right which He hath said is wrong. And as the command was plain and direct, they felt their obedience to it must be plain and direct. Let this mag-

nificent example of heroic steadfastness in the path of duty teach us that simple but difficult lesson how to say NO when we are tempted or threatened in order to make us do what we are aware is wrong. The man who has learned that lesson can go through the fiery furnace of this world unscorched, unharmed, without even the smell of its flame passing on him; for One shall walk beside him who has also overcome temptation—One whose form shall be indeed “the form of the Son of God!” 2. The same considerations apply with added force and on a grander scale to the case of Christ’s Church on earth and every part thereof. The history of that church is one of the strangest and saddest ever written by human passion and human error on the course of time. How the very consolations of God, the sweet ordinances of the Gospel, have, by the cunning of God’s adversary and the fierce narrowmindedness of man, been transformed into whips of scorpions, with which loveless zeal and arrogant pride have scourged generation after generation, they know too well who know anything of the story of Christianity. (C. P. Reichel, D.D.) *Is it True?*—If you would become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ it will be well for you to count the cost. It was our Lord’s custom to bid men consider what his service might involve. His frequent declaration was, “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” If we count upon ease in this warfare we shall be grievously disappointed; we must fight if we would reign. One reason of this is that the world, like Nebuchadnezzar, expects us all to follow its fashions and to obey its rules. The god of this world is the devil, and he claims implicit obedience. Sin in some form or other is the image which Satan sets up and requires us to serve. The tyranny of the world is fierce and cruel, and those who will not worship its image will find that the burning fiery furnace has not yet cooled. The world’s flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery must sound for you in vain. A nobler music must charm your ears and make you bid defiance to the world’s threatenings. The true believer’s stand must be taken, and he must determine that he will obey God rather than man. The love of the world and the love of God will no more mix than oil and water. To attempt a fusion of these two is to bring confusion into your heart and life. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego said to Nebuchadnezzar, so will true believers say to the world: “We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Now, if you can refuse to sin, if you can refuse even to parley with iniquity, it is well with you. If you stand out for truth and righteousness, your conscience will approve your position, and this in itself is no small comfort. It will be an ennobling thing for your manhood to have proved its strength, and it will tend to make it stronger. Peradventure some of you may say, “We will not bow before the gods of the world, but we will worship God only; we will follow Christ, and none beside.” This is a brave resolve; you will never regret it if you stand to it even to the end. We are glad to hear you speak thus; but is it true? “Is it true?” It is very well to profess, but “Is it true?” 1. Follower of Christ, be ready for the question “Is it true?” 1. Do not reckon to live unnoticed, for a fierce light beats about every Christian. You will be sure to meet with some one or other whom you respect or fear, who will demand of you, “Is it true?” Nebuchadnezzar was a great personage to these three holy men; he was their despotic lord, their employer, their influential friend. In his hands rested their liberties and their lives. He was, moreover, their benefactor, for he had set them in high office in his empire. Many young Christians are tried with this temptation. Many worldly advantages may be gained by currying favour with certain ungodly men who are like little Nebuchadnezzars; and this is a great peril. They are bidden to do wrong by one who is their superior, their employer, their patron. Now comes the test. Will they endure the trial hour? They say that they can endure it, but is it true? Nebuchadnezzar spoke in peremptory tones, as if he could not believe that any mortal upon the earth could have the presumption to dispute his will. He cannot conceive that one employed under his patronage will dare to resist his bidding; he demands indignantly, “Is it true?” He will not believe it! He must have been misinformed! You will meet with persons so accustomed to be obeyed that they think it hard that you do not hasten to carry out their wishes. The infidel father says to his boy, “John, is it true that you go to a place of worship against my wishes? How dare you set up to be better than your father and mother?” Often ungodly men profess that they do not believe in the conversion of their fellow workmen. Is it true, John, that you have become religious? A pretty fellow! Is it true? They insinuate that you are off your head, that your wits have gone wool-gathering, and that you are the dupe of fanatics. You will not be able to go through life without being discovered; a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the war time, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to Heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. How was it Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego came up to the front when the king's command was given? They could not consistently keep back. They were public men, set over provinces, and it was needful that they should set an example. Rest assured, my fellow Christians, that at some period or other, in the most quiet lives, there will come a moment for open decision. Days will come when we must speak out or prove traitors to our Lord and to His truth. 2. To be fully prepared to answer the enquiry of opposers, act upon sound reasons. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Be able to show why you are a believer in God, why you worship the Lord Jesus Christ, why you trust in His atoning sacrifice, and why you make Him the regulator of your life. Ask the Lord to help you to go to work with Bible reasons at your fingers' ends; for these are the best of reasons, and bear a high authority about them; so that when the question is put to you, "Is it true?" you may be able to say, "Yes, it is true, and this is why it is true. At such a time God revealed Himself to me in His grace, and opened my blind eyes to see things in a true light." When the mind is established, the heart is more likely to be firm. Know your duty and the arguments for it, and you are the more likely to be steadfast in the hour of temptation. 3. Next, take care that you always proceed with deep sincerity. Superficial profession soon ends in thorough apostasy. Only heart-work will stand the fire. We need a religion which we can die with. 4. This being done, accustom yourself to act with solemn determination before God on every matter which concerns morals and religion. Many very decent people are not self-contained, but are dependent upon the assistance of others. They are like the houses which our London builders run up so quickly in long rows; if they did not help to keep each other up they would all tumble down at once, for no one of them could stand alone. How much there is of joint-stock-company religion, wherein hypocrites and formalists keep each other in countenance. Where things are not quite so bad as this, yet there is too little personal establishment in the faith. So many people have a "lean-to" religion. If their minister, or some other leading person were taken away, their back wall would be gone, and they would come to the ground. We have need nowadays to set our face as a flint against sin and error. We must purpose in our own heart what we will do, and then stand to our purpose. Happy he who dares to be in the right with two or three. Happier still is he who will stand in the right, even if the choice two or three should quit it. He who can stand alone is a man indeed; every man of God should be such. 5. Once more, when your determination is formed act in the light of eternity. Do not judge the situation by the king's threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved. It may be that you will be discharged from your situation unless you can wink at wrong and be the instrument of injustice. Be content to lose place rather than to lose peace. Now I am sure that these good men believed in immortality, or they would never have dared the violence of the flames. These brave men dared the rage of an infuriated tyrant because they saw Him who is invisible, and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. You also must come to live a great deal in the future, or else you will miss the chief fountain of holy strength. God make us champions of His holy cause! Heroism can only be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. Humbly yielding your whole nature to the power of the Divine Sanctifier, you will be true to your Lord even to the end. II. But now, secondly, IF YOU CANNOT SAY THAT IT IS TRUE, WHAT THEN? If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you cannot say, "It is true," how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ's cross, and are willing to follow Him at all hazards, then hearken to me and learn the truth. 1. Do not make a profession at all. If it be not true that you renounce the world's idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should profess to be what he is not; it is a sin of supererogation, a superfluity of naughtiness. 2. If you have made a profession, and yet it is not true, be honest enough to quit it; for it can never be right to keep up a fraud. A false profession is a crime, and to persevere in it is a presumptuous sin. Will you, then, go back to your old ways? 3. I am sure you will if you cannot answer the question of my text; but remember, that in so doing you will have to belie your consciences. Many of you who are not firm in your resolves yet know the right. You will never be able to get that light out of your eyes which has shone into them from God's word. You can never again sin so cheaply as others; it will be wilfulness and obstinacy in your case. 4. Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed; he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. 5. If your avowal of faith in Jesus and opposition to sin is not true you had better withdraw it and be silent; for by a groundless pretence you will

dishonour the cause of God, and cause the enemy to take up a reproach against His people. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had stood before Nebuchadnezzar and had made a compromise, it would have dishonoured the name of the Lord. Suppose they had said, "O king, we believe in Jehovah, but we hardly know what to do in our peculiar circumstances. We desire to please thee, and we also dread the thought of the burning fiery furnace, and therefore we must yield, though it greatly grieves us." Why, they would have cast shame upon the name of Israel. O, do not talk about principle, and then pocket your principles because they are unfashionable, or will cost you loss and disrepute. If you do this you will be the enemies of the King of kings. 6. I want you to remember also that if you renounce Christ, if you quit Him in obedience to the world's commands, you are renouncing eternal life and everlasting bliss. You may think little of that to-night, because of your present madness; but you will think differently before long. Soon you may lie on a sick bed gazing into eternity, and then your estimate of most things will undergo a great change. III. But now, thirdly, let us consider what follows IF IT BE TRUE. I hope that many here can lay their hands upon their hearts, and quietly say, "Yes, it is true; we are determined not to bow before sin, come what may." 1. Well, then, if it is true, I have this much to say to you: state this when it is demanded of you. Declare your resolve. This will strengthen it in yourself and be the means of supporting it in others. Is it true? 2. Then joyfully accept the trial which comes of it. Shrink not from the flames. Settle it in your minds that, by Divine grace, no loss, nor cross, nor shame, nor suffering, shall make you play the coward. Say, like the holy children, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." They did not cringe before the king, and cry, "We beseech thee, do not throw us into the fiery furnace. Let us have a consultation with thee, O king, that we may arrange terms. There may be some method by which we can please thee, and yet keep our religion." No; they said, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." You may lose a great deal for Christ, but you will never lose anything by Christ. You may lose for time, but you will gain for eternity; the loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting. 3. If it be true that you are willing thus to follow Christ, reckon upon deliverance. Nebuchadnezzar may put you into the fire, but he cannot keep you there, nor can he make the fire burn you. The enemy casts you in bound, but the fire will loosen your bonds, and you will walk at liberty amid the glowing coals. You shall gain by your losses, you shall rise by your down-castings. Many prosperous men owe their present position to the fact that they were faithful when they were in humble employments. Do right for Christ's sake, without considering any consequences, and the consequences will be right enough. If you take care of God's cause, God will take care for you. 4. If you will stand up for Jesus, and the right, and the true, and the pure, and the temperate, and the good, not only will you be delivered, but you will do great good. This Nebuchadnezzar was a poor piece of goods; yet he was compelled to acknowledge the power of these three decided and holy men. The man who can hide his principles, and conceal his beliefs, and do a little wrong, is a nobody. He is a chip in the porridge; he will flavour nothing. But he who does what he believes to be right, and cannot be driven from it—that is the man. You cannot shake the world if you let the world shake you; but when the world finds that you have grit in you, they will let you alone. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to feel the influence of these men. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Hebrew Youths*.—I. THE SINGULAR CONDUCT OF THESE YOUTHS. There stand three men upright—when all are bowing—who dare to disobey the king's command—who know a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate. . . . Well for us if we have learnt to judge our actions otherwise than by the popular voice and popular example. If our inquiry is, not what saith the multitude, but what saith the Lord. II. THE SINGULAR TRIAL OF THESE HEBREW YOUTHS. The punishment which Nebuchadnezzar pronounced against those who should disobey his decree was that they should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. This form of punishment seems to have been common in Babylon. Jeremiah speaks of "Zedekiah and Ahab whom the King of Babylon roasted in the fire." That it was so, is moreover evident from the fact that the furnace was to be heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated." It was in the face, then, of such a terrible doom that these youths determined to stand true to their God—that they refused to conform to the idolatry with which they were surrounded. What a trial of their faith; and what strong faith must theirs have been which enabled them in the face of all this to remain "stedfast and unmoveable." "Though he slay them, yet will they trust in Him." Nebuchadnezzar, unfortunately, is not the only one who has presumed to dictate a religion to his fellows, and sought to enforce his command by the stern logic of the flames. Not long ago we visited the old city of St. Andrews, and saw where Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart suffered amid the fires "for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ—the reek from the faggots infecting as

many as it did blow upon." And, as we cast our eyes over the continent of Europe, many similar spectacles rise to view. Now in France it is a Shuch, in Bohemia a Huss; and has not Spain of late been but reaping the harvest which it sowed when kings and nobles gathered themselves together and looked with un pitying eye upon the followers of Christ suffering amid the blazing piles? III. THE SINGULAR DELIVERANCE OF THESE HEBREW YOUTHS (*W. R. Inglis*). *The Fiery Trial*.—Not unwisely did an old Scottish matron once remark, that "It is easy to utter the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, when there is plenty of bread in the house." If, however, one has no supply, and is without the means of procuring a morsel, strong faith is required to present the supplication aright. Similarly, it may be averred that it is easy to confess Christ when no pains and penalties are attached to the avowal of belief in Him. Most probably the self-confident and boastful would fail in such a testing time; while the meek and retiring would be borne through, because constrained by felt weakness to lean on the Almighty arm. It has been often and truly said, that dying grace is not given till the dying hour; neither is the grace of humble boldness in the cause of the Lord fully conferred, till there arise an occasion demanding its exercise. Twenty-three years appear by this time to have passed since Daniel was elevated to the position of ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and his three special friends made governors of subordinate districts. Meanwhile, much prosperity had been experienced by the empire in all departments. Nebuchadnezzar, it is believed, had during these years overcome not a few kingdoms bordering on his own. Egypt had fallen under his sway, exactly as Jeremiah had prophesied; and to the west or the south of Chaldea there were none strong enough to dispute the sovereignty of the king of Babylon. Forgetting the lesson that had been taught him by his dream regarding the compound image, he began to fancy that to his idol-god Bel, or Baal, his great success was wholly due. Evidently without asking advice from Daniel, he proposed to force all who were under his government to do homage to this idol. As many various nations had been compelled to submit to himself, he was resolved that they should also worship his god. Where was Daniel at this period? Possibly he had already told his master that he must be excused from attending at the dedication of the image; and as the king could not run the risk of losing his services, his absence was permitted. Possibly he may have been in attendance on the monarch during the worship of the idol, and refused to bow down before it; but his great influence prevented anyone from daring to accuse him. But much more probable is it that he was absent from the capital, and engaged at a distance in connection with some pressing business of the State. He may have been even sent away purposely by the king, and thus have had no opportunity of taking part with his brethren in their protest against idolatry. Had he been present, we may well judge that he would either have stood beside them, as being guilty like themselves, or, if unaccused himself, would have used his utmost efforts with Nebuchadnezzar on their behalf. The monarch was much excited. He caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to be instantly brought before him. Plainly did he repeat his command, that bow they must to his idol, or die. I. WE SHOULD PREFER SUFFERING TO SIN. To have bowed the knee to the golden image on the plain of Dura would have been an aggravated transgression on the part of any of the sons of Jacob. They knew well that there was no other God but the God of Israel, and the first and second commandments of the moral law strictly forbade such an act. Better to run the risk of the threatened punishment than, by yielding, to dishonour their Creator, and cast away their souls. Marvellously were these confessors of Jehovah rescued from the devouring fire; for the Lord, whom they honoured, had great purposes to serve by their preservation. Suppose, however, they had been burned to ashes, would they have been losers by their fidelity? Assuredly not! Only the sooner had they reached the rest that remaineth to the people of God. An early confessor of the Lord Jesus was summoned to the presence of the Emperor of Rome, and threatened with banishment, if he dared to remain a Christian. "Me thou canst not banish," was the noble answer, "for the world is my Father's house." "But I will take thy life," said the Emperor. "Nay, but thou canst not, sire, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will deprive thee of thy treasures," continued the Emperor. "I have no treasures that thou canst seize," was the response, "for my treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there." "But I will drive thee away from man, and thou shalt have no friend left." "Nay, that thou canst not," replied the bold and faithful witness. "for I have a Friend in heaven, from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee. There is nothing thou canst do to hurt me." Where the risk of loss is greatly less than in the cases to which we have just referred, it is always far better to suffer than to sin. The draper lad in the north of Ireland, who would not assist his employer to cheat a customer, and was turned adrift in consequence, was no loser by his integrity. Through this very circumstance he became a minister of the gospel, and afterwards rose to an eminent

position in his profession. There is little likelihood that any of us will be exposed to such a fiery ordeal as the three Jews in Babylon. We may, however, have to meet with much petty persecution, if we faithfully follow the Lamb, and show by our lives that we are His. II. LET US TAKE CARE THAT WE BOW NOT DOWN BEFORE THE GOLDEN IMAGE ERECTED AMONGST OURSELVES. Not in Britain only, but in every land under the sun, does this idol lift up its head. Those who worship at its shrine probably embrace by far the largest number of every kindred, and tribe, and nation. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," says Jehovah. Yet in the very temple of God is this idol set up by its votaries, and crowds of worshippers devotedly bend the knee. No sweet music of sackbut, or psaltery, or harp, is needed to induce men to adore. This idolatry is even considered respectable. In America this idol is irreverently known by the name of "The Almighty Dollar"; with us it is simply called wealth or money. A mercantile man, who had an extensive acquaintance with various classes of the community, used to state it as his serious opinion that the love of money ruins perhaps more souls than even strong drink. Like other sins, this mammon-worship never dwells alone. In due time it becomes the fruitful parent of many vile things, which will, ultimately, develop into scorpions, to torment the soul that nourished them. How comforting it is to know that imperishable and unalienable wealth can be had simply for the accepting. "The GIFT of God is eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

The Fiery Furnace:—How long after the events recorded in the last chapter the setting up of this great image took place, it is impossible to tell. The presumption is, however, that several years had elapsed. The building of this huge image to the favourite god of Nebuchadnezzar, probably the god of battles, was most likely to celebrate and commemorate, with suitable splendour, the final triumph of his arms over all the nations of the earth (v. 4). The profound impression made upon his mind by the recalling and interpretation of his awful dream by Daniel seems to have faded away, since we find him setting up an image of gold and requiring all his subjects to worship it. This was a tyrannical act of uniformity, intended to consolidate the religion as well as the politics of the empire. We do not know where Daniel, Ezekiel, and other eminent Israelites were at this time, or how far the mass of captive Jews complied with this decree; but it seems that the three young princes, who with Daniel had been faithful in refusing to eat the king's meat, and who had been subsequently elevated to high political office in the province of Babylon, refused, or at least failed, to do homage to the idol.

I. THE RAGE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Nebuchadnezzar was at the summit of his power; he had introduced a great statue, in the form of an image of his god of battle, to celebrate his universal sovereignty; his decree of universal obedience to his god, which was also an act of homage to himself, seems to have been generally obeyed. The defection of these princes from obedience seems to have reminded him that, after all, there were those who looked beyond him and higher than his fancied god for a true king. There were but two courses open to him. He must either at once recognise the right of the Hebrews to their religious liberty or he must suppress them. To do the former would be to unsay and undo all that was involved in the great celebration now going on; whereas, by summarily enforcing the decree of uniformity, especially upon the persons of the high officers of state, he thought he might increase his power, and by one stroke of severity bring all his subjects unto submission. There are several points of evidence that his conscience was aroused as well as his anger. When we refuse to obey conscience, we are always apt to fly into a rage and do the thing forbidden by conscience with ten times more violence. This king of Babylon is only the type of all the world-powers that have succeeded him, who have been enraged against the faith of God's elect, and have sought to destroy that faith by violence.

1. The arrest of the three princes. "Then they brought these men before the king." How often since have the children of faith been accused and brought before kings and their magistrates, to give an account of their faith and answer for their disobedience to some ungodly and tyrannical decree uttered for the purpose of destroying the "faith once delivered to the saints." The very means of which heathen kings make use to suppress the faith, is made the instrument of God for its universal spread.

2. The fearful alternative. The king seems, after all, to have greatly respected these princes, and secretly desired to find a way of escape for them. The sight of them and the remembrance of their faithful service and of the peculiar marks of Divine favour which had been bestowed upon them for a moment cooled down his rage.

3. The vain boast of the king. "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" This bit of vain boasting reminds us of the speech of Pharaoh to Moses: "Who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." (Ex. v. 2.) Also of the defiant proclamation of Sennacherib to Hezekiah and Jerusalem: "Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country

out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" (II. Kings, xviii. 35.) And yet God destroyed Pharaoh, and put a hook in Sennacherib's nose by which He led him in ignominy back to his own city, to perish miserably at the hands of his sons. How empty the boasts, how unbounded the folly of men who challenge Jehovah to conflict! II. THE DEFENCE OF THE PRINCES. 1. Not careful to answer. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." Had the Holy Spirit already whispered in their hearts the instruction which Jesus afterward gave His disciples? "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you, in that same hour, what ye shall speak." (Matt. x. 19.) How calmly these young men stood there before the king! God will answer for us when the emergency comes. Argument will not avail against your arbitrary power over us, or against the injustice of your tyrannical decree. 2. Their confession of faith. "Our God whom we serve." In making their answer, they distinctly announced that they believed in the one only and true God, and Him they served. This was their justification for not bowing down to the idol which the king had set up, nor worshipping any of his gods. Their faith was not speculative, but real. It dominated their lives, and secured their glad service. The full power of faith does not always manifest itself until the time of need comes, but, when once the emergency arises, faith springs to the fore and asserts itself. 3. Their confidence in God. "If it be so, our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Notice this, that though their faith was absolute as to God himself and their relation to Him, yet it was not absolute as to their deliverance out of the fiery furnace, only as to God's ability to deliver them. 4. Ready to die. If the worst came to the worst, they were quite ready to die. III. IN THE FURNACE AND OUT AGAIN. God does not promise His saints immunity from suffering in this world; on the other hand, He tells us that He has chosen us in a furnace of affliction. 1. The princes are cast into the furnace. 2. An awful warning. Now a strange thing happened. As the three men who bore these princes to the furnace approached the open door to cast down their helpless victims, a sudden draught of air sent out a volume of flame which slew them on the spot. God seemed to give warning then and there that it was a dangerous thing to touch His saints or do them harm. 3. The astonishment of the king. A while ago he was in a furious rage; now we see him trembling with astonished fear. Not only did the swift death that overtook his three mighty men startle him, but as he looked into the raging flames he saw a wondrous sight. Here was a fact on which he had not counted. By some mysterious power the young men "had quenched the violence of the fire" (Heb. xi. 34), and they were accompanied by the presence of another man, who seemed to have them under his protection. It is not necessary for us to attempt any discussion of this marvellous miracle of deliverance. Whether there was an actual and objective fourth man in the furnace with the three princes, and whether that fourth one was the very Son of God come down in a temporary bodily form, as perhaps the angel of the Lord, or whether the king saw a vision, is of no material importance. That there was a miracle is clear from the fact of the safety of the princes in the flame. There is nothing antecedently impossible in the literal truth of the whole matter. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I. Pet. iii. 12, 13.) (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *Three Nonconformists*.—I. THE UNHOLY OBJECT THAT WAS OFFENSIVE TO THEIR CONSCIENCES. It was like a proud, arrogant, Eastern despot, with an ever victorious army, to signalise a great triumph, by setting up some great colossal image. It was more than a memorial, it was a deification of himself. These Babylonian monarchs were not content with being kings or even priests, they must be gods, the object of their people's veneration. It helped them to keep their iron heel upon the necks of their subjects, and feed their own vanity. II. THE NATURAL HATRED OF THEIR ENEMIES. This was their chance. They had been watching and waiting for this. It is no wonder that they seized upon it with avidity. There is no love among the children of darkness for the sons of light. The saved of the cross have ever their cross to carry. There are shopmates and associates who are never slow to make you the butt of all their spleen, and to pour out all the malice of their soul upon you. The high offices which these youths held in the State exposed them to the greater vehemence of persecution. It is the way of the world to foster hostility against those above them, and to seek an opportunity to overthrow such. There are men who will sneak into power over your heads, if there be no other way. Yet it is better to endure with Christ than to go alone without Him. III. THE REFUSED DOOR OF ESCAPE. When their accusers had laid the charge before the king, there seems reason to believe that the king's first flush of anger was at the sense of his possible loss—he could not endure to think that three of his most capable

rulers had been so foolish as to expose themselves to death. He could afford to lose a whole host of such accusers better than lose one Hebrew youth. Possibly, also, the shrewd king saw through their too thinly veiled jealousy. Anyhow, the king offered them a way of escape. His words in effect suggest what we pleasantly call diplomacy, "Just say you blundered, you did not properly understand the meaning of my edict, and I will have the whole ceremony gone through again for your sakes, then you can bow down and save yourselves." Many of us would have fallen into that trap; it was so ingenious a compromise. It needed great decision of character to answer that aright. One day the officer came to Bunyan in his prison, on Bedford Bridge, and said, "Now, Bunyan, if you like to go free, you can; there is only one trifling condition imposed, and that is that you abstain from preaching." "If that is it," answered Bunyan, "then I cannot go out free, for as sure as I reach yonder field, I shall stand up and preach Christ." That one condition was the impossible condition. You have your battles to fight, perhaps the issues are not so clear as in the cases before us, yet I pray that you may be quick to discern the right from the wrong, and swift to do the right. IV. Now a great moral courage like this must be born of GREAT CONVICTIONS. With Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, convictions were worth having, and worth dying for. To these youths, God was greater, higher than the king. God was first, the king second. Their first consideration was not their prospects, but their duty. He has not the martyr spirit who acts indifferently. When you do not bow to the world's edict, expect not to be credited with conscientious convictions, it will be put down to obstinacy. When John Bunyan refused to keep silent, he was obstinate. When these Hebrews refused to worship idols, they were obstinate. So their persecutors say, but posterity has accorded them justice, and declared it an act of conscience; a spirit of fidelity to God. V. THREE THINGS THAT CREATED THEIR NOBLE CONDUCT. 1. They made religion a personal thing. It was not a matter of the state or community, but of realised individuality; and personal responsibility to God. No other but a personal religion is worth the name. No other will save your soul. 2. They had repented towards God, and put their trust in Him. They had turned from evil with mind and heart, and set themselves to seek righteousness. 3. They put eternal things before temporal. They saw the world in its true light, and took it at its true estimate. The eternal endures, the temporal passes away. (*F. James.*) *Devotion to Principle*.—I. THEY HAD CONVICTIONS. They were not merely Israelites in name; they believed in Israel's God. It would not be surprising if, so far from home and under such adverse conditions, the memory of their ancestral religion had gradually ceased and their devotion faded out. But their piety was more, apparently, than an inheritance; it had, before their transportation, been ingrained in heart and conscience and life. If religion be a mere matter of form, it may be changed as readily as one changes his coat; but when it takes possession of the soul it keeps company with a man for ever. Hence the importance of convictions. They believed in God, in the truths which He had revealed to them, in the moral responsibilities which He had imposed upon them. The word "belief" is, by some, derived from the Saxon *by-lifian*, that is, the thing we live by. II. THEY WERE LOYAL TO THEIR CONVICTIONS. They were called on to pass through a most trying ordeal. The day of the dedication of the golden image was at hand. What should they do? 1. They might avoid all trouble by joining in the acclamations of the multitude and prostrating themselves before the golden image. 2. They might prostrate themselves as a mere matter of form, saying, "After all, religion is of the heart; and God will know that inwardly we are devoted to Him." But compromise, in a question of right or wrong, is the subterfuge of the weak and unworthy. 3. The only alternative was to stay indoors that day. Why not? Then must they have said to one another, "We are three cowards." God wanted them to go out into the plain of Dura and preach a sermon on heroic piety. III. GOD TOOK CARE OF THEM. He always takes care of His own. Here is a sure word of promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *On the Conduct of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*:—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were three very young men, worshippers of the true God in a heathen land. They were exposed to much persecution and distress on account of their religion, yet they were enabled to act with faithfulness and prudence "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The true Christian will be obliged to stem the surrounding stream; there will, there must, be opposition; if he were of the world, the world would love its own; but because he is not of the world, but is chosen out of the world, therefore the world will hate him. Now let us imagine a person, and especially a young person, such as were the three individuals mentioned in the text, in such circumstances. How difficult oftentimes and painful the line of duty! How much need is there of some animating example, or affectionate and faithful advice, to keep such a person from offending against conscience, and forgetting his obligations to his Redeemer! To be faithful

where others are unfaithful—to worship God truly in a family, a parish, a neighbourhood, in which almost all around us conspire to forget Him. It can be performed only by the aid of Him who is at once a Comforter and a Sanctifier. It appears from the narrative, that Nebuchadnezzar the king set up a golden image, and commanded all his subjects to fall down and worship it. In like manner, in the present day, is sin in its various shapes an idol which the world delight to serve. By nature we are its slaves and votaries; and it is not till we have learned, like these three young men, to come out from the world and to worship the true God, that we begin to feel the burden of this service. New idols are constantly presented to confirm the sinner in his slavery, and to tempt the true Christian from his allegiance to God. Babylon surely abounded with idols enough; yet a new one must be set up for the occasion; and thus the world is always varying its temptations. Whatever be the last evil custom, the last new mode of sinning, men are expected to follow it. Thus, no sooner was the command given, than “princes, judges, governors, captains, treasurers, sheriffs, counsellors, and rulers,” with the people at large, all with one accord eagerly flocked to the idolatrous rite. These three persons only are mentioned as not complying with the order—a proof that even the most youthful Christian ought not to be ashamed of religion, or to reject it; namely, because there may be but few around him who think as seriously as himself. Should all the rich, the wise of this world, the gay, the splendid, be against serious religion; should a thousand new baits and allurements be added to seduce us from it; should unsuspected dangers and persecutions, spring up every moment around our path; yet we may learn from the example before us a lesson of faith, and constancy, and reliance upon God. These three young men, we find, did not court martyrdom or persecution; they did not break out into violent invectives against other persons; they gave no willing offence—thus teaching another most useful and important lesson. The Christian is not to affect anything that may justly draw down the opposition of the world. He ought, as much as in him lies, to live peaceably with all men—but where this is impossible, and the offence arises entirely from the side of the world who dislike his earnest piety, without being able to impeach his character or conduct, he may learn from the example before us how to act so as at once to glorify God and to preserve his own peace of mind. Behold, then, this illustrious example! Firm and decided for Jehovah, these three martyrs approached the eventful spot. Life or death was the alternative. No human way of escape was open before them. Thus tempted to waver, on the one hand, by dread of torments and death, they might also be allured, on the other, by hopes of reward. They might even be ready to plead that the sacrifice was but small. These and various other reasonings might naturally enter their minds; and, had not Faith been powerfully in exercise, would, doubtless, have overcome their resolution. But this Divine grace was able, amidst all, to preserve them. Were this Divine grace existing in full vigour in our minds, even the youngest and most timid Christian would be able to withstand all the artifices of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to say with Joshua of old, “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Instead of being ashamed or afraid of confessing the name of a crucified Redeemer, and of living as becomes His faithful disciples, we should use the decided language before us; and, placing our whole trust and confidence in the supporting arm of an all gracious Father, should learn to do everything, and bear everything, rather than forsake the cause of our Redeemer. There are four things which are often powerful obstacles in the path of the youthful Christian; namely, the allurements of pleasure, the commands of authority, the dread of persecution, and the specious solicitations of friendship and kindness. All these occurred in the case before us; and to a far greater degree than usually, or indeed ever, takes place in the present age. 1. They overcame, in the first place, the allurements of pleasure. What a festive scene was before them! The “cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music,” united their persuasive notes to tempt them to sin. Pleasure assumed all its most winning and seductive shapes to court their compliance. Yet, though in the midst of health and youth, they steadily refused to join the multitude to do evil; they accounted the reproach of Christ better than all the poisoned baits of the world. They were, doubtless, considered by those around them as gloomy and precise persons, who railed at what others thought innocent pleasures—but they knew the side they had taken; they knew also the power and love of their heavenly Parent, and they feared not the result. 2. Neither, again, could the commands of authority tempt them to commit this sin. They were strangers and captives in a foreign land; the hand of power was over them; they were represented as factious persons, as enemies at once to the government and the religion of the country; Nebuchadnezzar, a despotic monarch, was infuriated against them—yet they stood firm. They knew that the first authority to be obeyed is God. 3. The dread of persecution, we have already seen, they also man-

fully overcame; nor did they less resist the specious solicitations of kindness and friendship. Many a young Christian, who could have braved all the terrors of open persecution, has given way to this temptation, and has for ever ruined his soul, for the sake of that friendship with the world which is enmity against God. Not so these illustrious sufferers. Though they had received innumerable kindnesses from Nebuchadnezzar, and were in the way of receiving many more; though nourished by his bounty, and loaded with his favours; yet when religion was to be the sacrifice, they would not, they durst not make it. The result is well known; God wrought a miracle in their favour; His presence was with them in the fire; while their persecutors were consumed in the very act of casting them into the flames—an awful proof of the danger of opposing the cause or the people of God. Not even the garments of these triumphant confessors were singed; nothing was consumed in the furnace except their bonds. They became more free than they were before they were thrown into the flame; and in like manner the Christian, in the present day, who resolutely bears the cross of his Redeemer, often finds that the more he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, the more he enjoys freedom and happiness in his own mind. His shackles are consumed in the fire, and he is frequently rendered more bold and persevering in the cause of God, by the very efforts which are made to overcome his constancy. (*Christian Observer*.)

The Three Witnesses on the Plains of Dura.—I. The lessons taught by the narrative of the Holy children. 1. As to the reality of faith. (1) It resulted in constancy. They were perfectly respectful, and yet absolutely determined on their course. (2) It resulted in a proper estimation of their duties of loyalty to their sovereign and of devotion to their God. (3) It resulted in perfect trust that God would keep and sustain them. 2. As to the reward of faith. In their hopes they were not disappointed; for they had the presence of God which saved them. (Isa. xliii. 2; lxiii. 9.) II. Application of the narrative to our own times. The plain of Dura is a picture of the world; Nebuchadnezzar and his image portray the mammon-worship to which mankind is called by common consent and by every device. But the true servants of God refuse; they cannot serve God and mammon. 1. The choice requires a deep and abiding faith, which—(1) Dares to be singular; and—(2) Is courageous, constant, persevering, and fearless. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were not only preserved, but they were also the means of advancing the cause of true religion in the kingdom of Babylon; and so it will be found to be the case with those who suffer for the truth. (*F. Thorne*.)

The Refusal to Worship the Golden Image.—It has sometimes and justly been remarked, that truth is far more wonderful than fiction. Events certainly have transpired in the history of individual men which no fictitious narrative can approach. I. In the first place, observe, THE MANDATE OF IMPERIAL POWER WHICH HAD BEEN ISSUED. The person from whom the mandate now referred to had emanated, was Nebuchadnezzar, the monarch of the vast and gorgeous empire of Babylon. Now in the mandate before us there was heinous and presumptuous sin; and we shall endeavour to notice the elements of which that heinous and presumptuous sin consisted. And we remark—1. That it was a tyrannical encroachment beyond the just limits of civil authority. The monarch of Babylon had not, nor has any other monarch or person invested with worldly station or worldly power, the right of anywise controlling or attempting to influence the religious professions and religious deportment of his subjects. Human governments were created by Divine arrangement, in order that monarchs might order things aright in their secular or political capacity; and their legitimate power of interference extends only to overt acts which are socially beneficial, on the one hand, or which are socially pernicious and injurious, on the other. Obedience to reasonable commands in this respect is an obligation; but obedience to commands attempting to control opinion and conscience is no obligation at all. 2. Again, you will observe of this mandate, that it was a daring impiety against the majesty and claims of the only true God. You doubtless remember at once the law which that Creator had promulgated in early times, in direct denunciation of the apostacy referred to, pronounced by His own voice and written by His own finger—"Thou shalt not have any gods before Me." "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c. 3. Again, you will observe of this mandate, that it was a cruel outrage on the impulses of benevolence and of humanity. To threaten men that if they did not fall down and worship a golden image they should be cast into a furnace of fire there to endure the very worst and most excruciating agonies which the human frame can undergo, was, indeed, beyond expression savage. And here we cannot but observe an illustration of the keenness of despotic power in all periods of time. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS IMPERIAL MANDATE WAS TREATED. 1. And first, you will observe that there was firmness. Let us be "valiant for the truth upon the earth"; and let it be our constant aim, that being "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," we may indulge the glowing hope of being ultimately united in their glory. 2. And again, you

will observe, that besides firmness there was also meekness. There was no ebullition of self-sufficiency or of anger; there was respect for regal dignity and station—there was forbearance, there was quietness, there was readiness to suffer; they resisted the wrong, but they did not rebel against the penalty. It is always important, in advocating the rights of conscience and of religious truth, that in the same manner mildness should be blended with courage, and gentleness with resolution. The want of this spirit among those who have pleaded the right of conscience and of truth has often inflicted deep injury upon the best and the holiest of causes. There has been the indulgence of a rugged dogmatism and vehemence; there has been not seldom a resort to the use of force, the fighting of battles, and an endeavour after retaliation; and even when revenge would have struck deep injury upon both liberty and religion, and would have mournfully retarded and held back the time of their progress and the era of final freedom.

III. THE PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THE TREATMENT OF THAT MANDATE WAS FOUNDED, AND UPON WHICH IT WAS JUSTIFIED. You will observe, in the analysis of the narrative, that they were principles worthy of the occasion, and amply vindicating the course which was pursued. 1. Observe, there was conviction of their duty and responsibility to God. Their language is—"our God whom we serve." They were endowed with reverence and with love to Him, and these principles, associated with the relationship they embodied, prevented by moral necessity that they could be guilty of the glaring impiety of adoring publicly, in the presence of immense masses, a thing graven by art and man's device, created by man's base passions for man's base and bad designs. In the principle in this manner enunciated, you will observe, they took the highest ground under the highest influences—religion, imparted and preserved by the Spirit of God. And this is alone worthy of the occasion when the rights of conscience and of truth are to be vindicated. 2. Again, you will observe also, there was confidence in the power and readiness of God to deliver. We have seen that the monarch of Babylon uttered this challenge—"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" And then they replied—"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Let us cherish the confidence now. Let us cherish it for ourselves, and know that "nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord." Let us cherish it in behalf of the cause which is to us dear as our immortal spirits—the cause of the Redeemer's glory in the salvation of man and the conversion of the world; and let us never be guilty even of dreaming of such an era as when the church shall be in danger. False systems, which have usurped the name, may be in danger, but the true church never. Can the throne of the eternal Father be in danger? IV. THE RESULTS IN WHICH THE TREATMENT WAS VINDICATED AND JUSTIFIED WAS MADE TO ISSUE. You will observe here what a singular combination of circumstances claims from the narrative our regard. The immediate result was the infliction of the punishment. "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." Observe the method in which that deliverance was accomplished. Lastly, you must observe the characteristics by which this deliverance was distinguished. It was accomplished by the agency of the Son of God; and its characteristics require to be noticed. It was, you will observe, indisputably attested. There was nothing equivocal in the mode by which the deliverance was known. And this only indicates a general principle in the Divine interpositions—that when God interposes for the welfare and deliverance of His people, there is nothing uncertain; there is not such an intermingling of secondary instrumentalities that we are unable to separate or to discern the interference of the power of the great First Cause; there is always something in every event by which a devout and enlightened mind is able to pronounce "God is here; here is the work of God." And it is a delightful fact in the history of the church now, as it will be in the annals of the church in time to come, that wherever God interferes for the welfare of His people He accomplishes His work thoroughly. We observe again, that the deliverance produced a vast public impression. The impression, as it was immediately produced, is noticed in the last verses of the chapter: "Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon." The decree manifested a mighty impression on the mind of

the monarch. Some more especial lessons. 1. And, in the first place, we learn from the narrative before us the value of early piety. 2. Again, we learn also the immense importance of decision for God under the most difficult of circumstances. If the example of these Hebrew youths at this crisis had been wanting, even had their personal piety remained intact, how evil would have been the consequence! Had they with some mental weakness bowed, or had they been absent far away under some plausible pretence or excuse—how different would have been the result! Not a voice to be raised for God amidst that vast assembly, and the honour of God deeply and painfully compromised in that nation and other nations for ages! 3. And then, finally, we learn the folly of opposition to the people and to the cause of God. It cannot be hindered by the blandishments or by the opposition of the world; it stands aloft amidst the wreck of empires, and it suffers not amidst the fury of contending nations; it rides upon the whirlwind and directs the storm, and never shall cease its manifestation until it shall establish an empire bounded only by the limits of the universe, and terminating only with the destruction of the world. See to it that you oppose not that, individually, or by combination, which is indestructible. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, and the Lord shall have you in derision"; and so shall it be, until you shall "perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." (*J. Parsons.*) *The Three Jews in Babylon*:—It is truly a sad and awful spectacle—to behold a great monarch, and the personages representing the population of a great empire, with perhaps a numerous throng of the common people, assembled for such a purpose. Consider what man should be on earth! Reflect, that the right state would have been, that all mankind should be intelligent and solemn worshippers of the true God, of Him alone; the merely right state, below which, the scene becomes a spectacle of horror and misery, for the vital principle of all good is wanting. Think, then, of that great empire, that prodigious multitude of human spirits (and nearly all the rest of mankind being sunk equally low) ready to prostrate themselves in adoration of a figure of metal, from the hands of the artificers. Look at them in such prostrations, all over the world, and say, that man is not fallen! Between that state, and the simply, merely, right state, how awful the difference! In the incalculable human mass of a whole idolatrous world, we are shown here and there an individual, or a diminutive combination of individuals, little shining particles, specimens of what the right state of the world would have been. But if they were specimens of no more than what was right—then, what power of thought can estimate, what language describe—that condition of the general substance, from which they shine out in contrast? The right state of the sun is to be one full orb of radiance; that though there be some small spots and dimmer points, it should be in effect a complete and glorious luminary. Imagine, then, if you can, this effulgence extinguished, and turned to blackness, over all its glorious face, excepting here and there a most diminutive point, emitting one bright ray like a small star. What a ghastly phenomenon! and if it continued so, the utter ruin of the system. But such, in the history before us, we behold the condition of the human race—of which that empire was so large a province. We behold three men true and faithful in the grand essential principle, among the innumerable host that were sunk, debased, and lost, as to that which is the supremely essential matter to man. In other pagan lands, however, in the same age, there was not one such. In Babylon, a few. Observe, it is quite in the nature of things that prevailing evil should be ambitious to prevail entirely. And here it was to be brought to the trial, whether any would dare to refuse to be idolaters, in conformity to the whole great assemblage. The history of the design on the part of the monarch would be curious if we could know it. How he should conceive such a project. Were there not gods enough in his city and empire for all the worship and offerings for which the people could spare time and cost? The thing least strange in the case, was perhaps (for he was man), that he should forget what he had learned by experience of the God of Daniel, though, by his own confession at the time, "a God of gods," and superior to all known in his empire or in the world. But, then, was the new god to excel both all them and that God too? If not, what need? and what just claim? and what was to make him thus excel? It is a surmise of some learned men (Grotius) that it might be designed as the act of deifying, or rather of expressing and proclaiming the deification of, his deceased father. At any rate, a very leading prompter in the affair was the monarch's own self-importance. It was for him to show himself lord of even the religion of his subjects. It was for him to constitute a god for them, if he pleased. Then there was the process; an examination of the public, or rather the royal treasures—the gold collected and computed—the consultation and employment of artificers—operations of the smithery—frequent statements or inspections of the progress—perhaps reports circulated through the empire of the grand business that was going on. It is most likely that the imperial mandate to the great men of all the provinces had

been despatched some while before, appointing the time; and that the idol was erected but just immediately against the specified day. This grand assembly was summoned for the act of dedication. The great men had been summoned as a kind of representatives of all the people of the empire. Perhaps not one of them failed to be there from any principle of conscience against idolatry. And as to the willingly compliant conduct of the assembly, one is a little disposed to wonder at the king's having made ready such an expedient of persuasion, as that which he points at, to enforce his command—that is, the furnace, which was prepared and conspicuous near the station of the monarch and the idol. He certainly had not been accustomed to experience any disobedience to his commands. Why, then, such an argument of persuasion at hand? This might be for mere despotic pomp—to impress terror of the very thought of such a thing as disobedience. But it may be suspected that this was possibly done at the instigation of the haters of Daniel and his three friends. Their faith was warned of another Monarch, and also of another fire! a proper fear of whom, and of which, will overcome all other fear. "Fear not them who can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." They were certain to be at the place, without any force used by their enemies. They were assured that, in the present case, there must not be allowed a grand triumphant day to idolatry and the impious pride of power—undisturbed by at least a protest in the name of the Almighty. Was it for them, when their eternal Lord was to be dishonoured, to slink away into a base impunity? And, besides, were they to give to their own people, in captivity there, the lesson and example of betraying, even negatively, their religion, the only true one on earth? They knew their duty, and addressed themselves to perform it. It would seem that this duty devolved on them alone. A question might arise concerning the numerous other Jews then in Babylon—what became of them? Were they placed out of account on this grand occasion? It has been conjectured, in answer, that, as this was to be the solemn, primary act of sanctioning, authorizing, establishing, the new worship, the common people might, in this first instance, be left out of the account as being held of no weight; that it was the chief men only of the empire that were wanted, or held of any value for this purpose. There were, then, three men come on the ground under the fearful vocation to brave the authority, and power, and wrath, of a lofty potentate—the indignation of all his mighty lords, and the rage of a devouring fire. We admire heroic self-devotement in all other situations—we are elated at the view, for instance, of Leonidas and his small band calmly taking their station in Thermopylæ in the face of countless legions. But here was a still nobler position taken, by men who were fit to take it, because they were sure not to desert it. We may suppose the utmost calmness—the most unostentatious manner in these three men; that belongs to real invincible fortitude. And they had no occasion to begin with parade—to make a flourish of premature zeal! Exhibition enough was to come erewhile! They were "to be made a spectacle to God, and to angels, and to men." There was nothing they could need to say; it was past the time for consulting, questioning, or mutual exhortation. They were in the wrong place, if anything remained to be yet decided. But think of the brief interval of suspense and silence between the conclusion of the herald's proclamation and the first note of the signal-music! What would be their sensations in waiting for it to strike? Think of the intensity of listening! How much the soul may be said to live during such moments, when not amazed and stupified! And at whose dictate—under what conviction—were they thus submissively performing, in appearance at least, the most solemn act that human, that created beings can? The mere dictate of a creature, that was one day to become dust. Thus this proud, and numerous, and lordly assembly acknowledged that neither their bodies nor their souls were their own. But so acknowledged, too, the three men that remained standing upright. Their bodies and souls were not theirs to surrender, to a monarch or to an idol. They belonged to another Power; and to Him their bodies, if He should so appoint, were to be offered in sacrifice on that altar which was flaming full in their view. It were going, perhaps, quite to the extreme of possibility, if we should suppose in them such perfect self-possession that they could look around with regret and compassion on this wide field of prostrate and degraded humanity. But they had not long to look; there were vigilant eyes on them, though it seems not those of the king himself. His devotions were interrupted, and turned into surprise and indignation, by accusers of these three men. These accusers well understood their profession. And then, with the true address of sycophant courtiers, they put the alleged impiety in the form of disloyalty. It was as against him that the offence was committed, more than against the god. "They have not regarded thee, O king!" And this very effective art has never been forgotten by the haters and persecutors of the protestors in behalf of true religion. The three recusants of Babylon were instantly ordered into the royal presence.

And the potentate, powerless over the "rage and fury" which agitated him, did yet display some remainder of a reasonable disposition. The truth of the accusation was not to be doubted; but he expressed his amazement at their conduct, as what he could hardly believe against them. He had not long to wait for their decision. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter"; meaning, "we have no thought or deliberation to give to the alternative; no question or hesitation remains to us; we seek no evasion or delay; our decision is absolute, because our duty is plain." Some learned critics have given, as more exactly expressive of the sense of the original, an altered construction of the two verses together, thus, "Whether our God, who is able to deliver us, shall deliver us or not, be it known unto thee," &c.; thus taking away the apparent expression of their assurance that He would deliver them. We cannot know in what degree they did expect any extraordinary Divine interposition, but this construction of their reply exhibits them in a still higher, completer, character of magnanimity and devotement. In the utmost extremity of fury, he ordered the fire to be augmented to a corresponding intensity. "Seven times hotter"—a phrase not of strict numerical import, but meaning the utmost intensity possible, by means of the most effectual fuel that could in haste be supplied. Our martyr, Ridley, slowly consuming at the stake, earnestly entreated, "Give me more fire—more fire!" The binding of these three men was a very superfluous act. But it had a certain judicial appearance; and it exposed them more formally in the character of criminals and victims. And now the consummation, the crowning sanction, would seem to be added to the establishment and authority of the new divinity and worship by a human sacrifice. But the matter was not so to end. It might so have ended without impeachment of the Divine Governor of the world, with respect to these His faithful servants; for He has a right to demand an absolute martyrdom—an actual surrender of life for His cause, and often has required it. But, in this instance, if it had so ended, it would have appeared to the whole empire like a complete triumph and sanction gained to idolatry. There would be, among the great men of the assembly, much self-congratulation that they were no such insane and desperate fanatics. The personal enemies of these three men (and many such they must have had, who hated them for their incorruptible public virtue)—these, too, had now their moment of lively gratification. But the idolatrous chiefs and lords had not all the delight to themselves, that there was at that moment, on that field—the most animated exultation of all, was glowing amidst the flames of the furnace! It is beyond our faculties to conceive the first sensations of men, suddenly plunged into the midst of a vast mass of fire, of the most raging intensity, in their living, susceptible bodies, which even a spark would have hurt, and yet feeling no pain, no terror. We may imagine a momentary amazement, but quickly changed into a full consciousness of exquisite delight. It is beyond our power, however, to bring such a fact to our comprehension. Consider, it is according to natural laws and relations that pleasure is produced, that is, the constituted condition of human pleasure. But when, in a rare instance, by the Divine will and agency, pleasure is to arise from a perfect and stupendous reversal of those natural laws, we are thrown off from any power and means for estimating that pleasure. The attention of Nebuchadnezzar seems to have continued fixed on the fiery receptacle, perhaps with some relenting for what he had done; possibly with some degree of doubt, or suspense of expectation, respecting the consequence. He seems to have been the first to perceive that his fury, and the doom he had awarded, were frustrated. And with that prompt kind of honesty which appears conspicuous in his character, he was the first to proclaim it. Nebuchadnezzar loudly called them to come forth. Had he any authority to do so? He might have left it to the discretion of their splendid visitant and associate to lead them forth when He should judge it the proper time. This once, they were clearly beyond the monarch's jurisdiction. As to the monarch, that space of fire was as a tract of another world. And besides, they could have no wish to come forth. It was the sublimest, most delightful region they had ever dwelt in yet. At length the three men came out from the fire—their celestial companion being left to depart, like Manoah's angel, who ascended in the flame. They were looked upon by the amazed and humiliated assembly of grandees; and the effect of fire had not passed on their very garments or their hair. (*J. Foster.*) *The Fiery Furnace; or, True Principle Exemplified*:—Man is a worshipper. If there were no God before whose shrine he could bend his knees, he would make himself an object of worship. We have a remarkable instance of this in the narrative before us. What was the design of the Babylonian despot in the erection of this colossal image? Two different answers might be given to this question. It was intended either as an expression of his gratitude to the deity who he imagined had so greatly prospered him on the battle-field, or as a representation of himself under the title of the long-expected "Divine Son," or universal sovereign of the world. The fact that he summoned all the great officers of the

empire to be present at its inauguration is a clear proof that this was not an ordinary idol. It is not probable that he would thus have ordered all the officers from their labours and posts of duty merely to add to the magnificence and splendour of an ordinary scene. The proud monarch had something of far greater importance in view; he wished to secure for himself the homage of his chief officers, and through them that of his numerous subjects. Then, the terrible punishment threatened upon disobedience to the royal mandate is a further proof of the great importance the Babylonian despot attached to this ceremony. This threat was in perfect keeping with the despotism of Chaldea, and the spirit of that benighted age. But in spite of the severity of the threat, the three Hebrews were found true to their principles, and dared to oppose the king's impiety. How could they pay homage to an idol? Every principle of their religion, every feeling of their heart, revolted against the very thought. The honour due to their God they will not lavish on their monarch. I. TRUE PRINCIPLES SEVERELY TESTED. Every principle will sooner or later be tried. There is a fiery furnace that will test the principles and motives of every heart. The test in the case of the young Hebrews was peculiarly severe. 1. They had to oppose the will of a powerful benefactor. 2. They had to incur the odium of an excited public. 3. They had to forfeit the honours and emoluments of office. 4. They had to meet death in one of its most terrible forms. II. TRUE PRINCIPLE NOBLY MAINTAINED. 1. Their calm demeanour. True godliness possesses sweet sustaining power. 2. Their strong faith. Their language was the language of faith; the language of a pious heart firmly confiding in the faithfulness of Heaven. Their faith took hold of two things. The power of God: "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." And also His willingness: "And He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." These two elements form the basis of true faith. You confide in that person because you believe him to be both able and willing to befriend you. 3. Their inflexible determination. "But if not, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image." III. TRUE PRINCIPLE ULTIMATELY TRIUMPHANT. Several very important points were gained by this glorious triumph of true principle. 1. The impious ambition of the monarch was checked. 2. The living personality of the "Divine Son" was established. The deities of the Gentiles were the creations of their own fancy. Nebuchadnezzar had probably no faith in them. But the person whom he saw in the "fiery furnace" was not a myth, but a real living person. The God of Shadrach and his companions was a living person, not an imaginary object. We worship not an idea, but a God who has a heart to love us, and an arm to save us. 3. The faith of the weak and the wavering was confirmed. Had their bitter affliction almost driven the poor Hebrew captives into despair? The occurrence on the plain of Dura would revive their hope, and fill them with wonder and gratitude. Many a disconsolate exile would be greatly encouraged, his faith strengthened, and the expiring embers of his religious love fanned into a flame. 4. The welfare of the captive Jews was effectually promoted. Their treatment of the exiles would be more humane and generous; and they would naturally infer that the people whose God would thus interpose on their behalf were not to be despised. 5. The honour of the true God was greatly enhanced. How valuable is vital godliness! It possesses a sustaining power. It brings down upon the soul the richest blessing of God. Be faithful to it. Let its living principles be exemplified in your life. (*J. H. Hughes.*) *Three Heroes*:—Babylonia, whither the Jews were led captive by Nebuchadnezzar, was a pagan, idolatrous country, a circumstance which must have been very distressing to God's faithful people, and added very much of bitterness to the anguish of their enslaved condition. It was a trial heavy enough for the peculiar people to have seen their beautiful city of Jerusalem destroyed—their country turned into a waste howling wilderness—and themselves dragged away from their beloved fatherland into a strange, unfriendly clime. It would have been some relief for them, however, if, in the land of their exile, they had found a people whose religious sympathies and practices had been in harmony with their own—or even if their lot had been cast on some desert, uninhabited isle, where, like John in Patmos, they might have worshipped their God without let or hindrance. But how terribly annoying it must have been—at least, to the thoughtful and devout among them—to be dwelling amidst a people wholly given to idolatry! What was the moral effect of the prevailing idolatries of the Chaldeans upon the Jewish exiles, generally, does not appear—probably it was unfavourable. Still, it is very gratifying to learn that there were some men in Babylonia who defiled not their garments, but kept themselves unspotted from surrounding corruption. I. We learn that EMINENT PIETY MAY BE MAINTAINED AMIDST TRIALS THE MOST SEVERE. We are sometimes tempted to believe that man is the creature of external circumstances—that his character is formed for him—not by him; and that, consequently, he cannot be virtuous, as he is not responsible. The narrative before us is calculated to show the erroneousness of this notion, and to establish the important fact that the

freedom of the human mind is not destroyed, nor the moral agency of man set aside, by any circumstances in which he may be placed, save and except such as involve the loss of reason, or the eclipse of the intellect. It is true, indeed, that we are frequently influenced by circumstances—our habits too often reflect the form and colour of those circumstances by which we are from time to time surrounded. It is well when such circumstances as favour the growth of piety and godliness are permitted to shed their hallowing influence upon our character. But, to the force of evil circumstances—those circumstances which in themselves tend to foster the development of ungodliness and sin—we need not, we ought not, by any means, to yield. We are responsible for our character. We must, every one of us, give an account of himself to God. Never let us forget that our God has made us free, accountable agents; that most reasonably He holds us bound to do our every duty constantly and unflinchingly; and at the last day will admit no plea whatever for the infidelity of which we have been guilty in this life. "Many men are lamenting their misfortunes, and wishing that their place was changed, that they might the more easily live Christianly. If a man cannot be a Christian in the place where he is, he cannot be a Christian anywhere." The Christian life ever has been, and must be, a self-denying, cross-bearing life; and the future glorious eternal reward of Heaven is for them, and them only, who, through good report and evil report, have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. The three pious Hebrews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—were placed amidst sorest trials—as few are in our day—yet they proved faithful to their God. To be dutiful to their God they had to resist the most powerful temptations—to brave most formidable dangers. 1. They had to rebel against royal authority. "King Nebuchadnezzar was what would be called a man of large ideas and vast undertakings. The great empire he had won and consolidated comprised many different nations, with different gods and different forms of religious service. Seeing that all these nations obeyed him as a king, and were subject to his absolute sway, it seemed to him but reasonable that his god should share his triumph, and that, as there was but one civil, so there should be but one religious obedience. He, therefore, determined to set up a vast golden image of his god in the plain of Dura, and that, at a signal given by bands of music, all the persons assembled together in the vast plain at the time of dedication should fall down and worship this image." The religion of Heaven is by no means adverse, but most thoroughly favourable, to civil obedience. Good men have ever been the truest subjects and the best citizens; and the prevalence of godliness among a people is the best guarantee for the stability of the throne that is based on righteousness, and the surest security for the effective carrying out of all such laws as are just and good. But as the sphere of the civil ruler is limited, so are the obligations of the subject. The moral sense cannot be bound by Acts of Parliament; the will cannot be coerced by the magistrate's sword. It was a saying of Napoleon Bonaparte—"My rule ends where that of conscience begins." It would have been well if all civil rulers had recognised this principle. Much bloodshed would have been spared. When the laws of men harmonise with the laws of God there can be no difficulty felt by the good man as to duty in respect to them. But if it is attempted to compel obedience to laws diametrically opposed to the laws of God, then there can remain no doubt as to how the good man must act. We must obey God rather than man. Noble men! no reckless revolutionists, no fanatical politicians were they; but men who understood to what extent they were bound to honour man; and who well understood and deeply felt that there was no consideration which could, by any possibility, free them from their obligation to serve God alone. 2. They had to act in defiance of the popular custom. Grand moral spectacle! Truest heroism this! Here is none of your pitiful time-servers who dare not to differ from the multitude by doing right—here is none of your compromising religious duty by an unhallowed seeming to conform to the world. They did not follow bad customs, lest they should be thought singular. They despised the fashionable religion, and were great and good enough, though Jews, to stand true to their fathers' God in the face of a nation of idolaters. Was not that a brave deed? Warriors never did such a noble thing. Earth's proudest heroes never won such laurels, never deserved such fame! If you would be great in the highest and best sense, dare to be good. If there is one spectacle more contemptible than another, it is that mean-spirited soul whom you see timidly, cowardly crouching down to a popular custom which in his conscience he knows to be wrong, and ignobly following a multitude to do evil. It requires little moral courage, publicly and faithfully to stick to duty when it is popular to do so. It is a comparatively easy thing to wear the Christian name and attend to Christian ordinances when and where it is fashionable to do so. But to dare to be singular, to take sides with "the peculiar people," to endure the world's scorn, to do what few only have heart and conscience to do—that demands sterling piety, no common-place devotedness, more than lukewarm love to God and His

cause. In the present day the temptations to renounce and ignore religion altogether are not such as martyrs knew. Our danger comes from another quarter. Our perils lie hid beneath such religious pretensions as find general favour. It is fashionable, nowadays, to be religious. Only infidels and "our city arabs" are irreligious now. It is a disgrace not to belong to some church or another. The demand is for something more genuine—a counterfeit religion is too wide spread. The form of godliness is abundant. The power of it is rare indeed. Men will be religious; but they are far more eager to gain the world than to save their souls. While they are serving God after a fashion, their hearts are going forth after covetousness. Custom is, as it has ever been, the stern, unyielding foe of all earnest, spiritual, thorough-going Christianity. Men generally have little sympathy with the heartfelt, life-purifying religion of Jesus Christ. "Business is business" with them, and religion has no right to show its face in the warehouse or workshop, in the counting-house or the exchange. Strict morality will not pay; they cannot afford to do right. Their neighbours resort to the "tricks of trade," and cheat, and tell lies, and deceive; and so must they, or they may as well give up business at once. It is all nonsense to talk to them about applying Christian rules to secular callings. It would be perfectly ruinous! And then, as to social usages and domestic habits, what has religion to do with these things? It is all very well to sing and pray, and go to church, too. But you would never think of turning Puritans, and make religion to bear upon dress—upon our homes, and our amusements! "Style" has to be kept up. Appearances must be preserved. We must not be thought mean, &c. Thus thousands talk, and apologise for the most thorough-going conformity to the giddy, regardless world. I repeat it, he who will be true to his God in these days, must dare to break through unhallowed customs—must be brave enough to differ from others. He who stops to ask himself, What do others do? or, What are the religious opinions and practices of others? cannot be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your Saviour demands of you thorough-going, uncompromising fidelity to truth and equity. He requires you to take His will to be your own rule; and so completely will He have you in subjection to His authority, that, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, you must do all to His glory! 3. They had to resist the demands of self-interest. It was at a severe cost, an immense sacrifice, that they were prepared to fulfil their obligations to the true and living God (v. 6). By this it would appear that death by burning alive was a very ancient punishment for "heresy." It was a customary punishment among the Babylonians. Jeremiah, in denouncing the false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah, predicted that they should be put to death by the King of Babylon, "And of these shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire." See, then, how terrific the threat by which Nebuchadnezzar sought to promote the worship of his god. What a severe trial of the godly steadfastness of these three pious Jews (v. 13, 15). Would you have wondered if, in such circumstances, they had trembled and proposed to themselves some temporising mode of escape from so dreadful a punishment? Ah, threats cannot intimidate them. This noble answer reminds us of what Augustine relates of Cyprian, that when courtiers persuaded him to preserve his life—for it was with great reluctance that the Emperor devoted him to death—when flatterers on all sides urged him to redeem his life by the denial of Christianity, he answered, "There can be no deliberation in a matter so sacred." So our three heroes declare that they are in nowise concerned to vindicate their conduct, or to deliberate upon the expediency of the step they were taking. "Our consciences are bound to serve the God of heaven alone, and Him only will we worship, despite all consequences." But many can, Peter-like, boast grandly of how bravely they will act. Nothing shall move them from their Christian steadfastness till the crisis comes—till the hour arrives for self-sacrifice, for prompt and self-denying action—then they faint and fall away. Not so the three pious Hebrews. They were none of your talking heroes. Their deeds were as glorious as their words. Are we not too much given to time-serving? Are we not deterred oftentimes from faithfully acting out our convictions by the fear of losing someone's friendship, or of incurring someone's frown? by the fear of suffering the loss of certain worldly emoluments, or of missing certain social advantages? Is our devotedness to Christ characterised by all that manly energy—that indomitable courage that breaks through every barrier, and that conquers every difficulty? II. We learn what are THE SOURCES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF TRUE MORAL HEROISM. 1. All things are possible to them who believe. There is the secret of their heroism. It was not natural animal courage—it was not stoical insensibility—it was not indifference to life—it was not the love of distinction, or ambition for fame—it was faith in God. 2. God is ever present with his faithful people (v. 21—25). We have no reason for supposing that Nebuchadnezzar thought that the fourth person was Jesus

Christ, the Son of God; of him he must have known nothing. "A single angel," says Calvin, "was sent to these three men; Nebuchadnezzar calls him a Son of God, not because he thought him to be Christ, but according to the common opinion among all people that angels are sons of God, since a certain divinity is resplendent in them, and hence they call angels generally sons of God. According to this usual custom Nebuchadnezzar says, the fourth man is like the son of a god." No doubt Nebuchadnezzar recognised the Divine interposition in what appeared to him an angel; God was wont by the ministry of angels and otherwise visibly to interpose on behalf of His people, and in a most extraordinary way to effect deliverances for them; and, doubtless, it was God who appeared in human form with the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, to comfort, support, and deliver them, and to convince their enemies that they were under the protection of Heaven, and, therefore, in safe keeping. We do not look for any palpable manifestations of the Divine presence to attend us in our trials. We look for no miraculous deliverance from the hands of our enemies. Nevertheless, God has promised to be with us to help and succour us, so that we may triumphantly exclaim, "If God be with us, who shall be against us?" "A man in the right with God on his side is in the majority, though he be alone, for God is multitudinous above all populations of the earth." So that you may boldly say, "God is our refuge," "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." 3. The social influence of uncompromising fidelity to duty on the part of God's people is mighty (v. 23, 29). We see here the natural working of a truly consistent life. "Ye are the salt of the earth," &c. (Matt. v. 13-16); "The holy seed is the stock of the land" (Isa. vi. 13). "A man ought to carry himself in the world as an orange-tree would if it could walk up and down in the garden—swinging perfume from every little censer it holds up in the air." Ah, how many of us do this? How many of us commend to the world the religion we possess by an unbending, consistent life? 4. Distinguished honours shall crown the fidelity of God's people (v. 30). (*John Williams.*) *The Power of Youthful Piety*:—The history of these three young men teach us the following lessons. 1. The children of respectable parents may be reduced to humble circumstances. 2. Children deprived of the protection of parents sometimes rise in the world and prosper. 3. Religion is the best preservative of youth when separated from their parents and friends. 4. The effects of early religious education is generally good. These young men's piety was very vigorous. Consider the power of the piety of these young men. I. ITS PRINCIPLE. It was attachment to the true God. 1. Their attachment to God was natural, and, therefore, strong. Man was made for God. What is unnatural is weak. Unnatural conformation of body is attended by weakness and pain. The body deprived of the natural means of support soon becomes feeble. Unnatural exercise of social affections wastes them. It is so with the moral powers. Idolatry is not natural to man. It is weakness. It cannot reason; it cannot distinguish between matter and mind. It holds no communion with spiritual worlds; it sinks the spirit; it robs God of His right, and man of happiness. God is to man all that his nature wants. 2. Their attachment was individual. 3. Their attachment was uniform. II. ITS MANIFESTATIONS. Is wonderful, if we consider. 1. Their destitution of religious means. Without public worship, parental protection exposed to the bigotry, example, society of idolaters. 2. The strength of their temptation. 3. The tenderness of their age. They were little more than twenty. 4. Their number was small. There were only three. But were one in life, death. III. ITS IMPRESSIONS on those who witnessed it. 1. The king admired their character. 2. Called attention to it. 3. Blessed God. 4. Promoted them. (*Caleb Morris.*) *The Martyr Spirit*:—This episode of the three Jews in Babylon is a revelation of the martyr-spirit, and so, centuries after, the Christian writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews included them in his great muster-roll of the heroes of faith, as those who "quenched the violence of fire." They were champions of a cause which has often been contested since in the history of nations, and in none perhaps more sharply than our own. It was the rights of conscience they asserted, as they stood calm and confident before the furious king. They showed what men can do under the dominance of a lofty principle. Life, that was in its prime—dignities of office and sweets of power, that had been tasted—these they were ready to lay down for conscience sake. No sophistries blinded them to the real point at issue; they could not bow to that heathen idol—not even for the king. They faced the ordeal, and came forth from it victorious; they would have been equally victorious had their bodies been charred in the furnace. Theirs was the dauntless spirit which has been manifested by the martyrs or "witnesses" of all ages. The answer they made to the king of Babylon has found many an echo at the stake or the block. Such, as one instance, were the words spoken by the young Scottish martyr on the scaffold (Hugh McKail, 1666). "Although I be judged and condemned as a rebel amongst men, yet I hope, even in order to this action, to be accepted as loyal before God." (*P. H. Hunter.*) *The Three*

Hebrew Youths.—For the difficult task of acting upon fixed religious principle, example is more helpful than precept. I. THESE YOUTHS WOULD NOT, TO SAVE THEIR LIVES, COMMIT EVEN ONE SINGLE ACT OF IDOLATRY (v. 12). Had they not been true servants of God they would easily have quieted their consciences with excuses such as these. 1. All are obeying the command. 2. After all, it was a political rather than a religious act. 3. If they failed to comply with the royal mandate, their conduct might be misconstrued. But men of religious principle do not ask if they will be misunderstood, but what is their duty to God. II. THEY REFUSED TO PARLEY ABOUT THE COURSE OF DUTY (v. 16). Our declining even to discuss the course of duty, when it is plainly and instinctively recognised by the conscience, is a proof of religious firmness and constancy. III. THEY TRUSTED IMPLICITLY IN GOD'S SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OF HIS PEOPLE (v. 17). When our hold upon Divine truth is lessening or weak, we trust to the arm of flesh and useless expediences. Examples: Asa and the physicians (II. Chron. xvi. 12); Israel and the chariots of Egypt (Isa. xxxi. 1). Those whose hearts are fixed, and who prove true in the fiery ordeal of trial, fall back upon their inner lines of retrenchment. They realise the fact that the Lord reigns, and personally superintends the order of events, so that the wrath of man is restrained, and also that God watches with jealous care His own people. IV. THEY DID NOT CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR CONSTANCY (v. 18). God has not pledged Himself always to work a miracle or to do anything uncommon to deliver His people. As a rule we must not expect such interpositions. If we were perfectly certain of such help, where would be the worth of our holding out for the truth? It was as much a miracle of grace for the three youths to remain constant as it was a miracle of providence that they were kept safely in the fiery furnace. To determine our conduct, altogether irrespective of the consequences which may follow, shows the value of our religious life. V. THEY HONOURED GOD BEFORE THE WORLD, AND GOD ESPECIALLY HONOURED THEM. As unholy compromises and cowardly denials conduct to shame and confusion, so unflinching courage, and acting upon religious principles, leads to happiness and honour. Such is illustrated in the present case. 1. They are safely protected from the slightest harm in the fiery furnace. The very elements are made to respect them (v. 24, 25, 27). 2. The Son of God blesses them with His company (v. 25; Isa. xliii. 2; Prov. xviii. 10). 3. Their persecutor, Nebuchadnezzar, bestows greater honour upon them (v. 30; Prov. xvi. 7). Is our religion one of fashion, form, education, or one of reality and principle? If the former, then in times of trial we shall fall away; if the latter, we shall by God's grace be kept steadfast. Christians should be prepared to face a fiery ordeal of temptation at some period of their career. This will strengthen and purify their faith. (C. Neil, M.A.)

The Nonconformists of Babylon.—Hero worship is the one form of religion, if you will allow me to call it so, that binds the whole world. Dare great things, look at them in the face, and at once you are secure of the crown of laurel. What the world has to decide is the highest kind of courage. Some types of hero at once rise to your mind. There is the soldier type, for instance. He will dash through a storm of grape, and stand first upon the enemy's breastwork, covered with wounds. Or here is another, there is the fireman. He will rush through suffocating smoke and scorching heat, and come forth presently with the life he has rescued from the flames. Or here is the coast-guardsmen. He will swim through the boiling surf, with a rope in his teeth, to the ship that has been stranded. Noble types of courage all of them—heroes worthy of crosses and of honours. But there is one thing to be said with regard to all these, they have all one strong inducement to heroism—the onlooking and the applause of the spectators. But if you wish to know who the true heroes of men are, ask who are those who dare to do right, simply because it is right, secure of no applause from the world, certain only of disapproval—standing alone. To be honest when honesty is the best policy, to be right when broad lines of right and wrong are marked down and acknowledged by all men, that is good; but to dare to be honest, and good, and true when it is not the best policy, when it is not popular—commend me to the man of this sort for the highest hero. And it was of such heroism that the men in our text are an example. The golden image. No figure emerges from the mist of ancient times more clearly defined than Nebuchadnezzar. He occupies a large space in Scripture, and the disinterred libraries of the East are filled with the records of his glory. While yet only crown prince he had swept in triumph through Syria and Palestine, and inflicted a severe defeat on Egypt. Greater than his victories abroad was his conquest of the magnificent city of Babylon, with its colossal walls and temples, which may justly be called his creation. To a certain magnificence and generosity of character he united vast arrogance, an ungovernable temper, and vindictive cruelty; yet he was so religious that all the records of his deeds are ascription to his god. What is the meaning of this decree? Doubtless, in the first place, it was largely political—a method, not unwise,

of uniting the many different elements of his scattered empire, and securing his own supremacy. But it is not difficult to see that Nebuchadnezzar's god was, after all, only a deification of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The true man comes out in such phrases as these: "Is not this the great Babylon which I have built?" "Who is that God, who is able to deliver you out of my hands?" Yes, the image, overlaid with gold, flashing in the sun there, is an image erected to success and human glory. It is the worldly power triumphant. Men and women, the image of Dura is with us still. It is no longer embodied in outward form of idol or king. It is the world spirit, the spirit of earthly glory, wealth, success; and a right lordly spirit it is, towering, like Nebuchadnezzar's image, aloft, and decked out, too, like it, with flashing gold. It has allurements still; it gathers to it still all music, art, and refinement—everything that delights the senses, and makes the homage of its worshippers easy; but it is arbitrary and capricious as ever. No religion or morality may control it. Its first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; and for all its beauty and refinement, it is cruel—oh, deadly cruel. Resist it, and it is swelling with rage. Resist still, and it opens the furnace, no longer the furnace of wood or pitch. We have changed all that. The times are refined, but it has still its deadly enmity, as sharp in the teeth as ever. If it is no longer a furnace, it has sneering and scorning and social ostracism. The image flashes, the music sounds, the king is looking on, and in a moment the vast assembly is prostrate as a field of corn before a sudden tempest. Scythian purple, fine white linen, all kiss the dust. Just so, just so. Always where the world-spirit is upreared the world-power is down with one consent. Character, religion, these matter nothing. Wealth, show, rank, glory, these are your gods, O Israel. What kind of man is he that you ask us to worship? They say that he has broken his wife's heart; never mind, "bow your heads"; and at once the whole multitude make their universal salaam. Here another splendid equipage comes along. Hats off! It is said, Who is he? What has he done? He has made his fortune. They say he has taken his millions out of the gutter. What does that matter? He is a rich man. Bow your heads; and again there is an universal acknowledgment of the old image of Dura. Our god is Success. This is his great Babylon that he has built. And so, when the music sounds the scene of Dura is repeated in every age, and the golden image is still worshipped by all. Not by all! Thank God, there are heroes still. Let us consider what they had to do. Young men they were, we are told, standing on the very threshold of life. Aye, and when is life ever so sweet? When is the grass so green, and the sun so bright, and that light upon land and sea so pleasant? When is it so difficult to turn one's back upon it, and leave it all? And not only life was before them, but, look you, such a life full of advantage. Would they not say, "God, pardon for once. We find the noise of the multitude, and the wrath of the king, and the allurements of music too much. God pardon us?" They had a very good precedent for it. You remember that when Naaman the Syrian was cured, he said to the prophet, taking the prophet's God to be his in this thing, "The Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." And the prophet said, "Go in peace." And was there no prophet to say to these men that their sin was very small, and they might go in peace? There was higher than the king there that day. "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible." But we have not yet touched the full height of their heroism. Let us follow the narrative. The tongue of envy is at once set agoing. You will see that the envious tongue is the tongue of the Chaldeans, and you need not wonder at that when you find in the chapter before we have a record of a victory over the Chaldeans at the hands of Jehovah. They cannot bear to be thus humbled, prostrate themselves. You can hear cutting words like these: "Straight-laced!" "Who are they that they should be setting themselves up, indeed!" "Holier than all the rest!" Just so, just so. Do you worship with me? No; you dare to be different. How dare you? Who are you that you should set yourself up that I am wrong and you are right? And so the king heard of it, and was swelling with rage. Don't you wonder at the king? But a little while ago he had said of a truth, "your God is a God of gods and a Lord of lords." And yet it suited him to forget. The former interference of the God of gods had been quite in a line with his policy. "And if the God of gods and the Lord of lords will interpret my dreams to me, and give me satisfaction, why, I have no objection to His being God of gods; but if He interferes with my lordship, if He sets me down from my pedestal and my golden image, erected to my glory, ah! then who is that God who will deliver out of my hand?" That is the morality of the world, the world's god. They knew God. Well, they had their answer. "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver

us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." "But if not." Men and women, I wonder if you see the amazing heroism of these three words. What does it mean? Ah! here is what it means. Religion pays. Honesty is the best policy. If you do not get on in this world you will in the next. If you are good, there is Heaven; if you are bad, there is hell. It is best to be good. But if all that arrangement of yours for the reward of good and the punishment of evil were to-night upset, where would your morality be? It is convenient for you to be an honest fellow. You have the repute of your fellows. But that hope beyond—but if not, if there should be no reward for your goodness, if there is no Heaven to keep you up, if there is no hell to terrify you, nothing but right—that is right, whether it is reward or not. I wonder if you would be bold enough to say, "If not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." But marvellous things happen. With startling dramatic power it is put before us in this narrative. "Then Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, rose up and said, 'Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.'" Ah, whatever interpretation you make of that verse, on the whole doctrine the story is true for all time. Truth lives in the furnace. It was a great thing these men had looked forward to when they said, "Our God is able to deliver us from the furnace, and He will deliver us." That was great, but who of men ever thought of this greater thing by far—"Our God is able to deliver us in the furnace." These men went free; nothing was burned but the bonds which their fellows had laid upon them. The lesson of it all is this, that truth—nay, let me say this, to speak in New Testament language—the truth, as it is in Jesus, devotion to Christ, is a thing marked off from the world by as sharp a line as it was in the days of Nebuchadnezzar—and to young men—yes, and old men—there comes the same choice on the one side, the lordly bringing to itself all worldly advantage, surrounding itself still with cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, with the furnace not far off, is claiming your allegiance; and by the side is your Lord and Master, asking you to witness and be faithful to Him, to His Person, to His atonement, to His resurrection, to all that He is and all that He has given us; and He has asked of you, "What will you do to-day?" Ah! the world says, "No need to be so sharp; let us have airy notions and ill-defined beliefs; let us have a large margin, wherein it may be lawful now to bow to the golden image, and now to bow to Jehovah." No, no. Keen—keen is the dividing line still—the worship there, Christ here; the music there, the furnace here—and for your choice. God help you in that day when the two forces strive for your allegiance! I say, God help you to say, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us. But if not, we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image thou hast set up." (*W. J. Macdonald.*) *The Trial of Fire*:—The world crowns with the heroic wreath those who have been distinguished for valour in the field of carnal strife, "but there is something which has tried the souls of men more than the muzzle of a gun ready to pour its contents into the unshielded breast of a soldier." So there have been heroes who never set a squadron in the field, or bared their breast to an enemy's steel. Flattery and frowns, blandishments and dungeons, and cross and the stake, have had no power to turn them from the right. I. **THE ACCUSATION.** No man may expect to escape from calumny. But happy is the man who can be assailed only because of his virtues—his adherence to religious principles. And such is the base passion of envy, that it "withers at another's joy, and hates the excellence it cannot reach," and will, therefore, seek to elevate itself by detracting from the reputation of another. II. **THE TRIAL.** The trial of these young men was one of the most extraordinary to which men were ever subjected. It was so as by fire. Now, truth and virtue are on trial. What will be the issue? Come, ye angels that excel in strength; come, all the world that hang in hope upon the truth of religion, and await the result. "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king! that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." The answer illustrates: I. The duty of pleasing God rather than men. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." But just here the text is found at which so many fail. Men are careful to answer to their fellow-men, rather than to God, for their conduct. Public opinion is the great golden image before which they fall down in worship. Fashion also sets up its great golden image, and commands all to bow down and worship it. It has passed into an aphorism: "You had as well go out of the world as out of the fashion." God says: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." There is also a great golden image set up in the form of prevailing social customs, by which persons are tried whether they

will do right or conform to the example of the company they are in. 2. The confidence that God would take care of them if they honoured Him. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand." And their knowledge of the character of God assured them that no real harm could come to them in the way of their duty to Him. But their answer went further; if it had not, it would have lacked in one great element of force, which we shall see presently. They said: "But if God does not deliver us, we will not serve thy gods." If this had not been added, it might have been said: "No wonder they are so heroic, having the assurance that God would save them from the threatened punishment; in other words, they were willing to serve God as long as they were exempt from suffering; as long as it went well with them in this world." That was the kind of religion that the neighbours of Job thought he had—a mercenary religion. 3. We have in this answer an exhibition of true principle as the foundation of a religious life. They were governed by principle. "True religion," says Albert Barnes, "is a determined purpose to do right, whatever may be the consequences. Come wealth or poverty, honour or dishonour, life or death, the mind is firmly fixed on doing right." A man who loves what is right, and is determined to do what is right because he has deep down in his soul a recognition of the everlasting blessedness of virtue, is not the one who will want to bring weak excuses for worldly conformity; for doing what he has misgivings in his own mind is not right. He who is in earnest about saving his soul will not frame weak excuses for yielding to temptation. In fine, principle, and not impulse, will be the mainspring of his religious activity. True religion is a determined purpose to live for God, come what may. III. WE COME NOW TO THE CONDEMNATION AND DELIVERANCE OF THESE YOUNG MEN AS THE FINAL GENERAL PROPOSITION OF OUR SUBJECT. They were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Though they had been so faithful to God, yet He permitted them to be brought into this dreadful place. Now may Nebuchadnezzar utter his infidel sneer: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Even faith itself may be so tried as to say: "It is vain to serve God; He is so indifferent to our efforts to please Him, or He is powerless against the world." But do not be in haste to judge. God did not save them from the furnace, but He went with them into it and protected them there. So His people may not be exempt from trials, but they have the presence of Jesus in these trials. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," and through great tribulation ye shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. But if He sees that it is necessary that we go into those trials, He will give us blessed compensations. And then, if He sees fit to put us in the furnace in order to purify, and sanctify, and fit us for glory, it is because He knows there is something in us worth the trial. Men do not put dross in the crucible—a thing of no value—and sit there watching over it. Then, if you are in the furnace, there is something in you which God values, and by this process He will develop it. "They walked in the midst of the fire and had no hurt." How true to the history of God's people in all ages of the world—walking in the midst of the fire and not burned. From this we learn that it is not the outward circumstances of an individual that can harm him. His welfare depends upon the inward state of the heart. Hence a Christian has a source of consolation which no earthly influences can turn aside or obstruct. But the same fire which was harmless to God's servants destroyed their enemies. And thus it is that those trials under which Christians are happy are overwhelming to those who have no faith in God. I cannot leave this subject without one more thought. These men were called up out of the furnace. And that was not all; they were promoted in the kingdom. From the fires of trial to which God subjects us, always comes a higher state of life. But this higher state is produced by those experiences which seem so hard to us. We rise upon the wreck of the earthly to the Heavenly. After they were well tried the king came and called these young men out of the trial—out of the furnace. Then the king promoted them in the province of Babylon. And thus will God, when He has seen that we have been sufficiently tried, and are fitted for the better world, call us out of the furnace and promote us to the kingdom of everlasting blessedness. (*J. T. Murray.*) *Three Names High on the Muster-roll*:—Have you not seen in your time men seriously impressed? But after a while they forgot it all, and became at length the most bitter opponents of the truth before which they seemed once to bow. We know, then, what to expect; that some who seem like fish almost landed, will, nevertheless, slip back into the stream. This great king of Babylon was an absolute monarch. His will was law; no man ever dared to dispute with him. Who would differ from a gentleman who could back up his arguments with a fiery furnace, or with a threat to cut you in pieces, and to make your house a dunghill? I. First of all, as we think of these three brave Jews, let us consider THE EXCUSES THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE. They were accused by the Chaldeans, who had so recently been saved from death by Daniel and his three friends. The surest

way to be hated by some people is to place them under an obligation. But in this case the wrath of man was to praise God. They might have said to themselves, "It is perfectly useless to resist. We cannot contend against this man. If we submit, we do it unwillingly; and surely, being coerced into it, we shall be but little blamed." It is a bad excuse, but it is one that I have often heard made. "Oh," says a man, "we must live, you know; we must live." I really do not see any necessity for it. Again, they might have said, "We are in a strange land, and is it not written by one of our wise men, 'When you are in Babylon, you must do as Babylon does'?" Of course, if we were at home, in Judæa, we would not think of such a thing." Is God the God of this island, and not the God of the Continent? Has He ever given us permission to do abroad what we may not do at home? It is a vile excuse, but commonly enough made. They might also have said, "We are in office"; and seeing they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they might have found some difficulty in detaching their private religion from their public duty. A man gets elected to a parish vestry, or a council, or a board, and when he once gets to sit on that board, he seems to have left his honesty at home. I say not that it is so always, but I am sorry to say that it has often been so. The official has no sooner put on his robes of office than his conscience has vanished. But, then, they were prosperous men. They were getting on in the world, and I believe that God sent this trial to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, because they were prospering. They might have said, "We must not throw away our chances." Among the dangers to Christian men, the greatest, perhaps, is accumulating wealth—the danger of prosperity. May God grant that we may never turn His mercies into an excuse for sinning against Him! You who are rich have no more liberty to sin than if you were poor. Again, further, they might have excused themselves thus. The putting up of this image was not altogether a religious act. It was symbolical. The image was intended to represent the power of Nebuchadnezzar, and bowing before it was, therefore, doing political homage to the great king. Might they not safely do this? They might have said, "We are politically bound." Oh, how often we hear this brought up! You are told to regard the difference between right and wrong everywhere, except when you get into politics; then stick to your party through thick and thin. Right and wrong vanish at once. Loyalty to your leader—that is the point. A very soothing salve for their conscience might have been found in the absence of any command to renounce their own religion. They might have encouraged each other to submit, by saying, "We are not called upon to abjure our God." They need not believe the idol to be Divine, nor confess the least faith in it; in their hearts they might make a mental reservation as they bowed, and they might have whispered to one another, and said that it was a devil, and no God. They might have excused themselves to their own conscience by saying that they prostrated themselves to the music, and not to the idol, or that they made obeisance to the king rather than to his image. Anything, in fact, will serve for an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise; and, especially in these half-hearted days, it is very easy to find a specious reason for a false action. If some temporal benefit is attached to it. Modern charity manufactures a multitude of excuses to cover sins withal. A stronger argument, however, might have been secured from the fact of the universal submission to the decree. "Everybody else is doing it," they might have said. Though millions bowed, what had that to do with them? I ask you to cultivate a brave personality. In the service of God, things cannot go by the counting of heads. They might have said, "It is only for once, and not for long. Ten minutes or so, once in a lifetime, to please the king; such a trivial act cannot make any difference; at any rate, it is not enough to brave the fiery furnace for. Let us treat the whole thing as a huge jest. It would be ridiculous to throw away our lives for such a trifle." Not even for a few minutes in a lifetime would these three brave men deny their God. May their stubborn faith be ours! Another excuse that they might have made was, "We can do more good by living than we can by being cast into that furnace. It is true, if we are burnt alive, we bear a rapid testimony to the faith of God; but if we live, how much more we might accomplish! You see we three are Jews, and we are put in high office, and there are many poor Jews who are captives. We can help them. We have always seen justice done to God's people, our fellow-countrymen, and we feel that we are raised to our high office on purpose to do good. Now, you see, if you make us bigots, and will not let us yield, you cut short our opportunities of usefulness." If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it; and if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am yet to do it. But they might also have said, "Really, this is more than can be expected of us." Remember what Jesus said to the multitudes who went with him, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." II. In the second place, let us assure our own hearts by admiring THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THEY POSSESSED. They expressed it very emphatically and clearly. They had a definite, solid, foursquare faith. 1. First, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." The word "careful" there, does not give you the meaning. Read it, "We are not full of care as to how to answer thee." They did answer very carefully; but they were not anxious about the answer. They did not deliberate. They did not hesitate. They said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we can answer you at once on that point." 2. In the second place, they did not judge it theirs to answer at all. I find that it may read, as in the Revised Version, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter," meaning, "We will not answer you. It is not for us to answer you. You have brought another Person into the quarrel." Then notice what they say. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." 3. They avowed their faith in the Omnipotent God, knowing that, if He chose, no mighty man of Babylon could ever throw them into that furnace. What is more, they add, "And He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Whether they burned in the fire or not, they were sure they would be delivered. If any of you are in great difficulty and trouble, tempted to do wrong, nay, pressed to do it, and if you do what is right, it looks as if you will be great losers and great sufferers; believe this: God can deliver you. He can prevent your having to suffer what you suppose you may; and if He does not prevent that, He can help you to bear it, and, in a short time, He can turn all your losses into gains, all your sufferings into happiness. The Lord has helped us in the past, He is helping us in the present, and we believe that He will help us all the way through. III. But here is the point that I want to make most prominent—the third one—THE DETERMINATION AT WHICH THEY HAD ARRIVED. "I not," if God does not deliver us at all, "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Grand language! Noble resolve! 1. They did not pivot their loyalty to God upon their deliverance. They did not say, as some do, "I will serve God if it pays me to do so. I will serve God if He helps me at such and such a time." No, they would serve Him for nothing; theirs was not cupboard love. 2. They resolved that they would obey God at all costs. Let us walk in this heroic path. But some will say, "It is too hard. You cannot expect men to love God well enough to die for Him." No, but there was One who loved us well enough to die for us, and to die a thousand deaths in one, that He might save us. If Christ so loved us, we ought so to love Him. "Well," says one, "I think it is impossible. I could not bear pain." It is possible, for many have endured it. You may never be called to such a trial as that; but still, if you cannot bear the small trials, how would you bear the great ones? To enable us to get the spirit of these three holy men, we must get, first, a clear sense of the Divine presence. If a man feels that God is seeing him, he will not bow his knee to an idol; neither will he do evil; for God's eye is upon him. We must, next, have a deep sense of the Divine law. I have already reminded you of the law. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," &c. Above all, to keep us right, we must have a mighty sense of the Divine love. We shall never obey God till by His grace we have new hearts, and those hearts are full of love to Him through Jesus Christ. "But what did these three men do?" says one; "they simply did not bow their heads, and they were cast into the fiery furnace. What did they do?" They influenced their age, their people, and all time. These three men influenced the city of Babylon, and the whole Babylonian empire. They certainly influenced King Nebuchadnezzar. These three men command the admiration of Heaven and earth. A fool would have pointed at them and said, "There go three fools—gentlemen high in office, with large incomes, and wives and families. They have only to take their cap off, and they may live in their wealth; but if they do not do it, they are to be burnt alive; and they will not do it. They will be burnt alive. They are fools." Yes, but the Son of God did not think so. When He in Heaven heard them speak thus to King Nebuchadnezzar, He said, "Brave, brave men! I will leave the throne of God in Heaven to go and stand by their side"; and invisibly He descended, till where the fires were glowing like one vast ruby, where the fierce flame had slain the men that threw the three confessors into the burning fiery furnace, He came and stood. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The True Way of Treating Sin, and what comes of it*:—The true way of treating sin is by a religion of principle. And that sort of religion is splendidly displayed in Scripture. Out on the plain of Dura is to be lifted a golden image ninety feet in height. It is plated, not solid—and are not all idols plated? Every object of worship, save only God, is hollow and deceiving. Well, the pageant is accomplished. The image stands resplendent. The king is gorgeous on his throne. The highest officers of the kingdom crowd the plain. The music bursts and swells. And all

the plain at once is full of prostrate worshippers. Except that three men still stand. They have not fallen. They do not worship. Who are they? They are Hebrew captives from Jerusalem. They have heard the command higher than the king's—"Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor worship them." They will obey this loftier mandate. And there they stand amid the kneeling host, erect, alone; with firmness on their faces, with faith in their hearts, with God above them, with all the world beneath their feet. Here, surely, is a religion of principle. Not a transient enthusiasm; not simply a decorous, fair-weather profession; not a weak and swaying sentimentality, but a deep, inward, immovable, resistant principle of life, holding the possessors of it to straight and definite courses, and clothing them with heroism. Consider the foundation of such religion of principle. Right doctrine is one of its foundations. Doctrine is something taught. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been taught the truth that Jehovah is supreme. There is an immense importance in right doctrine. Right religion is right theology applied; right practice is right doctrine carried out; right life is right creed lived. You must learn the will of God before you can unflinchingly do that will. Right resolve is another of the foundations of a religion of principle. Not only must the right doctrine be received, but along with that must go the resolve to practise it at all hazards. The doctrine must not be a seed, carefully wrapped and laid in some secret drawer; it must be a seed planted, and helped upward into growth and bloom and fruitage by all the breezes, and all the showers, and all the sunlight. Right doctrine must, through holy resolution, compel the deed into coincidence with itself. Consider the tests of this religion of principle. It is prompt. Oh, the waste of life, in debating duty! Oh, the weakness of argument and counter argument! Oh, the trouble of the spirit stunned with the noises of disputation with itself. Oh, the clearness and straightness and strength of the life which, looking to Christ for truth, just bravely does the truth at once. Mark the grand promptness of these three Hebrews. "We are determined and decided; we are not careful to answer thee in this matter, O king." This religion of principle is conscientious about small matters. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*)

Religious Intolerance.—I. WE HAVE HERE AN INSTANCE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE. The scene of the text is laid in an Eastern land. It would seem that the will of the monarch was supreme. His word was law; he must be obeyed. And this authority was not confined simply to affairs of state; it seems to have entered into the region of religion too. This is always dangerous. It matters but little when it happens; trouble is almost sure to arise unless freedom of thought and liberty of conscience are entirely surrendered. It was this arrogant claim which kept many states of Europe in the chains of ignorance and superstition far too long. It was this which fired the soul of Luther, and led him to be a reformer. We state with emphasis that in our judgment no man has a right to come between God and the soul. 1. Every man should be at liberty to worship God according to his own conscience and lights. 2. The law should protect every man in the enjoyment of this liberty, providing always that he does not interfere with the enjoyment of the same rights and liberties by others. My freedom of action is to be limited by the rights and liberties of others. The king had a perfect right to set up his image. But when he sought to compel others to do as he did he interfered with their liberties, which should have been the measure of his own. The law should protect us all alike in our religion, if we do not interfere with the rights of our neighbours. 3. No man should suffer civil disability because of his religious belief. 4. No man should have preference in civil matters because of his religious profession.

II. WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITHFULNESS. 1. We must be true to our God, even if we have to stand alone. Living as we do in times when religion is popular, and to attend public worship is respectable, we cannot fully realise all it means to stand alone for God. 2. We must be true to our God, even if it makes us seem untrue to men. These men had received much in this kingdom. They were the sons of conquered people, men of an alien and foreign race, the children of captivity, and prisoners of war. Royal favour had spared and saved them. Sad and painful as it may be to appear ungrateful to those to whom we are under obligation, we must not dishonour our God. It is better to lose the friendship of man than the favour of God. 3. We must be true to God, even if it brings loss upon us. A religion which costs nothing is worth only what it costs. Did Moses consider what he would gain if he made common cause with his own people, whom God meant him to deliver? It may well be doubted if anyone ever suffers much in the long run through faithfulness to God. (*C. Leach, D.D.*)

The Martyrs.—Men of this strain are of native right the captains of the great host of God. They are the men sent to lead it when formed, to rally it when broken, and to inspire it by their own conduct in the field. The men who can say, Whether I succeed or fail, as the world counts success or failure, whether I suffer or triumph,

whether I die or live, one thing I do, the will of God as far as it is made known to me; and one thing I will not do, the will of the world, the flesh, and the devil, form that living core of strength and valour in Christ's army. The presence of these Jewish youths at the Chaldean court is a conspicuous instance of the visible interposition of a Divine hand in the government of the world. The Jew was the living witness of the care of God for the political welfare of men. We are prone to underrate the influence of the Jew on the world of his time. We see him narrow, selfish, and exclusive, and we easily overlook the remarkable influence which he exerted at critical moments on the surrounding peoples. Joseph's work in Egypt is really but a specimen of the work which that people, willingly or unwillingly, were compelled to accomplish for mankind. In Daniel probably the influence culminated, until the whole commission was read out by St. Paul. The crisis which Daniel records is one of the chief pivots of universal history.

I. Let us study THE MARTYR SPIRIT AS HERE REVEALED. 1. These men had attained to the condition in which conviction had passed beyond the reach of perturbation or question. The everlasting hills were not so firmly rooted as the belief in the God of Heaven, and the essential blessedness of serving Him, was rooted in those young hearts. The rending in pieces of the whole world system around them would have shattered none of their dearest beliefs and hopes (Ps. xli. 1—5). Their God made the world, and could make new worlds at His pleasure; but He was the same, from everlasting to everlasting, and His word must stand, whatever else in the universe might fall. 2. They were themselves of that temper, and had come to that strength and unity of character, that they could declare, There are things which we cannot say, there are things which we cannot do, whatever be the cost; it is blankly impossible; here stand we; we can do no other, God help us. I say they were of that temper, and they had come to that strength and unity of character. There must be both to make such martyrs, such witnesses for the God of Heaven as these. If this must be, it must be. God help us; it must be. We cannot speak, we cannot do, this awful lie. "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." 3. There must abide in all martyr spirits an unwavering faith in the omnipotent hand of God. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." His power to rule is clear to us as sunlight. He may choose to help us now, and signally deliver. He may choose to let us suffer, but nothing can shake our belief in His power to save. We are sure that His will must be done; His cause must triumph; His servants, His soldiers, must be crowned. It may be here; it may be there; we do not question Him; times are in His hand. But here or there it will be, as surely as He reigns. A man may say with unconquerable firmness, I cannot do this thing, I will rather die, even when he believes that death is annihilation. But this faith is essential to the joyous spirit of Christian martyrdom; the exultation in prospect of a death of pain and shame which broke forth in the words, "I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." To die thus, one must believe that that for which he dies will reign, and he with it, in eternity. II. We shall better understand the temper of these men WHEN WE COMPARE IT WITH A RECORD WHICH DESCRIBES VERY FAITHFULLY THE QUALITY OF MUCH THAT GOES BY THE NAME OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE (Gen. xxviii. 16—22). "Bless me, prosper my journey, bring me home again, and I will serve thee," were the terms of Jacob's covenant in Bethel. But if the cross be heavy, the self-denial hard, the battle long and stern, the cry is, Why hast thou brought me forth? "Is not this that we said unto thee, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?" How grandly beside these terms of bargain rings out the clear defiance of the text. Many a man enters on the pilgrim path in the belief that God will make his way smooth, pleasant, prosperous, and ends by being so wedded to truth and righteousness that he would say quite calmly with these men, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Do not be disheartened if you find faith waver in the hour of trial. At the opening of a battle, when the first bullets begin to patter, the boldest soldier draws himself together. When his blood is warm, he thinks of them no more than of summer rain-drops. Pray to the Master that thy faith fail not. III. Let us look at THE SCHOOL IN WHICH MEN ARE TRAINED TO SUCH GOD-LIKE VIGOUR AND COURAGE which it was God's will that they should practise in great things. They were as resolute against little compliances as against great ones. It is a grand mistake to think that men can leap in one moment of high excitement to such a glorious height of strength and courage. Nothing but trained Christian manhood can endure such strain. Idols! the world is full of them. Golden idols, too, and daily throngs bow down their souls to worship. Are you trained to say, That I cannot do, that trick I cannot practise,

that lie I cannot tell, that lust I will not indulge, that worldly success I will not clutch at, though life were hanging on it. I cannot do it; God help me! (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Courage and Fidelity.—I. THE IMPIETY OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN ERECTING THIS IDOL, and using means to compel all people, especially his captives, to fall down and worship it. II. The exemplary courage and fidelity of these men, in withstanding the impetuous passion of the king, and suffering all the effects of his rage and fury, rather than yield to the impiety of worshipping his idol. III. The happy issue of their constancy, and triumph of their faith in this conflict. I. As to the idol itself, though the sacred text says nothing of the shape of it, yet I think it is not doubted but that it was made in the figure of a man; some think it was intended for Belus, the founder of the Babylonian royal family; others, for Nabopollasser, this king's father; but a third opinion is that it was a model of that image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, in the foregoing chapter, which he might take to be the genius of his kingdom, and which, therefore, he might hope to render propitious to him and his affairs, by dedicating to him this magnificent statue, and through it offering to him Divine honours and adorations. This, indeed, was agreeable enough to the theology of the ancient Gentiles, who thus venerated their peculiar and tutelar deities. But it was more unpardonable in this king than in others, by reason of the long commerce which he had with the Jews, which makes it impossible to conceive that he could be ignorant of this first and greatest article of their religion, that there was but one God, and that He was to be worshipped in a spiritual way, without any material resemblance. He was well acquainted with Daniel and these three men, whom he had appointed to be bred up in his court, and to be fitted for the high offices of his kingdom, to which he quickly preferred them. I will not now stand to enquire how far it may be lawful to enforce the profession even of true religion by temporal penalties. There is a zeal for God, which His own word approves of in magistrates and ministers; and there is a zeal without knowledge, which runs out into a criminal persecution, for which St. Paul says that he obtained mercy, because he acted ignorantly (1. Tim. i. 13). But surely Nebuchadnezzar could not plead this excuse. He must be well acquainted with the religion of these men; he had the greatest obligations to their God, and was bound to them by the laws of hospitality, and by the faithful service which we may justly suppose they rendered him in their respective stations. II. Let us now turn to the contemplation of THE EXEMPLARY COURAGE AND FIDELITY OF THESE MEN, who withstood the impetuous passion of the king, and chose to suffer all the effects of his rage and fury rather than yield to the impiety of worshipping his idol. This is a plain argument that their hopes were extended beyond this life; for had they thought the fiery furnace could have put an end to their being, and that there should nothing have remained of them for God to reward or punish in another state, I am of opinion they would have bowed to this image rather than have burned for it. For, however some affirm, that truth is so much more beautiful and con-natural to the soul of man than falsehood, that a wise man would prefer it even for its own sake, though nothing was to be expected after this life; yet if it were to be vindicated with the utter extinction of the whole man, and that on the contrary his receding from it would prolong his existence and his happiness, I am apt to think that it would in such case become an allowed rule of wisdom, to recede from the truth when it could not be held without suffering the loss of soul and body for the sake of it. And this was certainly the motive, why these martyrs of the true God did so cheerfully surrender their bodies to the flames, submitting themselves to Him, to live or die, as He saw most conducive to His own glory; firmly believing that if the fire dissolved their bodies, their souls should pass into His more immediate presence, and be made partakers of His immortal felicities. I believe I need not say much to persuade those who have a competent knowledge of the sufferings of holy martyrs, that many of them have given the best evidence that the consolations of God have far exceeded the torments of men in their greatest extremities. III. THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THESE MEN'S CONSTANCY, and the triumph of their faith in this conflict. The enraged king had power to throw them into the fire, but he had no power to make the fire burn them. The king, when he called to his counsellors upon this occasion, told them that the form of the fourth man was like the Son of God. By this he might mean that he appeared to be a very august, majestic person; a god-like man, as we would say. This is as much as the expression sometimes imports. But because he could not think that a man of flesh and blood could enter there, and preserve the sufferers in such a miraculous manner, he must rather mean that it was some Divine Being sent from Heaven for this purpose. To this it will be objected that it is not credible Nebuchadnezzar knew anything of this Son of God, so as to be able to say that this person was like him. And we may readily allow that he did not; and yet this objection does not at all overthrow our hypothesis.

For the king might mean in general that he seemed to be some Divine person; and this person might be the particular and only Son of God, who in all probability appeared upon the earth in human shape upon some occasion long before His incarnation. (*W. Reading, M. A.*)

I. CONSIDER THE TRIAL OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. It must be allowed that things good in themselves are heightened in value by circumstances. Why was the liberality of the widow commended, while the rich cast into the treasury? We are told that they cast in of their abundance; but she of her penury cast in all that she had. The man who is not puffed up in the time of prosperity, is the humble man; he who is not cast down when in danger, and when all other men's strength fails, this is the courageous man.

1. They could plead authority. It was their sovereign who commanded them to fall down and worship the image, and good men must be loyal subjects. Yes, but here is a distinction to be made: we must distinguish between civil and religious concerns, and must obey God rather than man. But this conduct has often given to the servants of God a character for insubordination. Thus Jesus was charged with sedition, and Paul with being tumultuous.

2. They could plead obligation. Nebuchadnezzar had taken these captives from among the Hebrews, and had raised them to offices of trust and emolument. Nothing pleads so powerfully as kindness; favours attach the heart, and good men are sensible of obligations. There is no greater trial than to be unable to oblige a friend. "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me"—this is the trial.

3. They could plead the universality of the example. All around them yielded; and why should they be singular? Singularity, for its own sake, always shows a vain mind, and singularity in little things discovers a weak mind. Decency requires that we should not stand out in little things; but in things important, where a soul is to be lost, and God dishonoured—there we must be "separate, and touch not the unclean thing." A dead fish will swim with the stream; it is a live one only that can swim against it. It was thus that Enoch walked with God alone, and amidst opposition. Thus, Noah was a preacher of righteousness in a sinful world, and Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. You are not afraid to be singular in most things; you are not afraid to be singularly wise—singularly rich—singularly happy! The best wisdom is that "which is from above," and the best happiness is that which is eternal. When you are called on to do good, never ask what others are doing, or what will be said of you.

4. Remark the dreadfulness of the penalty. You sometimes complain that your trials are too much for your virtue. "Oh," you say, "if we follow on in this particular course, we shall"—but let us hear your trials—"we shall be exposed to the burning stake—cast into the lion's den." No, nothing like it. "Shall be deprived of liberty"; nothing like it. "Be reduced to want"; nothing like it. "No; but in order to attend to closet and family devotions," I hear you say, "we must rise a little earlier. Oh! but, if we don't profane the Sabbath, and open our shops on the Sunday, we shall lose some of our customers. If we don't conform to the world, we shall be scoffed at." Eternal God! these are the martyrs of thy religion in our day!

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. A conduct so tried, and yet so triumphant, must have had principle to support it. A man under the influence of principle will not be under the control of circumstances, nor under the influence of momentary impulse; if a good man errs, he acts from principle. But what armed them? Can we find a principle equal to the effect produced? The servants of God have done great things, and have suffered great trials; and the very thing which has enabled them to suffer is that which some are afraid of, viz., faith. Faith does not lead to licentiousness. It is by faith alone that we can do good works. But faith must have something to lay hold on, and act and work upon. In the faith of these three young men there were three things to act upon.

1. The power of God. "Our God," said they, "is able to deliver us." "He is the Maker of heaven and earth; He has suspended the laws of nature, made iron to swim, and raised the dead; and He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." It was here that the Jews failed; they asked, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can He give flesh also?" All nature may change; but His word cannot fail: "He can turn the shadow of death into the morning."

2. It regarded the disposition of God. "He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king!" Perhaps they thought it probable that God would work a miracle in their favour; perhaps they had some inward presentiment of it in their minds; perhaps they concluded this from Scripture. They had doubtless read in the book of Psalms, "I will deliver him and honour him, and I will shew him my salvation." He has engaged to deliver His people in the day of trouble, and He will do it, either here partially or hereafter completely.

3. It regarded a future indemnification in another world. What! did they still persist in their determination—though a painful death was to be the consequence? Yes; but they could not have regarded it as annihilation. If there had been no other world, it would not have become them to have sacrificed life; their martyrdom would,

in this case, have been madness. They must, then, have believed in a state of future recompense. Unless we bring the prospect of a future and eternal life to bear upon our conduct, we shall yield to temptation; and it is for want of this that the world leads us astray. When we think of another world, how infinitely superior does it appear to the present life!

III. Notice THE EFFECT OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. How did it end? In promoting the glory of the Master whom they served, and the interests of the religion which they professed. When the people of God suffer in the discharge of their duty, they glorify God, and show how He can deliver those who trust in Him. It resulted in their own honour and advantage. They staid not long in the furnace; but those were golden moments. O what peace and joy in God did they feel! and what holy resolutions did they form while in the furnace? To conclude: 1. Let us be thankful for the biography of the Scriptures—let us be grateful that we have the example of so many good men set before us, who, through faith and patience, do now inherit the promises. 2. If you are the servants of God, His grace is necessary for you. It is happy for us that we live under a paternal government, and are not exposed to the fury and caprice of tyrants. 3. While infidels ridicule you, and the enemies of Christ misrepresent your conduct, there is something in the religion of Christ which will support you; there is a reality in it which can be found in nothing else. (*W. Jay.*) *The Three Hebrew Youths*:—The Church of God has suffered much persecution. This, though in itself an evil, has been productive of good. By persecution the sincerity of religious professors has been tried, the hypocrisy of deceivers has been detected, the graces of good men have been exercised and improved. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES which occasioned the address. Babylon the renowned capital of the ancient Chaldean empire; a place not less remarkable for its magnificence than its idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen; the royal patron of idolatrous practices; a very powerful and ambitious monarch. And was the object of this imperious prince attained? Did he secure universal compliance? No; these three youths, mentioned in the text, dared to refuse. "Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury"—very unfit companions for a king! How little qualified was this man to rule mighty nations, who had no rule over his own spirit! This worm of the earth sets himself in competition with Jehovah! He challenges the Most High, the King of Heaven! He defies the power of Omnipotence! It is the sentiment of an infidel, bloated with pride, and burning with passion. II. THE TEMPER OF MIND discovered in the address. It possesses uncommon beauty, and is highly instructive. 1. Dignified composure. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." There was nothing in the least disrespectful in this sentence; they were not indifferent to their situation, or inattentive to their language and behaviour; it intimates rather that they were not perplexed about the answer they should give. The king was exceedingly agitated, but we see nothing of agitation in these young men; they were perfectly collected and composed. They did not begin to declaim against the idols of Babylon, or against the iniquity of this sanguinary edict. We notice here the influence of genuine religion; it is the same in all ages, and in all countries. So far as it is possessed, it quiets the mind; it preserves it unruffled; it subdues those angry passions which disturb the breast of many when their will is thwarted, when their inclination is crossed. Do you complain of the want of self-possession, and of command of temper in the presence of those who revile and persecute you? 2. Decided piety. In the presence of an imperious monarch, who was addicted to the practice of idolatry, and determined on reducing all about him to the same way, these youths explicitly avow "the God whom we serve." Yes, the man who loves God in his heart is not ashamed of his attachment, nor is he afraid to declare it on every proper occasion. Decided piety is productive of Christian courage; and this does not consist in rudeness; it does not oblige a man to intrude religious talk into every company, and at every turn; yet, when his principles are violently attacked, when the honour of God and of the Gospel is insulted, the true Christian will not be cowardly, but decided and firm. Beg of God to strengthen this heavenly principle in you, to fortify your hearts and minds, to preserve you from sinful shame, to make you decided and valiant for the truth as it is in Jesus. 3. Believing confidence is remarkably evident. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." They seem to have had a secret expectation that, should Nebuchadnezzar be suffered to carry his threats into execution, their God, by some means, would rescue them. Whether they had any intimation of this given them from Heaven, we are not certain. They trusted in the living God, and by faith "endured, as seeing Him that is invisible!" Ask yourselves, what is the nature, and what are the grounds of your confidence? Is your "hope in God?" Does it rest on His truth, and on the certainty that He will secure His own glory? Alas! the confidence of most is easily shaken, and faith wavers with every wind of trial. 4. Steady resolution, at all events, to obey God rather than man.

A variety of considerations might have shaken their constancy, and led them to a compliance. Let us advert here to the disposition of many professors of religion in the present day. Could not you have got over this difficulty without hazarding your life? Would you not have temporised a little? Would you not have yielded, and then, by some expedient, have settled matters with your conscience? Yes, some have settled much more difficult points. III. The remarkable EFFECTS which the address produced. On Nebuchadnezzar they were effects of more violent anger; it stirred up all his malignant rage, which appeared in the distortion of his countenance; he was "full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed." Henry remarks: "Would men in a passion but look at their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn their displeasure against themselves." But the day is coming when proud tyrants will be called to account, not only for the cruelties which they have themselves practised, but also for those which they have instigated others to commit; and an awful reckoning it will be." This subject suggests a few words: 1. To young persons. The case of these Hebrew youths conveys instruction to you with peculiar energy, and demonstrates the great necessity of steady religious principle. It is true you live not in the court of Babylon; but you live in a sinful world, surrounded with the enemies of God, and of your souls. An image of gold is not set up which you are commanded to worship; but there are other snares, a variety of other trials, which will put your sincerity to the test, and determine whom you serve. And you, parents, we wonder not that young persons, in the present day, are so yielding to vanity and vice; so content to swim with the stream, and to follow the corrupt fashions of the age; for what should hinder? What should induce them to resist? Their minds are not principled; they are not furnished with religious knowledge; and for want of this, their consciences have little sense of evil, their hearts are not inclined to good, they are left without any effectual restraint. 2. To undecided professors. There are many such; and many do not suspect themselves till they are tried. It is an easy thing to follow religion while the world smiles; but when it frowns, when it threatens, when it reviles and persecutes, then is the secret iniquity of multitudes discovered; their principles are abandoned, and their props give way. Remember, if religion demands anything, it demands the heart. You must be decided, or you are nothing. Is it so, that you are led away by the fascinations of the world? You know nothing of the Gospel as you ought to know. 3. Afflicted, persecuted believers are addressed. To you this subject speaks peculiar encouragement. Never was there a more striking illustration, or a more exact fulfilment of the promise, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And to you Jehovah speaks, as well as to believers in all ages: "I will be with thee"—"I will deliver thee." 4. Are there any persecutors here? This subject speaks closely to you. And let me remind you of the dreadful end of such characters. See it in the death of Herod, who was eaten up with worms; see it in the doom of Pharaoh, who, with his host, sunk like lead in the mighty waters; and see it in the degraded condition of this haughty Chaldean monarch. Many a man is an oppressor, a persecutor, in his own house. His influence, possibly, does not reach much farther; or he may have that regard to his reputation, and to his worldly interest, which binds him to restrain his passion in his general intercourse with men. But see him in his own domestic circle; observe his temper in his own family; how often rage and fury boil in his breast, anger distorts his countenance, and even Nebuchadnezzar could scarcely be more unreasonable in some of his requirements. (*T. Kid.*) *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*:—Let us consider the heroic constancy and fidelity of those devoted servants of God, and endeavour to derive therefrom matter for our instruction and encouragement. Now, I can scarcely conceive a harder trial of faith than what these men were called upon to undergo, or any circumstances fitted to put the truth and reality of their principles to a severer test. Had they been the objects of unrelenting persecution for some time previously, their case would have been vastly different. Their minds would have been, in some measure, prepared for the fearful crisis which awaited them. For it is well known how a long series of afflictions and trials loosens all the ties which bind us to life, and takes away the bitterness of death. But such was not the condition of the bold and holy confessors we are now considering. Their condition, their outward estate, was happy. They might have been called the children of fortune. Worldly prosperity had brightened their path—they had been promoted to offices of dignity and trust. It is but keeping within the strictest limits of reason and probability to suppose they had as much to attach them to life. This was a dreadful alternative. And here we may pause, and ask, Oh! how would hypocrisy, how would empty profession have shrunk from it?—how would the mere formalist have turned his back?—I had almost said, how would the weak and timid believer have proved himself unequal to the trial? But God's grace was magnified in these men. The fire which consumes the dross

only purifies the gold. The holy purpose was fixed. There must be no compromise, no concession; conscience told them the act was wrong. Its voice was paramount. There are those who sneer at those holy records of martyrdoms for the truth, and who would set them down to the score of wild fanaticism, or to the ambition of getting a name. But could it be so in the case before us? What motive could actuate them arising from secular considerations? There were no honours to be obtained by them as dying martyrs—there were the interests of no party to be upheld. They had not the power of the example of others before them to stimulate them to seek a martyr's glorious name. Oh, I should like to see how wild fanaticism, or heated enthusiasm, or the fire of false excitement, could stand such a trial!—how they would demean themselves under such circumstances. No, we must trace the inflexible courage and constancy of these men to a higher and nobler source. And now was the hour of breathless suspense; now it was expected the screams of agony would issue from the fiery furnace. But, no; all was silent as the grave. It could not be that death had done its work so soon. When, lo, the mysterious marvel!—What sight is this that breaks upon the monarch's view? "Were there not three men cast into the fiery furnace?"—but, lo, he sees four men, walking; and the fourth is like the Son of God! Now, it is delightful to see God thus openly putting honour upon the faithfulness of His servants. But this, as well as all other Scriptures, was written for our instruction; and we are not living in an age when the lesson which it is fitted to teach us is no longer needful. It is not because the flames of martyrdom are quenched, or its sword sheathed, that, therefore, the spirit, the uncompromising spirit of the martyrs is no longer needed. No, in every period of the church there is truth to be maintained with uncompromising fidelity; error to be opposed with unhesitating boldness. There is ever a demand for that singleness of purpose, that simplicity of aim, which turns not to the right hand nor to the left, where the interests of truth are concerned. These are times when the principles which were so distinguished in these holy men are as much needed as ever. It is well known how much of latitudinarian sentiments are now abroad. We know well with what plausible arguments opinions may be maintained which are as much opposed to truth as light is to darkness. And it is no ordinary trial of sincerity which awaits the young, especially—when they are thrown into the society of men who are infinitely their superiors in intelligence, and literary attainments, and skill in argument—to maintain their principles with meekness, but with boldness. The Christian is certainly called upon to act a consistent and decided part; to show plainly to whom he belongs; to come out and be separate; to be "a living epistle, known and read of all men." A love of God's truth is his distinguishing character; and a compromise of God's truth, or anything that tends to lessen or to obliterate the boundary marks between truth and error, shall have his unqualified reprobation. The truth of God is what he loves better than the life itself; and that truth is simple and one. It would be well to ask ourselves, occasionally, "What sacrifices do we make in defence of the truth? What do we do and suffer in our Divine Master's cause?" No one can tell how much the interests of true religion may be advanced by the Christian "showing, out of a good conversation, his faith with meekness of wisdom." The believer is bound to advance the cause of his Master, to the utmost of his ability, means, and opportunity. The silent lessons of a holy example are ever powerful. You may be faithful "in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation." The offence of the cross is not yet ceased; and the Christian is called to bear a cross. And it would be well that we should, at times, examine ourselves upon the subject of our trials and exercises for Christ's sake. If we have none, let us examine and search diligently into the cause; take care that our exemption be not owing to compromise or faulty concession—to bowing before the golden image of expediency. (*D. Kelly, B.A.*) *The Nonconformists of Babylon*.—We have here: 1. A specimen of religious intolerance. God alone is "Lord of the conscience." A man's faith and worship are things which lie between himself and his Creator. This liberty is my birthright as a man. 2. How religious intolerance may be met. These three young men simply refused to do what Nebuchadnezzar commanded; or, in modern phrase, they met his injunction with "passive resistance." They would not tolerate any excuses, any casuistry. With similar firmness and humility we should meet intolerance yet. 3. An illustration of the support which Jesus gives to His followers, when they are called to suffer for His sake. These young men were entirely delivered, even as Peter was taken out of prison at a later day. God's servants are not always taken out of tribulations, but they are always supported through them. 4. In the matter of religious intolerance, as well as in some other things, the opposite of wrong is not always right. Nebuchadnezzar gave up the attempt to coerce these young men. That was well; but he issued an edict in reference to Jehovah which had in it elements not less objectionable than his command to worship the image. He had no more right to cut men to pieces for speaking evil of Jehovah

than he had to put Shadrach into the flames for not worshipping his image. Both edicts were alike unjustifiable. (H. M. Taylor, D.D.) *The Three Witnesses on the Plains of Dura*:—We may be, and often are, put to trials similar in kind, though perhaps not in degree. If, however, faith and constancy were triumphant in so signal an instance as this, and in circumstances under which frail human nature may have been expected to give way, there is much more reason why they should not give way under less vehement assaults, and with greater advantages on their side. Let us pray to God that our strength may prove equal to our day. In company with idolatry we see tyranny and oppression; these hateful things are always found in union. Observe, too, the zeal with which men who are led by the deceits of Satan propagate their errors. And the cause of truth and godliness ought to be supported by the lawful influence, the fervent prayers, the holy examples, of all in every station, whether high or low. . . . What are the temptations by which we are usually induced to break God's commandments? Some present pleasure that might well be foregone; some convenience that might be easily dispensed with; some gain of money that becomes a loss when obtained; some compliance with the humour of those whom we are wont to look up to with respect, but whose smile is dearly purchased by the sacrifice of principle, and the forfeiture of the favour of God. Inquire into the principles which actuated these champions for the truth. It was that principle of faith which is so much pressed upon us in the Holy Scriptures. It was that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible." . . . We have, in this narrative, a most vivid exhibition of the practical working of faith. Many persons cannot understand why such stress should be laid upon faith. We behold in the case of these faithful servants of God what faith can do. It lifts us above the world, and bears us up against sorrow and adversity. (H. J. Hastings, M.A.) *The Importance of a True Creed*:—Why is it that men like these Jews under the Old Testament dispensation, and Christians now and at all times, are ready to give up life and everything for God? It is because a true religion is the sole thing which enlightens the conscience, and so trains and strengthens it as to invest it with real power in the guidance of our lives. When men have felt their will enlightened by Divine knowledge, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit's indwelling, they then choose God's service so firmly and joyfully that no earthly terrors can shake or move them from their sure foundation. This, then, is what religion does for us. It clothes us with power. Under false religions the conscience remains in a rudimentary state, and though it does approve or condemn, and say this is right and that wrong, it acts but weakly and ignorantly, and is a very feeble monitor. And with so little help men's lives sink down into mean baseness. But a true faith and the Holy Spirit aid to build up the conscience, and give it, first, light, whereby it distinguishes right and wrong clearly; and, secondly, power, so that it speaks to the will with all authority, and says, "This thou shalt do, and this thou shalt leave undone." Conscience had long ago decided for Shadrach and his companions what their lives were to be. And under its influence they could not abandon the faith which had enlightened the conscience and given it this power; nor could they be false to that God who had been their peace and happiness, and whom they knew to be the sole Almighty Governor both in Heaven and in earth below. (Dean Payne-Smith, D.D.) *The Duty of Religious Profession*:—At first Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides were dressed anyhow and anyhow; but in the mêlée with the cavaliers, it sometimes happened that an Ironside was struck down by mistake by the sword of one of his own brethren, and so the general said: "You wear red coats, all of you." What Cromwell said he meant, and they had to go in their red coats, for it is found essential in warfare that men should be known by some kind of regimental. Now, you that are Christ's, do not go about as if you were ashamed of your Master's service. Put on your red coats; I mean, come out as acknowledged Christians. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Christians Unconquerable*:—The rose of Jericho flourishes amidst surroundings which lack all things wherein plants delight—in the hot desert, in the rocky crevices, by the dusty wayside, and in the rubbish heap. Even more, the fierce sirocco tears it from its place and flings it far out upon the ocean, and there, driven by the storms and tossed by the salt waves, it still lives and grows. So should the Christian grow in any and all circumstances where he may be cast—in sorrow, in hardship, in misfortune, in suffering. A deathless life is in him, and he should be unconquerable. (Signal.)

Vers. 17, 18. *If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.*—*Our Sure Defence*:—These souls were under the strongest possible temptation to do that which would have been an act of utter unfaithfulness to God, and which would have cost them their own self-respect. Had they yielded to the royal threat, they would have done that for which they never could have forgiven themselves. It would have been a deed of recreancy and of shame. It is not only for

great occasions that we should be prepared. Again and again will occur to us the opportunity for courageous constancy, the temptation to unworthy concession or to the submission that would end in shame. Where shall we find our defence? I. **IN ABSOLUTE CONVICTION.** "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us," said these dissenting Jews. There was no doubt about that. They remembered what Jehovah had done in the past, what deliverances He had wrought; and in answer to the king's incredulity, they replied with the absolute conviction of the Divine power to save. It is almost everything to us to have a deep sense of some great spiritual certainties. When evils hang over our head, when our prospects are threatened, when health, or liberty, or life is at stake, it is much indeed to stand upon the rock of some solid certitudes. God is near to us; He is observing us, and is awaiting our constancy with Divine interest and acceptance; He will reward fidelity with His loving favour; He will not allow the worst to happen, except it be right and well that it should happen; Christ will sympathise with us if we suffer, and go down with us into the deepest waters into which we may descend. If God be for us, we can afford to have the world against us (Matt. x. 28; Rom. viii. 31). It is a strong rampart in the day of assault to have some impregnable convictions such as these within our souls. II. **A STRONG HOPE.** "And He will deliver us out of thine hand . . . but if not"; in other words, we have a prevailing hope that our God will exert His power on our behalf. Their state of mind was this: they knew that God was with them, and was for them, that He was mindful of their prayer and of their trust; that was certain. They could not be sure whether He would justify their faith by a miraculous intervention on their behalf, or by imparting Divine grace to enable them to bear martyr-witness to the truth. Their strong hope was that He would thus deliver them. It is open to us to act and to feel thus. We are in serious danger of financial disaster, or of being attacked by disease, or of losing reputation, or of severe bereavement, or of grievous disappointment, or of social or professional failure. We ask for deliverance. It is not for us to prescribe to the Lord of our life how He shall interpose for us. We may say to ourselves, "God will give us our desire, but if not"—we may cherish not a presumptuous confidence, but a sustaining hope. III. **AN UNWAVERING RESOLVE:** "We will not serve thy gods," &c. Even if their hope of bodily deliverance was not granted, they would retire to the spiritual certainties on which they built, they would fixedly determine not to belie their convictions, not to offend their God, not to desert the truth, not to fail their fellow-countrymen and their co-religionists in the hour of trial. To the proud threat of the imperious and all-confident monarch they opposed the immovable resolution of upright souls that believed in God; their resolution was unqualified, unenfeebled by the shadow of a doubt, invincible. Let the young go forth to the conflict of life in this devout, this heroic spirit, and to them also shall come the victory and the crown. (IV. *Clarkson, B.A.*) *Faith Victorious over the Fear of Man:*—Examples of the victory of faith over the terrors of the world are useful to believers in their militant state. The victory of faith related in our text will appear brilliant when we call to mind the number of the combatants, the situation in which they stood, the manner in which they were assailed, and the strength and terror of the opposition with which they contended. I. **WE WILL GIVE A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS MEN, WHOSE NAMES ARE IN THE TEXT,** and their praise in the church. With respect to number, they were only three; a small number to appear for the Lord God of Israel in opposition to the idolatry of the king, and the court, and the empire of Babylon. By nation and profession they were Israelites, who had been carried to Babylon in the captivity of their country. They were of the tribe of Judah, and are commonly believed to have been of the king's seed, or royal family. They were in places of power and trust in Babylon. II. **WE SHALL GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE TESTIMONY WHICH THESE ILLUSTRIOUS MEN HELD, AND THROUGH WHICH THEY OVERCAME.** It was not a testimony of their own framing. The Lord God of Israel framed and wrote it, and commanded it to be observed. "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children." That branch of the testimony for which these princely witnesses appeared, had not only been written on tables of stone by the finger of God; but, according to His promise, was written in their hearts. It had been put into the ark of His testimony, which was now lost; but it was also put into their minds by His Holy Spirit, out of which it could not be erased. "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me." "Fear ye not, neither be afraid—ye are even my witnesses. Is there a god beside me? yea there is no god, I know not any." "I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God." The reason inserted in the law satisfied the conscience of every pious Israelite: "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Encouraged and awed

with the sovereign reason in it, the princely witnesses entered the plain in the boldness of faith, stood before a haughty monarch without meditating terror, and spake with the dignity of men who feared Him that would not give His glory to another, nor His praise to an image of gold in the plain of Dura. With the Psalms of David and the prophecies of Isaiah they were doubtless acquainted. In the Psalms of David are these passages: "The Lord is great and greatly to be praised, he is to be feared above all gods: For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens." "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." "Wherefore should the heathen say, where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not, neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." In the prophecies of Isaiah, we find these and several other passages of the same import. "They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save." "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance; and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this and shew yourselves men, bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside Me." Under that dispensation, in Babylon, as in Jerusalem, believers lived by the word. III. We shall attempt TO GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THEIR MANNER OF MAINTAINING THE ESTABLISHED TESTIMONY, which they received, believed, and held fast. The witnesses, in maintaining their testimony for the honour of the God of Israel, conducted themselves: 1. With discretion. Nebuchadnezzar, in his haughtiness and bigotry, added rudeness and insolence to idolatry, and impiously challenged the might of the God of Israel—"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" The witnesses, however, neither call him tyrant, nor idolater, nor oppressor, though, in fact, he was all three. On the contrary, they express themselves discreetly and mildly: "O Nebuchadnezzar!" "O king!" In their language they give no occasion to irritation, nor to any courtier to accuse them of despising dominion. 2. With composure and presence of mind. Neither anger nor fear disturbed them. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, ruled in their hearts. The cause in which they appeared needed not the wrath of man to support it; and the fear of God, which is a sedate and composed principle, fortified their minds against the fear of man. 3. With confidence in the living God, as God and their God. Far from being ashamed of Him, and the testimony which He had established in Israel, they acknowledge His propriety in them, and their interest in Him, before a numerous and splendid convocation of His enemies. If their acknowledgment be boasting, it is boasting in the Lord, which is an exercise of faith. 4. With steadfastness. This was standing fast in the faith, and quitting themselves like men. 5. With uprightness. Nothing crooked, nor perverse, nor deceitful, appears in their conduct. Had they consulted flesh and blood, reasons might have been suggested to palliate some deviation from integrity. But flesh and blood were not consulted. The witnesses were Israelites indeed, in whose conduct there was no guile. Lessons: 1. The mean and unkindly behaviour of the mighty potentate, who projected and authorised the criminal solemnities of that memorable day. Vengeance sparkled in his eyes, with a fierceness resembling the flame of his furnace. This was unmanly, unwise, unkingly, ungodly—"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." 2. Observe the violence of superstition armed with power. Nothing will satisfy it but either the consciences or the lives of upright and holy men. One would have thought that the king and court of Babylon might have been satisfied with the obeisance of that great assembly, without prosecuting three dissenters of a different nation, and a different religion. 3. Observe the distressing alternatives to which faithful witnesses for God have been reduced. 4. Observe the goodness of God in supporting His witnesses in such extremities. What were these three witnesses? In themselves they were weak and timorous as other men. How were they preserved from fainting, and from dishonouring, by unworthy compliances, the testimony for which they appeared? The Lord stood by them, and said, "Fear ye not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, yea I will help you, yea I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, by His Spirit in the inner man," they stood firm, repelled the wrath of the king and the terror of his furnace, and obtained a glorious victory. "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." 5. Ob-

serve the wisdom of counting, before temptations and trials assail our faith, the expense of holding fast our profession unto the end. 6. Observe the nature and efficacy of faith in God: (1) The nature of faith in God, which is receiving and resting on the grant which He makes of Himself to us as the Lord our God. (2) The efficacy of faith in God. The efficacy of this principle is mighty. Through it, men weak and timid have resisted unto blood, striving against sin. (*A. Shanks.*) *Absolute Confidence in God*:—One case is presented here as to which there might be an alternative, and another case is presented as to which there could be no alternative. "If not." There is that which may happen, and there is that which may not happen. Whether or not our God shall deliver us—and of this there is a doubt—"we will not serve thy gods, O king," of that there is no doubt. The confidence of the just in God is never misplaced. But this confidence of the just must be absolute, in no way distinguishing. It must be in God himself, not in God doing for them this or that. They must demand of Him nothing; they must trust Him simply. This is the word which comes to us from the story of the fiery furnace. Death by burning was a Babylonish punishment. The martyrs of God are sometimes left to suffer. Faith in God—not in God's deliverance, but in God himself—reaches beyond all earthly destiny; it reaches up to Him. If we can only see the form of the "Fourth," no furnace that we may ever have to pass through will go on keeping its heat. Near to us, if we strive to be true to our Father and His love, we may see the very Son of God. There was one who said, and said it to all His true servants, whatever their condition may be, and in whatever age of time they may live, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." If the knowledge of Him who said that shall only be, by the mercy of God, vouchsafed to us; if we are empowered to grasp the fact of Christ and His salvation; not with the shadow of a fancy, but with a strong and real hold; then the plain of Dura, or the fiery furnace, the quiet pastures of life, or the rugged broken ground, the walking loose unhurt, or the consuming of the flames—there will be a reach in our souls beyond them. Knowing God, we shall absolutely trust Him. And then, as to the changes and contortions of this mysterious life—in which we must all take, certainly our chequered, perhaps our grievous part—we shall have outgrown either anxious hope or enervating fear. As to the afflictions of life, in the words of hope we may say, "He shall deliver us; but if not." Inevitably the point is open, and the trust of faith assumes, and accepts the doubt, and passes beyond it; but as to death, and the conditions beyond death, there is to the humble, true-hearted believer in Christ no alternative to be admitted. What did he say, that noblest of all Christian men, when he came to the borders of this valley, and looked forth upon its darkness, knowing that he must pass immediately into it—what did he say? "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. . . . Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." St. Paul speaks quite positively here. He admits of no second case being possible. There is no room here for "but, if not." That may suit the life of our mortality. The believer in God is here sure of God, but he is not sure of what God shall do with him. God hath pledged himself to no earthly thing, except His love over all. God makes us all like unto St. Paul in this; and life may be buoyant and cheerful with us, or even tempered and calm, but if not—at least when "I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." The form of the Fourth will be there, and He is not (as the King of Babylon said) "like unto the Son of God," He is the Son of God. (*M. Wright, M.A.*) *Firmness in the Hour of Trial*:—These Jews were placed in a perfect dilemma. Life and death are now presented for their choice—life with all its blessings if they would conform—death in all its terrors if they should refuse compliance. If they had consulted with flesh and blood, in forming their determination or in framing their reply, what a multitude of cogent and plausible arguments might have been found to justify their compliance. They were not required to renounce the God to whom they had been hitherto devoted—to adjure His name, to abandon His worship, and to profess the god of Nebuchadnezzar as the only living and true God. No such profession was required; all that was necessary was an outward act of homage, which might have been done with a secret disavowal of the image as a god, and a mental protestation in the sight of Heaven that they still owned none save the God of their fathers, and worshipped none else but the invisible Jehovah. But these men, by a previous refusal, had already lifted up their testimony against the idolatry of which they had been the witnesses; and their obedience now, after such a testimony, could be regarded in no other light than as an involuntary constrained act, in which their feeling of constraint destroyed their guilt. A multitude of considerations must naturally have suggested themselves in palliation of the crime. But no token of retraction was given, no sign of irresolution appeared. They addressed the king in calm, but uncompromising terms. The principle which actuated these youths

was a scrupulous regard to the will of God, and a deep-seated confidence in His power and promises. Idolatry was a sin prohibited and denounced by God as a derogation from the honour that was due unto His name. In defiance of the punishment which threatened them, they resolved to adhere to the plain line of duty, disdaining the subtleties which carnality would suggest. The application of this history is far from being a remote one. There is little likelihood, indeed, that any of you should ever be placed in circumstances so critical. But you may be the subjects of tyrannical dictation from another quarter, even from that world in which you dwell, and from those masters which dwell within you—your lusts, your appetites, your passions. Temptation may often be presented to make you swerve from the path of rectitude. You may meet with many who will ridicule your faith, and more who will ridicule your practice, if that be in strict conformity to the faith you profess. But we need not so much to warn you against others as to warn you against yourselves. There are tyrants within who would constrain you to do them reverence. Money, sensual pleasures, vanities, &c., all have something within you to which they make appeal. (*J. Glason.*) *Courage in the Nest of Causes*:—This is one of the most admirable instances of fortitude and magnanimity. The deportment of these men was at one respectful and unshrinking, free from anything approaching to a railing or resentful expression, but at the same time wholly unmixed with fear. How admirably does their response harmonize with the instructions of our Lord to his disciples, "When ye are brought before kings and rulers . . . it shall be given you in the same hour what ye ought to speak." How many and how glorious have been the triumphs which this Divine principle of a realising faith in the grace and providence of God have, in all times and countries, enabled His people, however weak in themselves, to achieve. In the example before us, it inspired the Jewish youths with a freedom from anxiety perfectly sublime. How does their magnanimous reply put to blush that lukewarm, pusillanimous profession of religion with which so many of us are contented, which refuses the most trivial sacrifice or self-denial in God's service, and shrinks affrighted even from the shadow of danger! We are in no danger of being called upon to resist unto blood, striving against sin. Our present peril lies in the opposite direction—of being altogether overpowered by the ease and effeminacy of modern refinement—in the risk of our being swallowed up in spiritual sloth and self-indulgence. Our danger arises chiefly from within, from that covetousness which is idolatry. It is when called to undergo fiery trials that the upright Christian may, with the most unhesitating confidence, look for his Lord's special protection and support. In every temptation, however fierce or terrible, He will open a door of escape, or give us grace to bear the trial. No fire so intense as to overcome His love. (*W. F. Vance, M.A.*) *Conscientiousness*:—In what a trying position these three young men were placed! They did not trifle with their consciences. Compare their behaviour with the accommodating spirit shown by Naaman the Syrian. Persons who are thus only half-conscientious are very apt to show this accommodating spirit whenever they are associated with those who are altogether irreligious. In the various matters of daily life, the conscientious, the half-conscientious, and the unconscientious, are often obliged to have dealings with each other. It is contrary to common-sense, as well as to all Christian modesty, that the Christian should thrust forward at times and in places where he is not called for the difference in principle between himself and some other who is only a Christian in name; but it does seem to be the duty of all Christians, when mixed up in this world's business with the ungodly, to be ready to bear witness to the truth, whenever circumstances call for such a witness. An accommodating spirit may be sinful. If we had more reverence for conscience, considering it as no less than God himself speaking to us, we should not be anxiously seeking how far we might go without sin, in making conscience give way to our convenience. (*W. H. Nanken, M.A.*) *The Fiery Furnace*:—The three young men, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, whom the king of Babylon named Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, did not go to the fiery furnace with a prophecy that they would be preserved, as David did when he moved forward against Goliath. David declared, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand." The three Hebrews in Babylon had no such prospect vouchsafed them. They went to the fiery furnace without assurance of any deliverance. Their courage of faith was greater than that of David in the case alluded to. The faith of these three is brought out into full relief when we thus consider that the fiery furnace was a reality in prospect for them. Had God revealed to them that they should not be touched by the flames, their faith would have rested on His word of deliverance; but now it rested on His character of wisdom, truth and love. It was a higher, grander faith than mere faith in a special deliverance promised. It was a full, implicit confidence that God would do what was best, and would never abandon His own servants. It is not, therefore, in the miracle that we find our lesson to-day. Such a miracle may never again be wrought. Men as true and as holy

as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego have not been miraculously saved from physical torture and death, and no saint of God has any right to expect such intervention. Our lesson lies deeper than this. The exclamation of the three was not "The Lord will deliver us from the force of the fire," but, "The Lord is able to deliver us from the fire." And herein is a vast difference. Here is implied a spiritual knowledge of the character of God as the God of His people, for the implied sentence is, "And He who is thus able will do for us what is best"; and that this is the implied sentence we know from what follows: "and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." They are assured that God will give them deliverance from the king's wrath, though it may be by taking them out of the body. There is a grand, eternal deliverance before them. The lesson, then, which we are to learn legitimately from these heroes of the faith is to be unconcerned regarding the Nebuchadnezzars and fiery furnaces that are in our path, and that not because they will be removed, but because the Omnipotent God, our God, is directing all, and will give us the grand deliverance. In our low views of things we are tempted to say, "Why, this is very unsatisfactory; there is no encouragement here. It would be far better if the promise would come to us that the fire should not burn us, that we should suffer no pain or hardship, and have all easy before us. Why cannot God do this?" Well, He certainly could, as far as ability goes, but what would become of His love then, for it is certainly true that whom the Father loveth He chasteneth? 1. The first point, then, in our lesson from the three Hebrews is to have faith in God as our God. There is a strange misapprehension of faith, Christian faith, in some minds. They seem to consider it a blind confidence that certain things will take place. Only put your mind on an event, and be perfectly sure it will come, and it will come. There is not a grain of Christian faith in such presumption, but the very enemy and hindrance of faith. Christian faith is faith in God, His character, His will, His promises, as revealed in Jesus Christ His Son. Christian faith has God as its object and security. It holds all things subject to His most holy will, and knows that all things are directed by that will for the soul's good. It does not attempt to mark out God's course of dealing, but it is satisfied with that course, whatever it may be. It asks God for special gifts, but it desires God's infinite wisdom to decide concerning the giving, for a true faith humbly recognises human short-sightedness and knows well that the human wish might be very injurious if granted. Herein is the radical difference between the believer and the world. He is in communion with God, and the grace of God is his comfort and defence, while the world resists the grace and has no Divine promise and no Heavenly experience to rest upon. 2. The second point in our lesson from the three Hebrews is that faith implies service. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us," is the exclamation of the three heroes. This completely sets aside a speculative faith, which is the common faith of so many who are called Christians. Orthodoxy in opinion is not faith. There must be an action corresponding to the creed. As there can be no true faith without active service, so, of course, there can be no assurance of faith. The Christian who lazily looks after nothing but his present earthly comfort will never look at fiery furnaces with composure. Now, the service of the Lord is the use of the Divine means of grace for ourselves and for others. His grace is working in our earth for His great purpose of salvation, and He chooses us to be His co-workers. The field is the human heart—our hearts and the hearts of others. As servants of God we will take hold of this assigned work earnestly. It is in this way our faith will grow into the proportions of overcoming power that will fear no Nebuchadnezzar or his fiery furnace. Without such service we can express no such growth. Salvation is not from without and by magic. It is by a life that has faith as its motor. The three Hebrews were simply acting out their life of faith when they refused to bow to the king's idol. It was the natural operation of a godly life. They served the Lord. That was their soul's position. They lived in accordance with that service. "The thing is perfectly plain. Our whole lives direct us. We shall not worship thine idol, and the burning fiery furnace is no argument." That is the way a soul in the Lord's service will always reply to an invitation to sin, even when a threat accompanies it. The reason why so many Christians yield is because they do not serve God. They wear Christ's name and serve self and the world. They have no courage because they have no faith. 3. The third point in our lesson from the three Hebrews is that God's service runs counter to the world's requirements. Hence there must be a collision. A man who will serve God will clash with the world. Nebuchadnezzar was but a specimen of the world. The world will insist upon some form of idolatry of every one, and will threaten the fiery furnace for disobedience. The world hates God, and will not recognise His exclusive demands. Political, commercial and social customs will bring a tyrannical pressure upon the soul, and the Christian in the name of his God will have to resist. The fiery furnace has different forms. The more resolute he is, the more wrath the world has and the hotter

will it make the fire. Then is the opportunity for the Christian to triumph in his faith and to taste the glory of his position as with God. Deceit, Sabbath-breaking, impurity, fraud, lying, intrigue, to which the customs of the age allure the Christian, are all forms of idolatry, for they are revolts from God after the gods of covetousness, ambition, or carnality. Now, there is no other treatment of these by the godly but positive, open, uncompromising resistance, at any cost. The only position, then, of the Christian who would be at peace with God and with himself is the position of the three Hebrews—the position of faith. There he is afflicted with no doubts, anxieties, or remorse. He knows that God will be with him, even if it be a valley of death-shadow that he is to traverse. He will find the inexpressible comfort of the Divine presence, and feel at every step the strong upholding hand of his God. He will not miss earthly friends in such exalted companionship. In contrast with this steady believer is the one who fears the world's opposition, and endeavours to soothe and subdue it. This is always done by giving up God for the world. This Christian is of all men most miserable. He gets worse than the fiery furnace in the tortures of his conscience, in his failure to make anything satisfactory out of the world, in his own self-contempt and his dreary, blank prospect. (*H. Crosby.*) *The Fiery Furnace*.—It was in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, according to the Septuagint, that he set up this image of gold in the plain of Dura. If that date be correct (and there appears no reason to discredit it), it was done to celebrate the recent destruction of Jerusalem, and the subjection of various enemies of Babylon from India to Ethiopia. I. THE SECRET OF LOYALTY is a simple and undisturbed trust in God. Of course, there can be no loyalty without faith; none to man, none to God; That which impresses us in the case of these Hebrew youths is that their trust was so serene. And now, when the stress of the king's command is put upon them, they are not taken off their guard; they are not overwhelmed with surprise or dismay. They trust in God. They believe His word. But the arm on which they leaned was omnipotent. The wisdom to which they confided their way was unlimited. Jehovah cared for them. He had kept them; He would keep them in the time to come. The truest courage is the calmest. Peter and John looked into the faces of the Sanhedrim, and put the question simply back to them, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Paul, arraigned before Roman kings and Hebrew governors, turns from his own defence on a technical complaint, to deliver the message with which his master had charged him. A loyalty thus based is ready for any emergency. It is not a strain; it is only a confidence. It does not go into heroics; it is unconscious that it is heroic. During the time of the civil war, much was said about the extraordinary bravery of Admiral Farragut in having himself lashed to the mast while passing the forts under fire at Mobile. In answer to an inquirer about it afterwards, he said, "I cannot understand why they make so much of my going up into the maintop. It was nothing special that I did at Mobile, and I was not lashed there at all. When going into action, or in any time of danger, I always went up there, because I felt it my duty to be where I could overlook everything in person, and be seen by all of the men, and set them an example of sharing their risks." True courage does not promise, nor posture, nor explain. It goes on quietly and acts. It does not care to answer. II. THE TESTING OF LOYALTY is permitted of God. Nor is it any contradiction to the constancy of His care for His people that it is so. The Lord can do better for His own than to shield them from all hardship. Even their spiritual gifts and graces deserve something better at His hands than sheltering. They ask for cultivation, for the opportunity of development, for the privilege of growth. Protection from evil ceases beyond a certain point to be a kindness. It is more to be strengthened than to be sheltered. The trees which grow always in the forest, protected from the sharpness of the winds, never compelled to battle with the storm, grow up toward the light, but do not spread their branches above ground or their roots below. If the barrier by which one of them has been shielded from the winds were taken suddenly away, the first blast of the tempest would lay it low. It is not braced against it. It stands, not because it is strong, but because it is supported. But on the mountain-side the oak grows, or the cedar. From a sapling the breezes have played with it, and it has bended but held on. And, equally, what power of discipline, what opportunity of courage, what development of strength would the church and Christian of the present day be deprived of, if, by more delicate but no less searching tests, its loyalty were not continually put to the proof. III. THE SUPPORT OF LOYALTY is promised and assured. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "My strength shall be sufficient for thee." "Certainly I will be with thee." IV. THE VINDICATION OF LOYALTY IS CERTAIN. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The Burning Fiery Furnace and its Lesson*.—Stars are visible in the dark, and heroes are seen in persecution and trouble. Had these men always remained amid the peace and quietness of Canaan, they might have perished without leaving even their names upon the pages of history. This is no singular and isolated case. All history,

whether secular or sacred, is full of them. The antediluvian darkness caused Noah to shine. The Egyptian bondage caused Moses to shine. Roman Catholicism caused Luther to shine. The national darkness of England caused Cromwell to shine. The chief glory of man is obedience to God. Every reader finds a charm in the Babylonian captivity. There is something that captivates and delights the soul of man, and has a powerful influence over his life. The wisdom, wealth, authority, slavery, and idolatry that crowd upon each other in the narrative with their light and shadow, may all be stript from the page, yet the power remains that moves the breast of man. Take that one secret, and all the august and dazzling things are bereft of their charm and power. We can part with the wisdom of the magician and the wealth of the king; but we hold with a tenacious grip the unfaltering trust of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. We pass by everything else and cling to this, because it is the chief glory of man, and his most lasting good. The imposing art of the magician, the foresight of the astrologer, the easy saying of the soothsayer, may be grand; but that power these three captives possess, which enables them to defy the king and live for God, is more glorious by far. The wealth of the king only enriched the body, and left the soul as poor as before; would last but a few years, and then vanish for ever. But the faith of the captives enriched "the inner man" with a life and blessedness that would endure throughout the hidden ages of eternity. The chief glory of man is not outward grandeur, but a strong trust in God; because it is a power to help amid the cares of life, amid the experience of death, and the unknown possibilities of the future. This has been verified by all history and experience. Pharaoh's palace yonder is adorned with all the arts and magnificence of the land. Sheep and oxen, corn and wine, power and plenty are on every side. Everything for which one can crave to make life joyous and gay is near. Servants and soldiers without number wait to do his bidding. But we yearn for none of those things; we pass by them all as valueless. We crave for the spirit and faith of the slave Joseph. Because the humble obedience of the slave, and not the outward grandeur of the king, is the chief glory of man. 1. The value of this faith is seen in that it gave the captives boldness to express their convictions. 2. The value of this faith is seen in that it prepared the captives for adversity and suffering. 3. The value of this faith is seen in that it secured the captives a noble victory. God stood by His servants, baffled their opponents, and gave them a glorious victory. God's enemies might appear to conquer at first, but Jehovah only delayed the victory of His people that, when it did come, it might be more marked and distinguished. To fight against God, and against God's people, always means defeat and ruin in the end. Pharaoh and his army were buried in a watery grave as they pursued the Israelites. (*J. Hubbard.*) *The Fiery Furnace*:—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were men of integrity, against whom no one could bring an accusation, except in the matters of their God. But solely on account of their adherence to the Divine cause, they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. 1. By this we may be reminded, of what it is important at all times to keep in view, that for adherence unto God we may be exposed to great difficulties and dangers. At the beginning it was foretold that there "would be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman," and no prediction has ever been more strikingly fulfilled. Those that are born after the flesh have always persecuted them that are born after the Spirit. What injuries have thereby been done unto the church! 2. Though these young men were menaced with danger, though all that was dear to them was in peril, yet they openly adhered unto God. They did not feign an excuse for absenting themselves from the dedication. They did not content themselves with adhering to God in their heart, while they bowed down to the idol with their bodies. When accused, they had not recourse to any specious disguise or subtle ambiguity. And, though everything like ostentation is to be avoided as a sin, we ought openly to bear our testimony for God, whatever difficulties we may have to encounter. It is not enough that we wish well to the cause of God in our hearts—it is not enough that we desire and pray for its triumph—it is not enough that we give it secret aid, while we remain openly among its enemies. When any acknowledge a cause to be good, and stand back from avowing their attachment, because of the odium which they may incur, or the danger to which they may be exposed, this is unequivocal evidence that the fear and the favour of man have more effect upon their minds than the fear and the favour of God. Christ was not ashamed to own us publicly. God and angels, men and devils, saw Him publicly die for us upon the cross. And shall we ever be ashamed to confess Him before men! 3. Their adherence unto God was not only open, it was also resolute. Nothing like hesitation, or suspense, appears in their conduct. Their minds seem as resolute as if all inducements had been upon the side of duty—as resolute as if adherence unto God had been the way of advancement, instead of leading, as it did, to a fiery furnace. "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship

the golden image which thou hast set up." We must beware of everything like halting, hesitating, and wavering. A halting, wavering, undecided frame of mind, is spoken of in Scripture in the language of contempt. Why halt ye between two opinions? if Jehovah be God, then choose ye Him, but if Baal be God, then choose ye him. 4. The adherence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego unto God was steadfast. Many are bold when danger is at a distance, who faint when the hour of trial draws nigh. But these young men were steadfast and immovable. They not only declared their resolution to suffer everything, they actually submitted to be cast into the furnace when it was heated seven-fold. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Much depends on the steadfastness of soldiers in the day of battle—the issue of the conflict, and the fate of their country. Openly, decidedly, and steadfastly to adhere to the cause of God's glory, in despite of all trials and difficulties, is no easy matter. They who are called to such work would do well to count the cost, and consider their abilities. It is God alone who can teach the hands for this war, and the fingers for this fight. And He has promised to do so. Has He not said, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness." These promises were made good, in the case of His three witnesses, on the plains of Dura. When He called them to more than ordinary work, He furnished them with more than ordinary strength. God not only supported His three servants under the trial to which they were exposed; He, in due time, delivered them. This deliverance was in many respects miraculous, and, in so far as this was the case, we are not warranted to expect that any such interposition will be made in our behalf. But the manner of their deliverance was in most respects similar to God's ordinary method of interposing for His church and people. (1) This deliverance was seasonable. It took place at the very best time. In the exercise of infinite wisdom, Jehovah discerns, and seizes the critical moment, and though His people may think Him long in coming, He will never come too late. (2) This deliverance was of such a kind that it could not have been conceived beforehand. And the manner in which God delivers His church and people is, in general, altogether different from what anyone could have conceived beforehand. (3) The deliverance of these three children took place immediately after their confidence in God and submission to His will had been fully tested. They put themselves into God's hand. (4) This was a God-like deliverance. It showed itself to be God's work. All the power and ingenuity of the created universe could not have saved these young men after they had been so long in that dreadful furnace. Although no visible manifestation of the Deity had been granted to them, the fact of their preservation in the fire would have shown that the arms of the Almighty God had been around them. All pure and holy deliverances come from God, and generally bear upon them the impress of His hand. The deliverer of the three children was one in the form of the Son of God. (5) Their deliverance, therefore, came from a God in Christ. And all the deliverances of the saints come from a God in covenant, and they come through the second person in the adorable Trinity. He is not only the Saviour of the soul, He is also "the Saviour of Israel, and the help thereof in the time of trouble." (6) In delivering His witnesses from the furnace, God vindicated their conduct. He showed that in refusing to obey Nebuchadnezzar they had done what He approved. How greatly did He honour them in the midst of their enemies, when He thus visibly owned them as His friends, and altered the very laws of creation on their account! And in delivering those who had been sufferers for His cause, God generally vindicates their testimony and puts honour on their names. (7) In short, this was a very wonderful deliverance. It afforded a remarkable display of the power, and the wisdom, and the loving kindness of the Lord. "This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes." And in God's greater works of deliverance, there is in general something so superhuman, something so God-like, as to fill every serious observer with admiration. What wonderful things has He done in behalf of His people! How blessed is that people whose God is the Lord! He can bring them "through fire and through water to the wealthy place." And He will make the worst and severest dispensations that befall them, to promote the honour of their names, and the everlasting welfare of their souls. (*William White.*) *The Three Hebrews in the Furnace*:—"I am no hypocrite. I make no profession of religion"—that is to say, you boast of your open and consistent enmity to God. This is not the worst. This impiety of conversation, which we every day hear, if it means anything, insinuates, of course, that a profession of religion can never be sincerely made—that there is no such thing as true piety; and proves the people who talk thus to be, not only sinners in their lives, but infidels in their hearts. I only wish these cynics would study the narrative now before us. It is said that no one can enter the presence of that matchless statue,

the Apollo Belvidero, without instinctively standing erect, without feeling his own form at once dilate and become taller and nobler; and the man is to be pitied who can contemplate the moral grandeur of these youthful heroes without being conscious of I know not what elevation of heart and purpose. A true soul will turn from the record of such undaunted loyalty to God and conscience with a fresh outfit of faith and hope. I. In unfolding the lessons of the text, let us begin with *THE NARRATIVE*, let us analyse this passage in the history of our race. And, first, who can look at the scene here portrayed without blushing for the degeneracy and corruption of our race? The spectacle presents a brilliant panorama. The morning is bright, and the eastern sun is kindling a blaze all over the plains of Dura, as its beams are reflected from silver and gold and diamonds, in which princes, satraps, peers, the whole jewelled aristocracy of that magnificent court, are arrayed. High on a throne of royal state, gorgeous with barbaric pomp and splendour, sits the Chaldean monarch. And from the centre of this Oriental and most imposing pageant, soars aloft, glittering and dazzling, the colossal image, the cynosure of every eye—attracting the admiration and homage of that uncounted multitude. The spectacle is grand; but what an exhibition of human nature! On every side I behold the earth carpeted with the softest green, enamelled with a flushing luxuriance of variegated and fragrant flowers. Cool fountains gush up in the groves, and transparent streams murmur through the valley. I breathe delicious odours. I am refreshed by the balmy zephyrs. Heaven and earth are rejoicing in their loveliness. From nature I turn to man, and what do I find? Recollect, here is no mob of the ignorant and brutal, but the monarch and his patricians—all the gathered wisdom, refinement, honour, of the empire. What do we see openly and superciliously displayed in them all? Idolatry, hostility to God, selfishness, cruelty, the most vindictive malice. In this countless host what a diversity of talent and taste and character; but those detestable passions reign in every bosom. And this depravity flows from an inexhaustible fountain in the human heart. In all this multitude here are only three men who worship the true God, and what have they done? whom have they injured? It is simple mockery to speak of liberty if the mind and conscience be not free. The persons, the property, the lives of his subjects are at the absolute disposal of the Chaldean autocrat. This, however, is not enough. His imperial mandate shall control their religion, shall fetter their souls. The ends of government are temporal, not spiritual. The Saviour possessed omnipotence, but He did not use it to enforce His religion by measures having no relation to the truth of His doctrine. He said, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me, go teach all nations." II. *THE CONDUCT OF THESE HEBREWS*, and the example which God here proposes of that constancy and decision of character, without which we can neither be true to truth, to Jesus, nor to ourselves. Decision of character must never be confounded with obstinacy. Firmness tempered with gentleness, this is what we need, if we are to be real Christians. The more you study the conduct of the Redeemer the more will you admire the peerless combination of these virtues in Him. It is not at all uncommon to meet people who pique themselves on firmness and decision; when in fact it is mere, sheer, downright stubbornness they betray—a perverse, self-willed pertinacity—in which there is no more moral force than there is in the dead weight which fixes a heavy, inert mass of rock to the earth. The other quality, gentleness, is more amiable, but it is scarcely ever united with the highest energy. There is softness, tenderness, sweetness of disposition; but the character is effeminate. Firmness tempered with gentleness—this is true decision of character; not the rigid, inexorable, iron hardness of the dead tree, which cannot bend without breaking; nor the weakness of the osier which bends and remains bent; but the innate, elastic vigour of the young oak, which only becomes more erect, and strikes its roots more deeply into the earth, by yielding to every breeze and complying with every pressure. What is the first element in true decision of character? It is an inflexible and controlling adherence to the will of God in all things and at all times. What is the next element in true decision of character? It is a spirit armed and intrepid in facing danger, in meeting the responsibilities of our station. How prone are we to shrink from duty. These Jews were men of a different spirit. At first, indeed, we are tempted to ask. Why did they come on the ground at all? But—not to remark that cowardice could have availed them nothing—it never can avail anything in the cause of God—was it for men like them to be afraid? Was this a time for the servants of the Most High to be craven? Here is no small matter; a great soul will never concern itself about small matters. God and His glory are about to be outraged. The third element in decision of character grows out of those just indicated. It is a brave disregard of consequences. The moment we begin to think of expediency—to inquire tremulously, What, if we are faithful, will be the effect on our interest or position or reputation? that moment we are gone, we have fallen. And all this strenuousness of purpose is

perfectly calm, as real strength always is calm. Men and brethren, a simple trust in God is the most essential ingredient in moral sublimity of character. It elevates a man high above all the earth, and equips him to bear anything, and to brave everything. If God be for him, who can be against him? How indispensable energy and courage are to the Christian, you need not be told. Would you be useful? you must be decided; piety is not enough; you must have a reputation for piety. Would you not dishonour your profession? you must be decided. But, now, how can this firmness and fortitude be inwrought and sustained in beings so feeble and inconstant? I answer, By faith, and faith only; hence the exhortation, "Add to your faith virtue," that is, courage. Faith is the source from which this commanding grace must spring, and by which it must be fed; and with what invincible courage, what undaunted contempt of danger and death, does not a simple trust in God inspire these young heroes? Observe the noble singularity of the Hebrews. Nor was this any transient enthusiasm, one of those sudden impulses which may hurry a generous spirit to make heroic sacrifices, of which it may afterwards repent. For space is given them to reconsider their determination, the king expostulates with them; but they are immovable. III. THE RESULT OF THIS FIERY ORDEAL; and impress upon you the great lesson it teaches. The expression, "than it was wont to be," shows that this furnace was the place of punishment for criminals; and it is probable that its floor was now a bed of the horrible ashes left by former executions. It is God's method ever to cause the malice of those who persecute his people to recoil upon themselves. "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." And what is all this but the type of a Christian, when called to pass through the fire—trembling, perhaps, in view of the furnace—but afterwards, with adoring wonder and gratitude, exclaiming, "My God how good it is for me that I was afflicted!" This is not all. Not only is this furnace a sort of heaven to these noble youths, but see how they glorify God in this day of their visitation. Witnesses who testify from eternity. For the place in which they stand belongs not to this earth. Witnesses who look with sublime contempt upon the king and all the pomp and equipage of his power. Witnesses who take no praise to themselves. A Christian never does arrogate any strength or merit; he ascribes all his salvation, from first to last, to sovereign grace. Lastly, witnesses whose testimony is at once and forever decisive. It is not by words, not by preaching, nor forms, that we are to honour God and His truth; it is by our fidelity, "that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven." Lessons: 1. And, first, let this narrative reinforce our faith and constancy. The secret of Christian strength is an open secret; it is a gracious habit of trusting in God at all times. The song of the Three Holy Children is one of the Apocryphal Books. The man who wrote that beautiful composition, if not inspired himself, had power to inspire others. Nothing can be more touching than the whole story, which I commend to you. 2. How amiable is the religion of Jesus Christ. To the faithful soul it is really true, that "all the way to heaven is heaven." Even when all is bright, how necessary is this religion for man. But are you bearing crosses and making sacrifices for Jesus and His cause? If not, you are preferring some idol to Him, and what must the end be? (*R. Fuller.*)

Ver. 18. **That we will not serve thy gods.**—*Christian Decision*:—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were three very young men, worshippers of the true God, living in a heathen land! They were exposed to much persecution and distress on account of their religion, yet they were enabled to act with faithfulness and prudence "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Religion, where it is genuine and active, will inevitably excite the hatred or contempt of the world. The genuine Christian will be obliged to stem the torrent; there will, there must be, opposition; if he "were of the world, the world would love its own; but because he is not of the world, but is chosen out of the world, therefore the world hateth him." How difficult, oftentimes, and painful the line of duty! How much need is there of some animating example, or affectionate, and faithful, and wise advice, to keep such a person from offending against conscience, and forgetting his obligations to his gracious Saviour! To be faithful in a family, in a neighbourhood in which almost all around us conspire to forget God—to be in earnest in religion where our friends, and associates, and connections are careless and indifferent—to forsake sin, and the world, and temptation, where everything invites us to love them and follow them, is no easy task. It can be performed only by the aid of that Holy Spirit, who is at once a comforter and a sanctifier. Nebuchadnezzar, not satisfied with his existing gods, commanded all his subjects to fall down and worship a new image which he had set up. In like manner, is sin in its various forms an idol which the world delights to serve. By nature we are its slaves and votaries; and it is not till we have been taught by the Spirit to worship God in truth, and to renounce the world's vanities, that we begin to feel the burden of this service. New idols are con-

stantly presented to confirm the sinner in his slavery, and to tempt the true Christian from his allegiance to God. Whatever be the last evil custom, the last new mode of sinning, men are expected to follow it. Should all the rich, the wise of this world, the gay, the splendid be against serious religion; should a thousand new baits and allurements be added to seduce us from it; should unsuspected dangers and persecutions spring up every moment around our path—yet we may learn from the example before us a lesson of faith, and constancy, and reliance upon God, and be incited, from the merciful support given to His servants of old, to commit ourselves to Him as a faithful Creator, knowing that with the “temptation He will also make a way for our escape.” The Christian is not to affect anything that may provoke the opposition of the world; if he live holily, justly, and unblamably, as he ought to do, and if he evidence in his life and conduct the faith, the hope, the prayerfulness of a true disciple of Christ, opposition will almost inevitably arise without his seeking it. He ought, as much as in him lies, if it be possible, to live “peaceably with all men.” Some of the most powerful obstacles in the path of the youthful Christian are the allurements of pleasure, the commands of authority, the dread of persecution, and the specious solicitations of friendship and kindness. I am well aware that this principle may be abused. Enthusiasm may fancy, and hypocrisy may pretend, a Divine commission for the wildest excesses; and resistance may be made about very trifling and unimportant matters. But the principle exists notwithstanding. The clearest and most valuable principles are liable to be abused. They knew that the first authority to be obeyed is God; and that though all other authorities should come in competition with this, yet that one was their Master, even that Messiah who Himself appeared for their support and comfort walking in the midst of the devouring flames. Many a young Christian, who could have braved all the terrors of open persecution, has given way to this temptation, and has, if not for ever ruined his soul, at least marred his present peace, and endangered his soul for the sake of that friendship with the world “which is enmity against God.” Not so these heroic sufferers. If, then, we value our own souls, if we value the souls of others, if we value the cause of Him who deserves all our love and gratitude, let us be decided, “steadfast, unmoveable.” But remember, that Christian decision is exercised in regard to matters of real importance, and when the command of God is clear and distinct. Among mere worldly men a certain stoutness of spirit is often exhibited in matters of indifference, as well as in matters of moment. Such firmness as this is a mere native obstinacy of character. At the same time in matters of real moment, Christian decision displays itself with unshrinking promptitude and perseverance. And such was the case in which these persons in the plain of Dura were called to act. An attack was made upon the very foundation of all true religion. It was a case, therefore, imperiously demanding the decision they exhibited. Everything, precious in religious principle, as well as everything tremendous in religious sanctions, required them to act as they did. True Christian decision keeps its eye on the eternal law of God. The man of real Christian firmness admits not a thought of a compromise with sin or with error. Man’s policy will always be narrow, unless it embraces considerations drawn from eternity. He who consults his convenience and temporal interests—who has been controlled at one time by the law of God, and at another by the will of man, will learn too late that he has acted upon a plan not to be admitted in transactions with the Eternal. He attempts a hard task indeed; that of uniting the service of God and mammon. Is there in your deportment nothing like a compromise with sin and error? Are the claims of Christ all met with cheerfulness, and discharged with promptness? Is there no blending of the service of God and the service of the world? (*H. Irwin, B.A.*)

The Choice of the Highest:—These words represent the grand challenge of the human heart against evil fate. Those who believe in the naturalistic origin of conscience forget that its greatest achievements have not been in line with, but in defiance of, popular sentiment. They have been the victories of minorities rather than of majorities. Yet no such sacrifice has ever failed or can fail. The three Hebrew children are a figure of the moral heroes of the world. They did not debate what ought to be done in matters of conscience. It is often said that first thoughts are best. I have only two things to say to you arising out of this text. The first is that the supreme spiritual need of the hour is a strenuous morality, and the second is, there is no morality worthy of the name that is not born in conflict. You may think it strange if I say the supreme spiritual need of the hour is a strenuous morality. What has morality got to do with spirituality? Everything. There is no spiritual truth which has not a moral bearing and places the man who receives it under a moral obligation. It is a cheap spirituality that makes no demand upon conscience. I do not wish to identify morality with spirituality, but I declare they can never be separated. To-day we are confronted with two seemingly contrasted attitudes of the modern mind towards Christianity. First we see

before us an admiration for the ethical value of Christianity, for the character of its Founder, for the ideal which He set up, but along with this there comes a very considerable and widespread distrust of its dogmas. He is worthy not only of imitation, but of the fullest homage that a man's heart can render. Christ stands highest, Christ stands first, Christ is my God. But about that I am not concerned to dispute at this moment. I think Christ is not concerned so much as to what we say about who He is, but He is a very great deal concerned as to the obedience we render unto Him. There is a need to-day of warmth of devotion and moral enthusiasm about the highest things which, after all, lie close to us every day. Poverty in these things leads to pessimism. Every spiritual truth makes this moral demand. The best way for you young men to find the truth about Christ, about God, about Heaven, is to be good. The good and the true are ultimately one. Do one good action and the universe speaks back to you its "Well done." Every one of you bows before a moral ideal written in his heart. You may prove unfaithful to it, but if you faithfully obey it, it will lead you into light. Whoever or whatever wrought that ideal within you is your God, and your God makes His demands upon you not simply sometimes now and then, but all the time and everywhere. The greatest need, I repeat, of the present day, is the need of a strenuous form of morality. Make men who are not afraid of rendering homage to conscience, and you will make that type of character which Christ Himself delights to honour. But to go to my second point, there is no goodness worth having which is not born in conflict. Make a distinction between the morally beautiful and the morally sublime. I trust you have all read Edmund Burke's essay on the "Sublime and the Beautiful." You will remember that he declares one ingredient of the sublime to be a feeling akin to fear, fear in the presence of an unknown dread of an experience that may come. Now, young men, the morally beautiful may contain nothing at all of that particular ingredient. The morally sublime goes to the making of character, and in the long run it cannot be different from the morally beautiful. There is nothing more winsome than the innocence of childhood. Is childhood ideal? No, but childlikeness is. You will go from the morally beautiful through the morally sublime. Begin with childlikeness if you would come to the character of Christ. If you go through the morally sublime you must be prepared to meet Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation and the demons in the darkness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Simplicity, naturalness, transparency of character, absence of arrogance, are characteristic of the child. It is remarkable but splendid to think that within are the very things which the world is coming to demand from manhood. Test it yourself. Examine your own virtue and see if you have obtained these qualities. That is not virtue which is easily won. The false accent of religiosity to-day says much about humility where humility is not, and a man may come to that dangerous condition when, as has been truly said, he is proud of his own humility. Doing what one wants to is no great virtue in the sight of God. We are every day confronted with the choice between the higher and the lower, the golden image or the fiery furnace. Sometimes a grand crisis comes in life. We have to choose between God and Mammon, conscience or a momentary gain. In such crises we seem left to ourselves, but we never really are left to ourselves. In the darkest hour there stands by our side that unknown Friend. Most of us want God to rescue us before the crisis comes. He very seldom does that, but He rescues us on the other side of this strenuous activity by which character is beaten out, gained, and won. When God calls us to a crisis, God brings us to a conflict. It is as though there was a bar to cross, and on the other side, and only on the other side, is the still water and safety. God does not give His rescues upon this side. It is an evil agency that would keep a man back from that by which his manhood is won. Here is opportunity in the great crises of life—to venture on for the right, and to leave the future to God. Supposing, then, that in this house of prayer there is some man listening to me who is face to face with the burning fiery furnace, I would say to him, Make this humble man your ideal. Be not careful about your answer. First thoughts are best in cases like this. Play the man. "Our God is able to deliver" you from the burning fiery furnace—but if not, if not? Then do not bow down. Leave the future to Him. Some of you are instantly tempted to compromise with the ideal. Watch what you are doing. You are perilling something higher than you know, driving from you, it may be, God's great opportunity. Faithfulness is always vindicated. There is a grandeur in moral victory. If it were otherwise, God's world would be wrongly made. No man who has ever tested the worth of righteousness has had cause to regret his choice. Listen to the call of inflexible good. Dare to trust it and obey. (*B. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Character versus Circumstances*:—The Babylonian kingdom is in the very height of its power and prosperity. The great Nebuchadnezzar has become a powerful and mighty potentate. His very word is law throughout all that vast realm. He is accustomed to strict obedience in

all the affairs of state. Since his subjects are under such perfect control; since they dare not oppose his plans nor thwart his purposes, he thinks he will command them as to what their religion shall be. There are many religions in the realm of Nebuchadnezzar the king; there are many gods to whom sacrifice is made; many images of stone before which the people bow. But Nebuchadnezzar will change this order of things. He will make one image of great stature. The day arrives. A great multitude has assembled. The statue is unveiled with much pomp and display. Another victory for Nebuchadnezzar! Great is the king of the Babylonians! Mighty is the monarch of the Chaldeans! Wonderful is the power that he exerts over his subjects; for their religion, even, is subject to his command. But what news is this that he hears? What strange report is this that his courier brings? "There are three men in your realm, O king," the messenger says, "who did not obey your royal mandate, nor bow themselves down at your command." "Three men in all my kingdom that dare to disobey! Three subjects in all my realm who disregard my command! Who are they? Are they generals of war who have grown haughty? Are they men of wealth who have become influential? Are they politicians of fame with whom is power, that they dare thus to withstand the king? Speak, messengers, their names! Who are they?" "Neither wealth nor power nor royal lineage is theirs, but they are three captives brought from Judea who dare to withstand thine own edict. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee nor worshipped the golden image which thou hast set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar commanded the three offenders to be brought before him. He tells them of the law they have broken, and rehearses to them the penalty incurred. A fearful penalty, a death sentence of execution terrible. But he will give them one more chance. Our text forms a part of the answer that the Jewish captives gave the king in the hour of trial. 1. These Israelites were true to their principles, in spite of difficulties, and in the face of opposition. They were just as loyal and true in Babylon as ever they had been in Jerusalem. They kept their religion as pure and undefiled as captives as ever they did as free citizens. Circumstances were tremendously against them, but they were the kind of men who did not give way to circumstances. Popular opinion was mightily against them, but they were the kind of men that are uninfluenced by wrong public opinion. They had grit as well as grace; pluck as well as piety. 2. There are a good many people who are good enough so long as they are surrounded by good influences, but get them away from those influences and into temptation and they fall. Some men, who are very good citizens in Jerusalem, lose all their piety as soon as they get down to Babylon. The men who possess decision of character and firmness of purpose are the men who stand where others fall. Young men come here to our city from their country homes. Some advance to positions of responsibility and honour; others sink into lives degraded and low. What is the difference? The difference lies not in the circumstances that surround these men, but in the characters that they possess. 3. That young man is safe, wherever you put him, who has the consecrated courage, the God-like determination, the heroic devotion to principle, that these three young men had. To tell what will become of a man, inquire not so much into his surroundings, but look at the man himself and see how he is made. When that young man leaves your home to go to a distant city, look not at the reputation of that city so much as at that young man's character, if you would read his future. Young men, into your lives trying hours will come; into your experiences untoward circumstances will be thrust. But you will have no experience more trying, and be placed in no circumstances more difficult, than were the three Judean captives. And they found that the God whom they worshipped at home, and to whom they were true abroad, did not forsake them in the hour of Nebuchadnezzar's rage, but in the very midst of the fiery furnace He was with them, and from all harm He safely delivered them. Their God is your God. He who gave them strength to resist will give you power to overcome. (*C. G. Mosher.*) *Three Hebrew Martyrs*.—This persecuting spirit is of very ancient date in the history of human folly. That the summons of the king met with general compliance is not very wonderful. Accustomed as the Assyrian princes and nobles had been to the worship of idols, it is not surprising that they yielded instant and implicit obedience to the royal mandate. It was but adding another to the calendar of the gods of Chaldea, and gratified that passion for variety in the objects of worship which is characteristic of the spirit of idolatry. 1. In looking at the conduct of these Hebrew confessors, the first circumstance that strikes us is, that THEY DID NOT COURT THIS OPPORTUNITY OF MANIFESTING THEIR ZEAL AND CONSTANCY. The erection of the golden image was not the work of a day. Much preparation was employed, and the scene that was to be exhibited in the plain of Dura was known throughout the length and breadth of the land. But in the midst of all the preparation for this new exhibition of human folly, this insult to the Majesty of Heaven, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did not feel it to be their

duty to interfere. It was enough for them to utter their testimony to the faith of their fathers when legitimately called to do so, and to show their abhorrence of the idol when commanded to bow down before it. They were prepared for martyrdom, but they did not court it; they were ready to brave and defy the tyrant's rage, but they sought not prematurely to provoke it. That forward zeal, which courts opposition and seeks reproach, forms no part of the Christian character; and to step out of the sphere in which Providence has placed him to censure the errors that prevail in the world, or to make an uncalled-for statement of his opinions and feelings, is going beyond the sphere of legitimate duty, and causes his "good to be evil spoken of." If the Christian adheres to the plain and obvious path of duty, and seeks to lead a holy and blameless life, he will meet with difficulties enough to exercise his faith and patience, and sufficient opportunities of proving and exhibiting the strength and vigour of his principles, without going beyond the sphere of his ordinary calling, or courting unnecessary publicity and distinction.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THESE HEBREW MARTYRS TO THE ALLUREMENT OF PLEASURE merits our next consideration. A slight examination of their history will satisfy you that they were at that time of life when those attractions wherewith Nebuchadnezzar introduced his golden image have the greatest power over enlightened and cultivated minds. They were not, so far as the history before us testifies, the gross and repulsive pleasures of mere sensualism, wherewith the introduction of the golden image into the number of the Chaldean divinities was celebrated. Pleasures of a more refined and attractive description were held out to allure and deceive the princes and nobles of Babylon. All the charms of Eastern music were employed to recommend this scene of idolatrous folly, and to drown all inquiry concerning the wisdom and propriety of the measure. But these Hebrew captives were superior to the attraction. It is probable that other pleasurable attractions accompanied the powers of music on this memorable occasion; but, of whatever description they were, and whatever passions they addressed, they had no power to suppress or extinguish that fear of God which was the ruling and master sentiment of their souls. They tell us to be on our guard against the seductive influence even of innocent pleasure. "The flute and the dulcimer, the psaltery and the sackbut, the cornet and the harp," were in themselves innocent instruments of delight, and, employed in the service of God, would have filled Shadrach and his companions with hallowed joy; but, prostituted to the purpose of idolatry and sin, their notes were dissonant, and lost to these holy men all their power to please. And thus do they teach us how pleasures, that are in themselves innocent and susceptible of being rendered the ministers of our improvement, are to be estimated. Sin is never so insidious as when it comes attended by those pleasures which in themselves are innocent. Never let your taste for any enjoyment, which in itself may be harmless, reconcile you to scenes or indulgences with which the guilty ingenuity of men may have associated it. Our most favourite enjoyments must be viewed with jealousy, and shunned when we see them prostituted to the purpose of iniquity.

III. In maintaining their fidelity, these pious Hebrews RESISTED ALL THE INFLUENCES OF KINDNESS AND FRIENDSHIP. Throughout all the provinces they were viewed as the favourites of the mighty monarch, and many an envious eye was cast at the eminence they had attained. They were thus bound to the king by the ties of gratitude, and by the prospects of future favour. Men who so truly and deeply feared God could not be deficient in yielding every legitimate honour to the king. But the question which now pressed upon them related to higher interests than the favour of a monarch, and all the honour and wealth he could bestow. Similar sacrifices of worldly interest to religious principle—of the sense of gratitude to the sense of duty—are frequently demanded of the faithful servants of God; and where religious principle and the sense of duty have a proper hold of the heart, these sacrifices are made without hesitation or reluctance. These Hebrew confessors would gladly have retained the favour and friendship of the king of Babylon; but when these could not be retained but at the expense of their religious consistency and by the sacrifice of their immortal interests, they were willing to relinquish them.

IV. When we admire this superiority to the influence of kindness and friendship in the cause of religion, THE FIRMNESS AND MAGNANIMITY WITH WHICH THEY BRAVED DEATH IN ITS CRUELEST FORM MERIT A STILL HIGHER MEASURE OF OUR REGARD. In this moment of uttermost peril, the feeling of self-preservation, the all-powerful instinctive love of life, might have whispered, and doubtless did whisper, some excuse to conscience for compliance with the king's command. Such are the considerations that enhance the faith and fortitude of these confessors. Let us now, in conclusion, turn our attention to the manner in which Heaven honoured their faith and constancy in the hour of trial. (J. Johnston.) *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, or Decision in Religion*:—Decision of character never appears more truly great than when it is displayed in defiance of danger and in contempt of death.

I. In looking at THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTER

OF RELIGIOUS DECISION, as it is illustrated in this history: 1. It appears to be lofty in its principle. It is quite evident that in this case it was not exercised in order to gratify some mere impulse of feeling. It did not spring from a foolish wish to affect singularity, nor from a mere determination to oppose the king's authority. No; but it was a noble stand in defence of the rights of conscience—it was a firm resistance of an unjust demand—it was a lofty determination to obey God rather than man. Had Nebuchadnezzar commanded Shadrach and his companions to perform some difficult, but lawful service, we believe they would have performed it; but desirous as they were of obeying him, they dare not do this, at the certain risk of disobeying God—they knew that Jehovah had infinitely higher claims upon their obedience than any earthly king—they knew that in the decalogue they were expressly and solemnly commanded to avoid the sin of idolatry, and not even the imperious mandate of a Nebuchadnezzar, nor yet the fiercest manifestations of his displeasure, could make them swerve from their duty, or shake their constancy to the King of kings. I say, their decision, in this matter, was lofty in its principle. It was so, because it was based upon an intelligent sense of duty. Reason and judgment and conscience were arrayed on the side of principle; while all that worldly wealth could offer, and all that worldly power could inflict, were enlisted on the side of expediency. Was it not noble in these men, under such circumstances, to stand firm by their principles? But, again, their decision was lofty in principle because it was an assertion of the inalienability of man's right at all times to think and to act for himself in all matters of religion. What right had the Babylonian king to enact laws on the subject of religion? As the monarch of an earthly kingdom, it is true, he had a temporal jurisdiction over his subjects, and he had a perfect right to exercise it. But you perceive Nebuchadnezzar was not content with this. Accustomed to wield the iron sceptre of despotism over the bodies of men, he vainly wished to control their spirits too. But Nebuchadnezzar had yet to learn a most important lesson—he had yet to learn that there is a power in the spirit of man to burst asunder the chains that would enslave it—he had yet to learn the supremacy of conscience, and the power of religious principle to enable a man to press toward his object even with death itself in view.

2. I would remark that religious decision, as it is illustrated in this history, appears to have the character of uncompromising firmness. Throughout the whole of the conduct of Shadrach and his companions there does not appear the smallest indication of a wish to accommodate matters or to effect a compromise between principle and expediency. But, further, let us follow them to the presence of the haughty king, before whom they were soon dragged at the impeachment of their bloodthirsty foes; and here, how striking the scene. See them confronted by everything most adapted to intimidate and appal human nature. Once more, if we follow them on to the last and most fearful trial of their constancy, we shall see the uncompromising firmness of their religious decision. But even this barbarous mandate did not shake their constancy. They saw the fury of the king—they heard his cruel command—but they were unmoved.

II. THE IMPORTANT TIME OF ITS MANIFESTATION. It requires only a limited historical acquaintance with the state of the world at the time when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were called to act their parts upon it—to know that it was a time of great mental degradation and moral debasement. There seemed to be at that period a concentration of effort on the part of the powers of darkness to quench the last spark of vital religion yet remaining upon earth, and by a desperate piece of policy to plunge in yet deeper gloom an already too fearfully benighted world, and Shadrach and his companions seem to have been the appointed instruments in the hands of God of defeating this infernal policy, and of preserving this only remaining spark from utter extinction. Was not that a critical season, when, before an assembled universe they were called to combat the confederated power of darkness, and to vindicate the insulted majesty of Jehovah? It was for these men, by their conduct, to show whether the whole family of man should be publicly led captive by the devil at his will, or whether, by boldly standing forth as witnesses for God, the work of darkness should be arrested, and Satan deprived of his triumph. And here let me ask, before passing on, whether the present period of time be not one which pre-eminently demands the manifestation of religious decision on the part of the professed servants of God.

III. THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS resulting from religious decision, as illustrated in the history before us. Had opportunity permitted, we might have dwelt upon the beneficial consequences resulting from this decision to the individuals themselves who exercised it. It was not only a manifestation of their consistency, and a proof of the reality of their religion, but it secured them the respect of the king, and it opened up a way for still greater aggrandisement and worldly honour. We might still further have enlarged upon the effect of this decision upon the minds of the captive Jews at Babylon. Doubtless, those of the Hebrews who had bowed down to the image, through a time-serving policy, would be ashamed of their inconsistent and

guilty course, while such as had done thus through a vacillation and conscious weakness would be inspired with a fresh energy and zeal. We might also have shown you at length the mighty change which this manifestation of decision tended to effect in the views and purposes of the proud king of Babylon; and, doubtless, also in the views and purposes of those by whom he was surrounded. Oh! let us ever remember that with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego we are called to stand forward before an ungodly world as witnesses for God, and that, as His professing people, our every action has an influence directly or indirectly upon the destiny of the world. If we are faithful to our trust, a stamp of reality shall be given to our religion which shall convince the most unwilling, and convert the world; but if we are unfaithful, the reign of darkness shall be perpetuated, and Satan shall triumph. Let me conclude in the language of a well-known writer: "Of this, Christians, you may rest assured, you cannot stand neutral. Every moment you live you are testifying for or against religion. Every step you take you tread on cords that will vibrate through all eternity. Every time you move you touch keys whose sounds will re-echo over all the hills and dales of Heaven, and peal through all the dark caverns and vaults of hell. Every moment of your lives you are exerting a tremendous influence that will tell on the immortal interests of souls all around you. Are you asleep, while all your conduct is exerting such an influence?"

(G. W. Fegg.) *Active Religious Principle*.—I. THE PRINCIPLE FOR WHICH WE CONTENT SHOULD BE TRUE. This should be our first consideration. The standard of right or wrong is the Bible. These young men had not now to investigate whether idolatry was allowable or not. Though the revelation of the Divine will, which they had, was not so full and clear as that with which we are favoured, it was quite decisive on this subject—and they knew it. We, too, ought to be familiar with the Scriptures, so that when any line of conduct is proposed to us we may be able instantly to say whether or not we ought to pursue it. II. TRUE PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AGAINST ALL OPPOSITION. III. TRUTH SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE. This is of great consequence, and is often neglected. But if we fail in spirit and manner: 1. We injure our cause before men; who soon perceive our inconsistency, and put a small price upon our bad-tempered exhortations. 2. We deprive ourselves of Almighty help; without which our most earnest efforts will be vain. IV. THERE ARE ABUNDANT ENCOURAGEMENTS FOR US THUS TO MAINTAIN RIGHT PRINCIPLES. These young men were encouraged by an assurance that God's power and goodness were exercised on their behalf. They knew that God was "able," and would deliver them out of the king's hand. V. GLORIOUS RESULTS WILL FOLLOW THE CONSISTENT MAINTENANCE OF RIGHT PRINCIPLE. In the case before us, the confessors were themselves preserved and honoured, and the God whom they served was glorified. (Edward Thompson.) *Witnesses to the Truth*.—This scene is one of the most sublime and majestic which the human mind can conceive. On the one side is represented human power in its grandest and most overwhelming form. On the other side we have three men who stand apart and refuse to join in the act for which all the rest are met. Here is the contrast between spiritual greatness and human greatness. Each complete and the highest of its kind. 1. We ask ourselves what it was which gave these three men the power to withstand the will of this great monarch, and stand firm though they were alone in the midst of an assembled world? And the answer is obvious. It was simply that they felt the importance of the truth for which they witnessed. They knew that they were upholding the true religion against the false. 2. Here, then, is the lesson which the scene teaches us; that we have laid upon us the duty of witnessing to the truth; and that in order to be able to witness to the truth, we must have an inward perception of the value of the truth to be witnessed to. We are told particularly in Scripture that this is one of our great duties as servants of God. The whole Jewish nation entrusted with the oracles of God, When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego bore witness, as they did in this striking manner, to the truth of the unity and spiritual nature of God, and against the worship of idols, they fulfilled their special duties as Jews, and did what God had sent the Jewish people into the world to do. And we Christians, too, are told in Scripture that we are to be witnesses to the truth, as the Jews were to be, though to a higher truth than the Jews had. Our Lord Himself had this as one of His great offices (John xviii. 37). And the Apostles (1. John i. 1—3). And all Christians are invested in a measure with this office of witnessing to the truth of the Christian revelation (Matt. v. 16). 3. And as Christians have the office imposed upon them, so they are placed in a world which tries that office severely, and opposes great temptations to, and brings an overwhelming influence to bear against, the performance of that duty. The scene described in the Book of Daniel is indeed a symbolical one. The great Babylon which arrayed itself in majesty on that occasion, and set up its golden idol, has fallen, but there is another Babylon which still goes on, and always will go on till Christ comes again to judgment.

As imposing, and as carnally majestic, great and sublime as ever. Go where we will it follows us. And what a powerful influence does it exert upon our minds—very same influence as that which tried the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego on plain of Dura. Doubtless they felt the commanding force of that great spectacle, and had feelings and natural weaknesses of men. It was influence of the visible world which they resisted. 4. Such being the office, then, which Christians have, and such the temptations under which they have to exercise it, what is, as a matter of fact, the way in which this duty is performed? Do we find Christians showing by their lives, and by the objects they pursue here, their belief in eternity, witnessing to the great truth of the Gospel dispensation, that our Lord by His resurrection from the dead brought life and immortality to light? or do we not find that the great rule of all action adopted by them is to do as other people do, to think as other people think, and to aim at getting what all other people strive to get? That is to say, do not the great mass of people do exactly the same thing that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would have done, if at the proclamation of the herald, and at the sound of the music, they had fallen down and worshipped the golden image? 5. The office of witness, however, to Divine truth, rejected as it is by the generality, as if it were something more than could be expected of men, is a privilege as well as a duty, and brings, if it is faithfully executed, great rewards to those who execute it. We cannot conceive anything more sublime than the triumph of the three great witnesses in this chapter. It is one of the great triumphs of faith, one of those great anticipations of the final triumph of good over evil, which Scripture has recorded for our encouragement. (Moses, Elijah, etc.) The men were bound, the furnace was heated, etc. (Describe result.) The strength of the whole earth was gone in a moment, in the presence of One who was walking in the midst of the fire, and whose form was like the Son of God. 6. Here was, indeed, a triumph of that faith which bears witness to the truth; and, as I have said, this scene is symbolical. It is the figure of a deep truth which holds now, and which we may apply to ourselves. Men know the truth, but they will not witness to it. Yet, we may venture to say, and with certainty, that never, on any occasion, by any one of the humblest servants of God, was this office of witness to the truth executed without a reward. In the adversity a companion; in the fire walking with him the Son of God. (*Canon Mozley.*) *Faith Victorious Over the Fear of Man*.—I. CONCERNING THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH. By these holy writings we know and acknowledge Him to be the Lord our God in Christ. 1. He is the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah. (1) His existence. When Moses asked his name, this revelation was made, "I am that I am," which imports that He is the existing One, who is, and who was, and who is to come, without variableness or shadow of turning. Assurance of His existence is an high attainment in the life of faith, and essentially necessary to our worshipping and glorifying Him as God. This we infer from the repetitions of these solemn words, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord"; and from the words of the apostle, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (2) His glory. The excellency of His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, is the glory in Him which faith beholds, believes, acknowledges, admires, and adores. In the exercise of it, believers sometimes rejoice in one of His attributes, and sometimes in another, as these appear suited to their temptations and trials. The three witnesses before the king of Babylon rested in his power, and goodness, and sovereignty; "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us." But faith embraces the whole of His excellencies, as the revealed and transcendent glory of its great object. 2. The object of faith is the Lord "our God." He says in the ear of His people, "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God"; and hearing His speech, they say, "This God," who speaketh in His holiness, is "Our God." Would ye have an example? ye will see one in the eighteenth Psalm: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." 3. The object of faith is the Lord our God in Christ. In the faith of sinners this consideration of Him is essentially important. Without a mediator of righteousness, atonement, and reconciliation, we can have no intercourse with Him in believing. "By Christ we believe in God, who raised Him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God." This consideration of the object of faith is not peculiar to the New Testament. Though the revelation of it was comparatively dark, the first believer, and all that followed, had it before them, and saw it truly. God was then, as He is now, in Christ. The witnesses in Babylon saw and believed in Him as in Christ; and in the furnace had a sensible proof of it. II. CONCERNING THE GROUND OF FAITH. The ground on which we stand and build in believing, is the record or testimony of God, revealing Himself to us as the Lord our God in Christ. This record, testimony, or witness, faith believes to be true, receives as good, rests in as sure, and builds on

with appropriation, according its address with full assurance of its stability. The truth is, faith can neither stand nor build on any other ground. Unless we have His own testimony before us, we cannot glorify Him in believing. It would be presuming, and not believing, to call Him our God on any other ground. Though the faith of believers doth not fix them always on the same passage, they always build on some passage of the revealed testimony. They never change their ground, but do not always build on the same spot. In the Testimony which is the ground of faith there is an order that ought not to be overlooked, since according to it the exercise of faith is to be regulated. The glorious Object, in the front of the law, says, "I am the Lord thy God"; and in the body of the particular commandment, which turned to His witnesses in the plain of Dura for a testimony, He repeats it, saying, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Upon hearing this gracious declaration from His throne, faith proceeds, and boldly advances its claim, saying, "This God is our God." In this very order the witnesses proceed, and add to their faith virtue. 3. Concerning the exercise of faith. In the exercise of faith there is: (1) The knowledge of its glorious Object, in the revealed grant which He makes of himself in Christ, as the Lord our God. True faith includes true knowledge of its Object, the only living and true God. And these witnesses understood what they affirmed, when they said, "Our God, whom we serve." They knew their God, understood the grant He had made of Himself to them, and believed that in receiving it they were not setting their seal to an untruth. (2) In the exercise of faith there is a persuasion that the Divine grant is faithful and true. The persuasion is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of faith, and grounds itself upon the grant in the word of faith. (3) In the exercise of faith there is a conviction that everyone, to whom it is revealed and known in the word of truth, is warranted and commanded to believe and receive it. This conviction is clear, and, in believing, appears and operates in the mind with all the force and beauty of truth. The terms of the grant are without limitation. (4) The exercise of faith includes the trust, or rest of the heart in the grant, both as it is faithful and true, and worthy of all acceptance. "The Lord is my God, according to His word." Doubts disperse, fears flee away, the storm in the conscience calms, and peace and joy spring up in the heart, which pass all understanding. From these discussions, concerning the object, the ground, and the exercise of faith, we infer: 1. That believing God is warrantable and authorised exercise in all extremities. Warrantable, because it is allowed; authorised, because it is commanded. 2. That the gratuitous deed, which is the ground of believing, proceeds upon a ransom found, and an atonement made. Grace reigns in it. The reign of grace, however, is a righteous administration. 3. We infer the immorality of unbelief. By many in the visible church unbelief is not held to be an immorality. Discipline cannot lay hands upon it, nor are ministers able to do anything but cry against it. It is, notwithstanding, a crying immorality, denying the truth of God in His word, despising the loving kindness of the Saviour of the world, resisting the spirit of holiness, and drowning in destruction and perdition multitudes of precious souls. (*A. Shanks.*) *Christian Heroism*.—The service of Christ demands heroism of the truest and highest kind. This world is radically hostile to Christ and His religion, and no disciple, in any age or land, can be, in all things and at all times, true to his Master, in the full sense of the term, and not encounter opposition and obstacles that will demand the very highest type of heroism to meet and overcome. Examples of the sublimest heroism are not wanting in the history of the church. We have such in Noah, in building the Ark; in Abraham, in the sacrifice of Isaac; in Daniel; in the three Hebrew worthies; in Paul, and the other disciples; in the long line of the prophets, martyrs and witnesses to the truth, and in the lives of such missionaries as Brainerd, Martyn, Carey, Judson, Morrison, and Harriet Newell. And in the grand roll of honour, read off in the final day, will be found the names of untold thousands of true heroes, whose deeds were never recognised on earth—men and women, who, in humble life, or in private stations, away from the observation of men, heroically endured and wrought for the Master, and won a crown as bright as any worn by martyr-saint! Never was there greater need of Christian heroism than at the present time. I. IN THE PULPIT. The tide of change, of insidious and seductive error, of worldliness and spiritual declension, is rising high and beating fearfully against the old foundations of faith, and spirituality, and a godly life. The pulpit of to-day is assailed by more potent and dangerous influences than if we were in the midst of fiery persecution. To stand firm for God and truth, and "the simplicity that is in Christ"—to lift high the banner of righteousness and wage uncompromising war with sin and error in every form—requires the heroism of apostles and martyrs. Would to God our pulpits everywhere, in city and country, responded to the demand. II. IN ALL THE WALKS OF PRIVATE CHRISTIAN LIFE. This a day that puts to a severe test the fidelity of the heart to Christ. Oh, there are so many false Christs in the world, false standards

of duty, counterfeit experiences, "lying and seducing spirits," evil examples and deceptions, and so much "conformity to the world," and worship of "mammon," and lowering of the standard of discipleship, that to meet the full demands of Christ-likeness and Christ's service calls for more heroism than it would to face the stake! Alas, how little of it, comparatively, do we see! III. IN THE GREAT MISSIONARY WORK, TO WHICH GOD IS CALLING HIS PEOPLE. IV. IN THE MART OF BUSINESS. Terrible is the strain here, and how many fail and go down in the awful wreck and ruin of character, many of them, too, bearing the name of Christ; and all because they have not true manliness, true courage, to face temptation and disaster—have not heroism sufficient to live up to the principles of righteousness. V. IN PUBLIC LIFE, IN POLITICS, IN ALL PLACES OF HONOUR AND TRUST. Heroism is here demanded, and heroism of the genuine stamp. Dare to do right, though office be lost, or election fail, or poverty come, or clamour assail. To do right is to win! To do or connive at wrong is to lose, always! (*J. M. Sherwood.*) **Nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**—*Steadfastness in the Midst of Dangers:*—At the king's command, the three Hebrew youths came forth from the fire unscorched. The same scenes—differing simply in the lesser details—have more than once been witnessed upon the earth. The whole world is one wide plain of Dura, in which a golden image is set up. The God of Heaven proclaims His sovereign will. Rival divinities set up their groundless claims. They all have their due proportion of abject worshippers. 1. The man of the world bows down before the golden image. He adores that which seems nearest to himself. Popularity, and power, and place are foremost in his thoughts. He makes an idol of the world. Nothing is "real" in his sight which cannot be coined into money, and which will not aid him in his ambitious plans. 2. The Christian has full scope for the exercise of the determined spirit manifested by the Hebrew youths, in a consistent walk with God. "All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If you are what you ought to be, no degree of prudence and reserve will free you altogether from the opposition and malice of an ungodly world. It seems, at first thought, a hard lot; but it has its blessings. (*John N. Norton.*)

Vers. 19—28. **That they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.**—*The Fiery Furnace:*—I. THE PERSON WHO CAUSED IT TO BE MADE. This Oriental despot was then in the zenith of his glory. He was the acknowledged master of the world. The pomp and pageantry of that religious gathering has never been surpassed. In deep awe, "they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up" (v. 4). II. THE PERSONS WHO WERE CAST INTO THIS BURNING FIERY FURNACE. AND WHY. These were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—"the three Hebrew children," who were carried to Babylon in captivity B.C. 606. They were of royal birth. They first came into notice in refusing to eat the "king's meat." Why were they cast into the burning furnace? It was because they refused to do that which would offend the living God. Listen to the answer given by those Hebrews: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (v. 18). What is our answer? Observe, there is one great word in this verse now quoted. It is the word "not"! "We will not serve thy gods"! O this word, "not"! How grand it is! 1. It contains all the decision of v. 16. There they say: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." "There is no need for talk on this subject, O king. You are determined what to do; so, also, are we!" Glorious decision! There is never any "not" where there is the least hesitation or parleying with sin. 2. This word "not" contains all the faith of v. 17. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning furnace." This is what the great Paul once said: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (II. Tim. iv. 18). How glorious such a trust! 3. The "not" before us contains the profoundest courage. It was popular that day to bow to the image; the loud-mouthed "herald" proclaimed the penalty of not worshipping. Yet the brave men spoke out courageously. With decision, faith, and courage, we can alone stand against the evils of our day. Because Shadrach and his friends said "not," they were cast into the fire. III. THE PERSON WHO DELIVERED THEM, AND WHY. It was Almighty God (v. 28). Why? Because they "trusted in Him" (v. 28). This is the verse referred to in Heb. xi. 33, 34—"who through fire subdued kingdoms"! It is faith that overcomes the world. Faith is the mighty moral force of the age. The Apostles said unto the Lord, and so should we, "Increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5). Observe: 1. The completeness of this deliverance: "Nor was an hair of their head singed" (v. 27). So God always saves—it is complete, or not at all. 2. They were thrown into the furnace "bound," but soon they walked through the flames "loose" (v. 24, 25). O how Satan has tried to bind us in our afflictions, but in the greatest sor-

row—when the furnace has been heated “seven times,” we have had both freedom and joy. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John viii. 36).

IV. THE PERSONS BENEFITED BY THE FIERY FURNACE, AND WHY. 1. The three Hebrews were benefited by receiving another wonderful evidence of the power of grace; by being promoted to a higher official rank in the kingdom (v. 30). This was the result of decision, faith, and courage. 2. Nebuchadnezzar was benefited by being brought back to the knowledge of God which, years before, he had professed (ch. ii. 47). 3. No doubt the great multitude which that day had worshipped the golden image was benefited. They all saw that the true God was He whom the Hebrews worshipped. Decision for the Lord Jesus is the best way to win the wicked to His worship and service. (*Alfred W. Moment.*)

Religious Persecution:—We have in this chapter an affecting case of an attempt to punish men for holding certain opinions, and for acting in conformity with them. When we read of an instance of persecution like this, it occurs to us to ask certain questions. 1. What is persecution? It is pain inflicted, or some loss, or disadvantage in person, family, or office, on account of holding certain opinions. It has had two objects. One to punish men for holding certain opinions, as if the persecutor had a right to regard this as an offence against the state; and the other a professed view to reclaim those who are made to suffer, and to save their souls. In regard to the pain or suffering involved in persecution, it is not material what kind of pain is inflicted in order to constitute persecution. Any bodily suffering; any deprivation of comfort; any exclusion from office; any holding up of one to public reproach; or any form of ridicule, constitutes the essence of persecution. It may be added that not a few of the inventions most distinguished for inflicting pain, and known as refinements of cruelty, have been originated in times of persecution, and would probably have been unknown if it had not been for the purpose of restraining men from the free exercise of religious opinions. The Inquisition has been most eminent in this; and within the walls of that dreaded institution it is probable that human ingenuity has been exhausted in devising the most refined modes of inflicting torture on the human frame. 2. Why has this been permitted? Among the reasons may be the following: (1) To show the power and reality of religion. It seemed desirable to subject it to all kinds of trial, in order to show that its existence could not be accounted for except on the supposition that it is from God. If men had never been called on to suffer on account of religion, it would have been easy for the enemies of religion to allege that there was little evidence that it was genuine, or was of value, for it had never been tried (Job. i. 9—11). As it is, it has been subjected to every form of trial which wicked men could devise, and has shown itself to be adapted to meet them all. The work of the martyrs has been well done, and religion, in the times of martyrdom, has shown itself to be all that it is desirable it should be. (2) In order to promote its spread in the world. “The blood of the martyrs” has been “the seed of the church”; and it is probable that religion in past times has owed much of its purity, and of its diffusion, to the fact that it has been persecuted. (3) To fit the sufferers for an exalted place in Heaven. They who have suffered persecution needed trials as well as others, for all Christians need them—and theirs came in this form. Some of the most lovely traits of Christian character have been brought out in connection with persecution, and some of the most triumphant exhibitions of preparation for Heaven have been made at the stake. 3. What have been the effects of persecution? (1) It has been the settled point that the Christian religion cannot be destroyed by persecution. (2) The effect has been to diffuse the religion which has been persecuted. The manner in which the sufferers inflicted have been endured has shown that there is reality and power in it. (*John Cumming, D.D.*)

In the Fiery Furnace:—Note the teachings of the miracle. I. THOSE ONLY WHO LIVE ABOVE THE WORLD CAN AFFORD TO LEAVE IT OR TO LOSE IT. The man who has temporal blessings without fellowship with God cannot afford to disobey the world’s laws or customs (Heb. xi. 14). II. THE MEANS TAKEN TO EXTINGUISH TRUTH WILL BE USED TO EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE. The Philippian jailer, not content with beating his prisoners, thrust them into the inner prison, yet into this prison he shall come, and falling upon his knees, shall beseech help from his prisoners. The very means taken in that city by the magistrates to silence Paul and Silas led to their being more highly esteemed, and consequently to the words which they had spoken receiving more attention. III. ONE SPECIAL INTERPOSITION OF PROVIDENCE IN A LIFETIME WILL NOT GUARANTEE EXEMPTION FROM AN ORDINARY FATE AT ANOTHER PERIOD. Peter was saved from Herod’s sword, but he suffered martyrdom in later life. IV. THE SERVANTS OF GOD WHO HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY CONDEMNED SHALL BE PUBLICLY VINDICATED. The Son of God was publicly condemned and executed as a malefactor by the Jews, but they will one day own Him as their Lord with “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him” (Isa. xxv. 9).

(*Outlines by a London Minister.*)

Ver. 24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished.—*The Astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar as he looked into the Fiery Furnace*:—Consider the causes of his astonishment. I. HE WAS ASTONISHED AT THE NUMBER HE BEHELD IN THE FURNACE. "Lo! I see four men; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!" Some have imagined that by the expression "Son of God" Nebuchadnezzar meant a son of Jupiter, or of Baal, or of some other heathen deity; but surely it is far more reasonable to suppose that by the power of God, who "causeth the wrath of man to praise Him," and of whom we read, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," the king was constrained to utter a great truth in spite of the fury of his spirit and the darkness of his soul. Does it not seem clear that Jehovah was then dealing with Nebuchadnezzar in essentially the same way as He had, ages before, dealt with Balaam, when He caused his opposition to praise Him, and when, in spite of "the madness of the prophet," he was constrained, instead of cursing Israel, to give utterance, under a power he could not resist, to truths he did not understand, when he spake of the coming of "a Star out of Jacob," and proclaimed: "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh"? Can we fail in the light of Scripture to recognise the fourth in the furnace as "the Messenger of the covenant" of whom we read: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them"; "the Word" that was to be "made flesh and dwell among men, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? That cause of the king's astonishment, seeing four in the furnace, becomes to us illustrative of a precious truth—that God, our Saviour, is with His people in the furnace of affliction. "The Lord loveth the righteous." Loving man, He prepares them for home; and affliction, "if need be," is one of the preparatory means employed by Him "whose fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem." But neither are others free from trial. The world has its furnaces. Was not Cain in a furnace when he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear"? Was not Belshazzar, when, with trembling knees and a terrified soul, he quailed before the writing on the wall: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting"? Was not Judas, when, casting on the ground the thirty pieces of silver, as if burning not his fingers but his soul, he went out and hanged himself? And multitudes now wandering in the ways of sin are in furnaces of affliction. But when servants of the Lord are in the furnace of affliction they are in the furnace that is "in Jerusalem," and in it they are not alone. He who controls and regulates its heat, and can, at His pleasure, take them out of it, is with them in it, as "the consolation of Israel, the Saviour thereof, in time of trouble." "I will not leave you comfortless." "Lo! I am with you always"; "My grace is sufficient for thee." II. Another cause of the king's astonishment was this: "THEY HAVE NO HURT." How illustrative of the precious truth that God's people receive no hurt in the furnace of affliction! So the Psalmist seems to have felt when he said, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul." To have discoveries made to us of errors in the judgment, deceitfulness in the heart, self-righteousness in the spirit, and manifold deficiencies previously unnoticed by us in our character and life, may be most humiliating and painful for a season, but far from hurtful to the soul; for such are some of the expressly intended results of sanctified affliction which, injuring none of the Christian graces, gives new vigour to faith, new brightness to hope, new ardour to holy affections, and a tone of new devotedness to the whole spirit and life. Surely, then, it becomes the people of God, amid the various trials of life, to "trust and be not afraid," and so "glorify in the fires" their covenant God and Father. III. That the king saw in the furnace "four men LOOSE, whilst unhurt," was another cause of astonishment. Not power only, but thought, discrimination, and directing influence were acting amid the flames. He who "directeth His lightning to the ends of the earth," Lord of all the elements, the God of nature and nature's laws, caused the fire to act only in such direction and for such ends as He willed. It acted, but only to burn bonds. That cause of astonishment illustrates another precious truth—that sanctified affliction burns bonds—the bonds of sin, Satan, and the world. Children of God, becoming entangled anew in bonds of various kinds, are often placed by the unerring hand of a faithful and loving Father in the furnace of affliction; and in due season, the bonds being burned, they are led out of the furnace to feel anew and often far more than previously, "the glorious liberty of the children of God." IV. Another cause of the king's astonishment seems to have been this: THEIR DEMEANOUR IN THE FURNACE—"walking in the midst of the fire," so calm, self-possessed, joyful. How illustrative of another precious truth, that God's people are not only supported but enabled to be "joyful in tribulation." Before the multitude of amazed spectators went away they must surely have fixed their eyes very intently for a few moments upon the king, the furnace, and the three faithful servants of "a great God." Let us do likewise. 1. The king. What is now the state of his mind? One thing he said was this: "There

is no other God that can deliver after this sort." "True, O king." But is there any other god that can deliver at all? Where were thy gods, O Babylon, when some of their self-denying votaries, those "mighty men," were being burned to death even outside the furnace? Sadly did Nebuchadnezzar fail to turn to rational and right account that signally favourable opportunity of looking fully at the question, "What is truth"? And not very long afterward he was to be seen eating grass with the beasts of the field! What a lesson as to the importance of improving every season of specially favourable opportunity, every day of specially merciful visitation. 2. The furnace. Read as in letters of light among the subsiding glories, such lessons as these: "The path of duty is the path of safety"; "As my days, so shall my strength be"; "Them that honour" God, He "will honour"; "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." 3. The three tried ones that have come forth as gold. (1) They are young men, not Levites, not priests, but young men who have been engaged in secular affairs and in positions of great exposure to many allurements and temptations—representative young men. (2) The extent of the usefulness of those three young men will never be fully known till time shall be no longer. (3) Having glorified God in the fires, no one could tell, from their appearance, that they had been near the furnace. (*Joseph Elliott.*)

Ver. 25. Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.—*Consolation in the Furnace*.—The narrative of the glorious boldness and marvellous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young men especially, since these were young men, learn from their example both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of integrity in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. To have a clear conscience, to wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offence, is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield or the traffic of Tyre could win. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and inward contention therewith. An ounce of heart's-ease is worth a ton of gold; and a drop of innocence is better than a sea of flattery. 1. The place WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE OFTEN ARE. In the text we find three of them in a burning fiery furnace, and singular as this may be literally, it is no extraordinary thing spiritually, for, to say the truth, it is the usual place where the saints are found. The ancients fabled of the salamander that it lived in the fire; the same can be said of the Christian without any fable whatever. It is rather a wonder when a Christian is not in trial, for to wanderers in a wilderness discomfort and privation will naturally be the rule rather than the exception. It is through "much tribulation" that we inherit the kingdom. 1. First, there is the furnace which men kindle. As if there were not enough misery in the world, men are the greatest tormentors to their fellow men. The elements in all their fury, wild beasts in all their ferocity, and famine and pestilence in all their horrors, have scarcely proved such foes to man, as men themselves have been. Religious animosity is always the worst of all hatreds, and incites to the most fiendish deeds; persecution is as unsparing as death, and as cruel as the grave. At times the Christian feels the heat of the furnace of open persecution. Another furnace is that of oppression. In the iron furnace of Egypt the children of Israel were made to do hard bondage in brick and in mortar; and doubtless many of God's people are in positions where they are little better than slaves. There is also the furnace of slander. 2. Secondly, there is a furnace which Satan blows with three great bellows—some of you have been in it. It is hard to bear, for the prince of the power of the air hath great mastery over human spirits; he knows our weak places, and can strike so as to cut us to the very quick. He fans the fire with the blast of temptation. Then he works the second bellows of accusation. He hisses into the ear, "Thy sins have destroyed thee! The Lord hath forsaken thee quite! Thy God will be gracious no more!" Then he will beset us with suggestions of blasphemy; for while tormenting us with insinuations, he has a way of uttering foul things against God, and then casting them into our hearts as if they were our own. 3. And thirdly, there is a furnace which God himself prepares for His people. There is the furnace of physical pain. A furnace still worse, perhaps, is that of bereavement. Then, added to this, there will crowd in upon us temporal losses and sufferings. The business which we thought would enrich, impoverishes. 4. The context reminds us that sometimes the Christian is exposed to very peculiar trials. The furnace was heated seven times hotter; it was hot enough when heated once; but I suppose that Nebuchadnezzar had pitch and tar, and all kinds of combustibles thrown in to make it flame out with greater vehemence. Truly at times the Lord appears to deal thus with His people. It is a peculiarly fierce heat which surrounds them, and they cry out, "Surely I am the man that hath seen affliction—I may take precedence of all others in the realm of sorrow." 5. I do not like to leave

this point without observing, too, that these holy champions were helpless when thrown into the furnace. They were cast in bound; and many of us have been cast in bound, too, so that we could not lift hand or foot to help ourselves. Pretty plight to be in! Who does not shudder at it! Certainly none of us would choose it; but we have not the choice, and as we have said with David, "Thou shalt choose mine inheritance for me," if the Lord determines to choose it for us among the coals of fire, it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good. Where Jehovah places His saints they are safe in reality, although exposed to destruction in appearance. II. WHAT THEY LOSE THERE. Look at the text, and it will be clear to you that they lost something. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego lost something in the fire—not their turbans, nor their coats, nor their hosen, nor one hair of their heads or beards—no; what then? 1. Why, they lost their bonds there. Do observe: "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire." The fire did not hurt them, but it snapped their bonds. Blessed loss this! A true Christian's losses are gains in another shape. Now, observe this carefully, that many of God's servants never know the fulness of spiritual liberty till they are cast into the midst of the furnace. Shall I show you some of the bonds which God looses for His people when they are in the fire of human hatred? Sometimes He bursts the cords of fear of man, and desire to please man. When persecution rages, it is wonderful what liberty it gives to the child of God. Never a freer tongue than Luther's! Never a braver mouth than that of John Knox! Never a bolder speech than that of John Calvin! Never a braver heart than that which throbbed beneath the ribs of Wickliffe! 2. Again, when Satan puts us in the furnace, he is often the means of breaking bonds. How many Christians are bound by the bonds of frames and feelings; the bonds of dependence upon something within, instead of resting upon Christ the great Sacrifice. Fierce temptations may be like waves that wash the mariner on a rock—they may drive us nearer to Christ. It is an ill wind which blows no one any good; but the worst wind that Satan can send blows the Christian good, because it hurries him nearer to his Lord. Temptation is a great blessing when it looses our bonds of self-confidence and reliance upon frames and feelings. 3. As for the afflictions which God sends, do they not loose our bonds? Doubts and fears are more common to us in the midst of work and business than when laid aside by sickness. III. WHAT SAINTS DO THERE. "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire." Walking! They are walking—it is a symbol of joy, of ease, of peace, of rest—not fitting like unquiet ghosts, as if they were disembodied spirits traversing the flame; but walking with real footsteps, treading on hot coals as though they were roses, and smelling the sulphureous flames as though they yielded nothing but aromatic perfume. Enoch "walked with God." It is the Christian's pace, it is his general pace; he does sometimes run, but his general pace is walking with God, walking in the Spirit; and you see that these good men did not quicken their pace, and they did not slacken it—they continued to walk as they usually did; they had the same holy calm and peace of mind which they enjoyed elsewhere. Their walking shows not only their liberty, and their ease, and their pleasure, and their calm, but it shows their strength. Their sinews were not snapped, they were walking. These men had no limping gait, they were walking, walking in the midst of the fire. IV. WHAT THEY DID NOT LOSE THERE. The text says, "And they have no hurt." They did not lose anything there. 1. But we may say of them first, their persons were not hurt. The child of God loses in the furnace nothing of himself that is worth keeping. He does not lose his spiritual life—that is immortal; he does not lose his graces—he gets them refined and multiplied, and the glitter of them is best seen by furnace-light. 2. The Christian does not lose his garments there. You see their hats, and their hosen, and their coats were not singed, nor was there the smell of fire upon them; and so with the Christian: his garment is the beautiful dress which Christ himself wrought out in His life, and which He dyed in the purple of His own blood. As it is not hurt by age, nor moth, nor worm, nor mildew, so neither can it be touched by fire. I know you dread that furnace—who would not?—but courage, courage, the Lord who permits that furnace to be heated will preserve you in it, therefore be not dismayed! V. WHO WAS WITH THEM IN THE FURNACE. There was a fourth, and he was so bright and glorious that even the heathen eyes of Nebuchadnezzar could discern a supernatural lustre about him. "The fourth," he said, "is like the Son of God." What appearance Christ had put on I cannot tell, which was recognisable by that heathen monarch; but I suppose that He appeared in a degree of that glory in which He showed Himself to His servant John in the Apocalypse. You must go into the furnace if you would have the nearest and dearest dealings with Christ Jesus. Whenever the Lord appears, it is to His people when they are in a militant posture. The richest thought that a Christian perhaps can live upon is this, that Christ is in the furnace with him,

I know that to the worldling this seems a very poor comfort, but then if you have never drank this wine you cannot judge its flavour. What must it be to dwell with everlasting burnings! One's heart beats high at the thought of the three poor men being thrown into that furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, with its flaming pitch and bitumen reaching upwards its streamers of flame, as though it would set the heavens on a blaze; yet that fire could not touch the three children, it was not consuming fire. But, be ye warned, there is One who is "a consuming fire," and once let Him flame forth in anger, and none can deliver you. He calls to you to leave your sins and look to Him, and then you shall never die, neither upon you shall the flame of wrath kindle because its power was spent on Him, and He felt the furnace of Divine wrath, and trod the glowing coals for every soul that believeth in Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Two Aspects of Life:*—Now, what I want to derive from the passage as an illustration is this—that there are two aspects of life; one which is here described, as Nebuchadnezzar described it to his counsellors, and as they acknowledged that it was; and the other as it appears to the eye of faith, which is represented to us by this king, who had his eyes opened to see that which apparently his counsellors did not see. The three men, then, being cast into the furnace of fire, may be taken as instances of daily commonplace life; that which Nebuchadnezzar himself was enabled to perceive may be taken as that interpretation and glorification of the ordinary facts of everyday life which the Bible, which religion, and which emphatically Christianity is enabled to cast over all the circumstances of our existence here. Now this may be taken as a pattern of all the circumstances of life. There is the ordinary, the commonplace, the matter-of-fact, the prosaic way of looking at everything; and as things are so looked at, they show very much as the natural features of this city do on one of our dull, foggy November mornings. There is nothing to delight, there is no poetry, there is no light about them; they all seem dull, and dead, and leaden. But, then, there is another aspect, and that is such as the king had his eyes open to perceive; and you observe that what he saw was something totally different from what things were to the eyes of his counsellors, and from what they were as he thought they must be. He said, "Lo, I see four men." There is another there. These men are not alone; they are not left to grapple with the violence of the flame; they have a friend with them; and, moreover, as they were cast bound, so now he perceives that they are loosened. He sees them also walking in the midst of the fire. Observe that they were there exposed to all these mighty flames. He allowed them to go down into them, but they were walking about in the fire and they had no hurt. So it is with Christian life. The Christian is not delivered out of temptation; he is not one of those who are never exposed to trial; there is no exemption wrought on his behalf; he has his lot with other men; he takes his part with other men; and sometimes his lot and part are worse than those of other men, or at least they appear to be so. But yet he is enabled to walk about in the midst of the fire. Now there are those persons who always take the commonplace, matter-of-fact view of life, and they are the tedious people. I know no people so tedious, so difficult to get on with, as those who always see things in their dull, grey light, precisely as they are; whereas those who can throw into the commonplace and into the ordinary the glamour of a Divine existence and of a higher life, who can throw poetry into the scene—those are the people who are interesting, those are the people who know with whom it is a joy and a privilege to be. Then, again, observe very often we may be in the midst of danger and not know it. Who can tell how many dangers he has been preserved from? It is quite possible that many of us from time to time walk over difficulties and dangers of which we have no notion, and we probably never discover that we have been preserved from difficulty and danger. Is not this the case with many of us? Or, on the other hand, it is possible for us to walk in the midst of danger and to know that we are in the midst of danger, as these men knew they were; and then sometimes we are not conscious of that unseen, invisible protection which is nigh unto us. Now I want you to learn to see this, to believe in it. We, as Christians, walk by faith, and not by sight, and there should be no emergency and no trial into which the Christian comes in which he should feel himself left alone; he should always know that there is someone there with him, a mighty friend, the strongest of the strong, and that the form of that unseen one is like the Son of God. Oh, it is only the Word of God, it is only the power of religion, it is only the truth of Christianity and the presence of the grace of God, which can thus throw into the ordinary, the dull, and the commonplace the light of the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, which tips everything with gold, and makes everything to shine as with the light of the glory of Heaven. That, and that alone, can make life glorious; that, and that alone, can steel your heart so that you may bear up under all opposition, and under all trials, and may quit yourselves like men in the day of the Lord. That question, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" could be an-

answered only in one way—"True, O king!" But it was the grace of God, it was the mystery of the promise of God and the presence of God which enabled that great king to say, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; the smell of the fire has not passed on them. It had no power to damage or injure them because there was One with them who was mightier than the flames, and the form of that fourth Mighty One was like the Son of God." Now, it is a very remarkable thing that in this Book of the Prophet Daniel, the fourth and last of the four great prophets, we have such an extraordinary foretaste, if I may say so, of the coming Gospel of Jesus Christ. But when the king here says, "The fourth is like that of the Son of God," it is impossible, and we see ourselves that it is impossible, that he can mean one of those persons who are called by a figure of speech "sons of God." He must mean the Son of God, who is, by eminence and excellence, the only begotten Son of God, the one who is made in God's image and God's likeness, who is of God and from God, and who stands in the exact relation to God that a child stands to his father. Such, then, is the glorification which is offered to every Christian for all the trials of life. Life, no doubt, for everyone under the most advantageous circumstances, has its dull aspect. We all know what it is to travel along a road which has no variety, which is nothing but monotonous from beginning to end, and we feel the effect of such journey on our spirit. Life has such journeys for us all, even under the most favourable circumstances. What we want is not to have those circumstances altered—because it may be that they never will be altered, and certainly when we most feel their monotony they are not so likely to be altered—but what we want is something which will make us proof against their dullness and monotony, something which will give us strength to cope with them, something which will shed the sunlight of eternal day over the darkness and gloominess of the morning spread upon the mountains, and will kindle for us by it a glorious day in which and through which we may walk from hour to hour with the presence of Him whose form is like that of the Son of God. Now, have you this presence of the Son of God with you? I am quite sure you want Him. I am sure there is no one whose heart does not yearn after a friend. Sometimes one solitary friend is worth a mine of wealth to us, and if we have got one such friend we may count ourselves rich. Now, there is such a friend for every one of us in the person of the Son of God, who is also the Son of man, "so pitying found." That Son of man and Son of God is very near to every one of us; and if we would see Him we must have our eyes open as this great king's eyes were opened. It is only by faith that we can behold Him. We are not told that these three men even knew that there was a fourth with them. It was only given to one man to see that fourth, and it was only given to him to recognise in Him the form "like that of the Son of God." The Son of God may be with us now. He is with us now, because He has promised to be with us. What we want to make us strong is to know that He is with us, and to feel that the form of that Son of God is indeed the form of the Son of man, who was crucified for us, who rose from the dead for us, and who now sitteth at the right hand of God, evermore to make intercession for us. But, pray that your eyes may be opened, that in every want that you have in this life, in every trial and temptation, you may ever feel that the Son of God and the Son of man is with you. (*Dean Stanley.*) And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.—*Folly of Polytheism and Pantheism*:—There can be no confidence nor firm trust where men suppose that there is a multitude of gods. For one god may have to yield to another, or may find his power limited by another's dominion. The Greeks of old believed that there were quarrels and feuds and divisions among the inhabitants of their Olympus, and that one deity might have to sacrifice the interests of his devotees in order to obtain some concession for other favourites. Happy was Israel of old in the belief in one God, and many were the deeds of heroism wrought in the strength of this conviction. Nor can there be peace of mind and calm fortitude where the one god is the mere sum of the being of the universe. To the pantheist God is not a person, omniscient, omnipresent, almighty, who sees and knows and takes interest in all he does. To him God is a blind power, the mere aggregate of the working of nature and man, of whom he is himself part, and into whom he will be finally absorbed. Such a deity has no separate existence, no separate action, no separate knowledge, no personal will, no special sphere of duty. The man may see, but the god, who is the mere sum of all human and animal seeing, himself sees not. Man may work, and nature may employ her physical and vegetative energies, but the sum of all this working can do nothing. Whatever it be, it has not even an existence for and in itself, and can inspire no hope, can give man no courage in danger, no consolation in sorrow, no strength for right action. Such a god is a name, and not a being, and there is no such thing as responsibility to him. And absorption into him at death simply means the ceasing to have a separate existence. In life we are the acting,

thinking, energising part of the pantheistic god, to be absorbed into him at death is to fall into unconsciousness. In neither polytheism nor pantheism is there any nobleness of thought, or anything to make man better and aid him in becoming godlike on earth. It is responsibility to an almighty, omniscient, and just Judge which raises man to the true height of his dignity, as a being endowed by God with free will and a conscience; and the answer to the question why God has made this world such as it is, and placed man in a position so full of difficulty, is to be found in the thought that only by bearing the burden of responsibility can man be made fit for God's service in Heaven. Here, on earth, men rise in moral worth and social influence by responsibility rightly borne; and the whole doctrine of a future judgment, and of eternal rewards and punishments, has for one great purpose the impressing the minds of men with a sense that they are responsible to a righteous Judge for all they think and say and do. It was this sense of responsibility to a personal God which gave these three Jewish martyrs their high courage, their strength to resist a despotic monarch, their calmness and joy in the hour of suffering. (*Dean Payne-Smith, D.D.*) *The Son of God in the Fiery Furnace*:—The concluding words should read not "the Son of God," but "a Son of God." Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen, ignorant of the high religious teachings of the Jews, and certainly not acquainted with the Christian doctrine of the second Person in the Trinity. The fourth figure in the furnace struck him as Divine in its beauty, majesty, glory, a godlike form. I. A REVELATION IN A FIERY FURNACE. Whether the startling appearance were an angel, or Christ before His incarnation, or any other mode of Divine manifestation, it was in any case a revelation of God. 1. God only needs to be revealed to be seen. He exists always; He is seen at rare intervals. He is not more existent when seen than when unseen. The veil hides His light, but does not extinguish it. All we need is that the veil should be lifted. Then the ever-present God will be recognised. 2. God is revealed in the fiery furnace of trouble. Invisible writing starts into appearance when held to the fire. Characters suddenly flash out in their true light at seasons of storm, terror, and pain. God reveals Himself in critical moments of agony and need. 3. The revelation in the fiery furnace is seen by the outside world. The three youths are not alone favoured with the cheering vision of the Heavenly presence. Nebuchadnezzar also sees the wonderful appearance. Indeed, it is he only who is expressly stated to have observed this additional figure in the furnace. God was revealed by means of the faithful Jews, but so that the heathen world might behold Him. The vision of God in the passion of Christ is open to the gaze of the world, and may arrest the attention of those who are blind to the daily revelation of the Divine in nature. May not this fact be an explanation of the mystery of suffering? We take too narrow and personal a view of the mission of pain. It has larger and wider ends than the sufferer's own private advantage. May not others be called to endure pain that through the flames that kindle about their own souls the light of God may flash out upon their fellow-men? II. DIVINE FELLOWSHIP IN HUMAN TROUBLE. 1. God is with His people in their troubles. He does not only look down from Heaven. Pity from the serene altitude of perfect bliss may only aggravate the torture of those who are writhing in the torture-chamber of affliction. But we are told of God that in all His people's afflictions He is afflicted. Christ came into the world to suffer with men. He was with St. Stephen in the council chamber, with St. Paul in the gaol at Philippi. 2. The comforting Divine presence is dependent on the fidelity of God's people. There are troubles in the midst of which we dare not expect to see the cheering radiance of our Saviour's countenance. If He appears in them at all, our consciences tell us that it must be with a look of grief or anger, and a voice saying, "What doest thou here?" The trouble which we bring upon ourselves by heedless indifference or culpable disobedience to the will of God invites no comforting Divine fellowship. 3. The Divine presence in trouble is a security against all real harm. The cruel flames play about their would-be victims as harmlessly as forest leaves. Secure the presence of Christ and all will be well. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *A Son of God in the Fire*:—Sceptical criticism has railed out against all this, as showing too much of the wonderful to be believed. But with the Almighty one thing is no harder than another. He can make a blazing sun in the heavens with as much ease as make a daisy in the meadow. Some have urged that it was unfitting the Deity to show such wonders here. But who can decide what is, and what is not, becoming to a Being whose thoughts no man can fathom? And when we consider that millions of His chosen people were then in servitude in that empire; that the great object of their being there was to purge them of their idolatries; that no ordinary ministries for this purpose existed; that here was a great and mighty people that knew not God, destitute of any effectual means of being made acquainted with His superior majesty and power; and that here was an assembly of all their heads and chiefs, who would thus be made to see His signs, and to become the

attestors and heralds of the miracle to all parts of the mighty realm—there certainly would seem to be reason enough that here and now, if anywhere or ever, the greatest wonders of the God of Heaven should be enacted. Who can say that there was not ample occasion for just such a display of the Eternal omnipotence? And see also the effect. A decree went forth from the throne to “every people, nation, and language,” reciting the wonder, proclaiming the majesty of Jehovah, and forbidding, on pain of death, the speaking of “anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.” And these men were thenceforward promoted and honoured by the empire as the living witnesses of the living God. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*) *True Souls*:—I. IMMENSELY TRIED. “Walking in the midst of the fire.” II. MORALLY UNCONQUERABLE. Not all the influence of the monarch and his ministers could break their purpose, or make them unfaithful to God. You can’t conquer a true soul. III. ESSENTIALLY UNINJURABLE. “And they have no hurt.” “Who is that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good!” “Fear not him that can kill the body.” IV. DIVINELY ACCOMPANIED. “The form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” What a sight for the monarch! Did it not rouse his conscience, think you? God always accompanies His people. “Lo, I am with you alway.” (*Homilist.*) *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*:—I. THEIR TEMPTATION. II. THEIR FAITHFULNESS. 1. They stood alone (v. 7). Might they not fall in with the current and perform the outward act with inward reserve? 2. Then the terrible alternative: “Ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (Dan. iii. 15). Nothing more calculated to inspire terror. But, like St. Polycarp, they “preferred the fire which lasts an hour and then cools, to the perpetual torment of eternal fire.” In the same way, the Christian martyrs, St. Lawrence and others, were prepared to undergo terrible tortures of gridiron and flame rather than lose the favour of God by denying Christ. But these “three children” were faithful in the days of the old covenant, when God’s love to man had not been made known by Christ, nor did the Spirit of God as yet personally dwell among men; this accentuates their courage. 3. Then note their readiness to endure the torture. III. THEIR RESCUE. 1. It was miraculous. An old writer enumerates eight miracles in this lesson; but, without going into minutiae, that they were not consumed by the flames could certainly only be owing to Divine intervention. 2. It was the fulfilment of prophecy, “When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. xliii. 2). “The flame,” says St. Chrysostom, “set free the captive, and itself was bound by the captive.” The reality of the fire was shown by the molten chains, and the deaths of those who cast the three children into the flames; but the Divine promise was evidenced by their preservation. 3. The mode of the rescue was through the instrumentality of an angel: “The form of the fourth is like the Son of God”; “a son of the gods” (R.V.), that is, an angel. Some ancient interpreters thought Christ Himself was here meant (Tertullian, St. Augustine), of whom Nebuchadnezzar had heard from Daniel, and thus it would be classed with the “theophanies”; but St. Jerome says, “It was in truth an angel.” The visible presence of the angel was proof to the king that the deliverance of the three youths was the result of God’s protection, and from no deception. Similarly, God delivered Jerusalem from the power of the Assyrians by the ministry of an angel (II. Kings xix. 35); the Apostles from prison (Acts v. 19; xii. 7); and St. John from the cauldron of flaming oil. 4. The deliverance was complete. Completeness marks all the works of God. There are no half-measures or imperfect contrivances—only the chains are destroyed, not their garments, nor their hair singed, nor the smell of fire had passed upon them (v. 27). IV. LESSONS. 1. Temptation may be strong, but faithfulness to conscience should be stronger. Temptation, though strong, is never overwhelming or an excuse for sin (I. Cor. x. 13). The three children were faithful unto death; they were, like St. John, martyrs in will (Rev. ii. 10). 2. What Nebuchadnezzar designed is unconsciously carried out by multitudes amongst ourselves. They fall down before the golden image; they worship wealth, and make a god of “the mammon of unrighteousness”; and this covetousness “is idolatry” (Col. iii. 5; Eph. v. 5). 3. Let us admire and imitate the courage of the three children in disobeying the royal mandate, and take the side of Christ and His Church, if ever obedience to the powers of the world should involve a violation of the Laws of God. 4. Let us rejoice in the Divine deliverance. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (Ps. xxxiv. 7). The furnace of Nebuchadnezzar is an image of the “fiery trial” of persecution, of sensual passion, and of affliction; but to those who are faithful, like the three children, temptation and tribulation are times of Divine manifestation, of refinement and election, and of more entire self-surrender. “Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction” (Isa. xlviii. 10, R.V.). (*The Thinker.*) *The Three Children in the Furnace*:—This transaction is typical. It sets forth the security of God’s saints in the hour of their greatest peril—together

with the reason of that security. Fire represents trial, persecution, for fire consumes, devours, destroys. A furnace is the very image of destruction in its wildest shape. To have fallen down bound into such a furnace, and straightway to be seen walking about there loose, is the liveliest picture possible of perfect security amid tremendous danger. The presence of a companion, and he the Son of God, explains the rest of the marvel, for it accounts for that safety which before was simply inexplicable. 1. In every trial the victory is promised to faith; the same faith which on the plain of Dura "quenched the violence of fire." 2. The fire of temptation is illustrated by the security of the three children in the furnace. The man is safe, because the Lord is with him. 3. We are here taught to behold the safety of God's elect children in that tremendous day when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire." God Almighty so preserve us in adversity; so be with us amid temptation; so absolve us in that tremendous day—even for His own mercy's sake! (*Anon.*) *The Divine Presence in the Fire*:—This story has a far-reaching suggestiveness. It represents an oft-repeated conflict. It stands as the picture of man in the face of the fierce elements which oppose him—man in his agony, man in his heroism, man, also, in his consolation. It does not need much insight to perceive one aspect of the universality of the story. Man and the fire—that is life. All too soon we say, man is thrust into the fire of pain and suffering. It needs some insight, or some reflection, to perceive the other aspect of its universality. If man and the fire shall be described as life, man and the fire and the Divine presence walking with man in the fire—that is religion. It is something that we are given the power of perceiving a greater than man with man in the fire. Look again at man in the fire. I take man first as an intellectual being. It is by reason of the understanding which the beasts do not possess that there comes an added keenness to human suffering. We have memory, we have anticipation; and out of these come fierce fires to increase our agony. Pain, which comes to the sons of men, comes with an appeal to their consciousness. Man can anticipate, and he knows that the pain which enters into his life to-day is the indication of something which is working there, and he lives in constant dread of its recurrence. From memory and anticipation there comes the agony of retrospect and the agony of suspense. By the very law of our intellectual being we suffer more than the beasts. But would you part with it? Though you know that the capacities with which you are endowed make you capable of the greater suffering, you will not forego the painful gifts. It is precisely as we grow in the scale of being that our power of suffering grows with it. We are reasonable beings, and because we are so we suffer the more. Take man as a moral being. These Hebrews suffered because of their allegiance to a law higher than the law of self-preservation. Why is it that a man who is conscientious must suffer? It is just because he is conscientious. He cannot demoralize himself, and the law within asserts itself, and makes him face the greater pain. But this proclaims his greatness. He is the greater because he is the witness to a law which is larger, truer, deeper than any of the outside laws that touch the physical world. In another way his sense of right makes him suffer. He must do right, though the world frown, because the Divine law within him is asserting itself over the law outside. His suffering springs from this—his capacity to understand the allegiance which he owes to the higher law. Take man as a spiritual being. Men, in the history of religion, have exhibited a spiritual conscientiousness. There are things which, though not wrong, are wrong to them. The cause is within themselves. Others cannot understand. The man has recognised a law of his being, which is deeper than the law of the Decalogue. Whatever seems to him to drag him down is wrong for him, because hostile to his better life. He is grieved with anything which hinders the spiritual development of his being. In all this the Lord Jesus is our model. Mark Him in His temptation; see the moral standard. Suffering seems to me as Heaven's subpoena, compelling men to bear witness to the Divine which is within, and underneath, to the eternal laws of right, and to the manifestation of a presence like unto the Son of God. What shall be the law by which a man shall pass through the fire, and the smell of fire shall not pass upon him? How few having gone into the fire of life come out unsinged, untouched, the smell of fire not passing on them! Are not men tainted so that you know that they have suffered? They have been singed in the fire. How noble and great seem the few souls that pass through the fire and come forth unharmed! They are the men who held their own in the battle! What is the law? In every universal thing there is some law. The men at whose side the Son of God walks, who are triumphant over the fierceness of the flame, are the men who have had a victory previous to that. Their victory over the fire was preceded by their victory over the multitude. They would not bow down. We must go back further. These men have first been victors over themselves. The man who is victorious over self is the man who is victorious over the world; and the man who is victorious over

the world is victorious over the fire that is in the world. That is the law. But when you have discovered a law you are very far from having discovered all you need. It is not always easy to put the law into operation. What force is at work behind law? In the midst of the fire there was revealed a fourth figure, and his form was like unto the Son of God. In the midst of the fire was the Divine presence. The motive force was the Divine energy, the Divine life, the Divine presence. The law of success is self-control, but the power to make the law effective is in the Divine presence. Life has little meaning unless I recognise that wherever the fire is kindled, there the Divine presence is also. To recognise that is the part of faith; to work and live by that is the power of faith. Another question this truth may answer. We are called upon to suffer, and who will unriddle its pain? The pain is given that the Divine may be made manifest. The cross was to be the symbol of the world's agony, and of the Divine presence also. . . . Then, let us cultivate self-control as a protest against the frivolity of life which destroys the heart, against the sensuality of life that corrupts the conscience, against the intellectual dishonesty which disturbs the pure vision of what life ought to be. As we do this, we shall not be alone. He who wore our nature walked before us in the ways of suffering. When the flame shall kindle upon us He will be with us. (*W. Boyd-Carpenter, D.D.*) *Standing Fire*:—I. THEIR PREPARATION FOR THE DAY OF TRIAL. It came not unawares. Duty is easy when no lion is in the way. In the narrative we only see the valiant three in the day of trial. Their heart was fixed before it came. With no wavering mind went they out to the plain of Dura. They stood in the evil day because they were well prepared, well-equipped for it. Great men are not known by the world till they are great. So trials are to come on us; sharp temptations. They will reveal our character, of what sort it is. Let us every day be pure, unselfish, Christ-trusting, Christ-copying men. Then every day will be a preparation for the terrible time when temptation will assail us like fire; and we shall stand in the evil day. II. THE CONDUCT OF THE THREE IN THE DAY OF TRIAL. They stood in apparent isolation. To do good is easier when we go with the multitude. But when we stand alone, then is the agony. Alone, yet not alone. Christ is the maker of great men, great hearts. Many a young man He is making brave, daring to stand alone amid terrible temptations to impurity. III. THEIR DELIVERANCE IN THE DAY OF TRIAL. The king's eye is on the furnace, and he sees a fourth, one looking like a son of the gods. We identify with the angel Jehovah the messenger of the covenant. Christ's presence can make even a furnace into paradise. Their deliverer was strong. He will be ours, and save us, if we seek it, from sin, all evil, all that will harm us. Then trust in Him. (*G. T. Coster.*) *A Sermon to Firemen*:—The events here recorded probably occurred in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. He had just returned from triumphant war, bringing with him the spoil of subjugated nations, and captives without number. At this juncture he was inclined to make a pause. He thought the time was come for the inauguration of a new era. First, however, he must be certain of the allegiance of these races. The foundation must be firmly laid before he proceeds to erect the superstructure on it. So he decided on the ceremonial which took place on the vast plain of Dura. He was known to be a devout man in his way; an enthusiastic worshipper of his god Merodach. The ceremony was no mere idle pageant; it was not only a matter of state policy, it was an act of gratitude, due to the deity to whom he believed himself to owe his victories and his throne. It is well to bear this in mind if we would enter into the real difficulties of both the monarch and his recalcitrant Jewish monarchs. The line of conduct to which the three Jews felt themselves compelled was looked on by Nebuchadnezzar as open rebellion, and an insult both to himself and his god. These Jews had a most painful and distressing alternative before them—either to act in opposition to their own deepest convictions by worshipping an idol, or else to submit to a horrible death. We can imagine their mutual anxiety, conference, and prayer. When the public refusal was made the monarch was infuriated. To be bearded by his own officials at such a moment, in presence of such a multitude, would have tried the patience of more patient men than he was. He had a passionate temper. The king felt that he was committed to a struggle with the God of the Hebrews. 1. We are inclined to praise the indomitable resolution of these young men; but we must go behind them, and realise their trust in the unseen Jehovah, and in the promises of His word. It was that made them manly. The three young men found their way into a spiritual position, which enabled them to endure the wrath of the king, because they could see a greater, although an invisible King behind him. 2. In this chapter we have a duel between the world-power and the Lord God himself. We have in it the Church of God almost at its lowest ebb. We have the world in all the plenitude of its power, and in all the insolence of its authority. Can we over-estimate the value of such a testimony as this to the faithfulness of God? Take away this story of the

three children from the Bible, and how infinitely great would have been the church's loss! 3. A thought for ourselves. In some shape we may all of us have to pass through the fire. Any one of us may be tried by the seductions of his senses; the snares of business life, bitter loss and disappointment, or the keen edge of long-protracted bodily agony. Let us see to it that we have with us, as we may have, the presence of the personal Christ, of Jesus the great High Priest, the Angel of the Covenant. Then we shall pass through the flame, and it will not gather upon nor burn us. So shall we, in our small way, bring glory to God and strength to other people. (*Gordon Calthrop, M.A.*) *Safety with the Master of the Elements*:—The flame recognised the presence of Him that made it, and bowed reverently before the Son of God, just as on other occasions the waters of the sea owned Him, the winds heard Him, and all nature responded to Him, and obeyed Him. The flame lost its power to consume, because it was commanded not to do so by Him that kindled it at the first. Nature is all pliant in the hand of Jesus. He is the Lord of creation; He has but to speak, and all things will respond in ten thousand echoes, "Speak, Lord: thy servants hear." These Hebrew youths, we are told by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "quenched the violence of fire" by their faith. (*J. Cumming.*) *Jesus with us in the Hour of Trouble*:—Thou wilt not, Christian, have to pass through the river without thy Master. We remember an old tale of our boyhood, how poor Robinson Crusoe, wrecked on a foreign strand, rejoiced when he saw the print of a man's foot. So it is with the Christian in his trouble; he shall not despair in a desolate land, because there is the foot-print of Christ Jesus on all our temptations, our troubles. Go on rejoicing, Christian; thou art in an inhabited country; thy Jesus is with thee in all thy afflictions, and in all thy woes. Thou shalt never have to tread the wine-press alone. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 28. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel and delivered His servants.—*The Persecuting Spirit*:—The occasion of these words must be too well known to be repeated in all its circumstances. I. THE PARTICULAR CAUSE OF THE GREAT DANGER WHICH THESE MEN WERE BROUGHT INTO. They would not serve or worship any god except their own God. There is no one who has any conception of God but must allow Him to be infinite in all His attributes. But infinity implies unity; and if this being is One, Divine worship must be due to Him alone. This made God forbid the Jews the serving any of the gods of the neighbouring nations, under such severe penalties. As God showed his approbation of these Jews' refusal to worship the image by the miracle He wrought in their deliverance, so, I doubt not, but He has showed so many wonders in delivering this nation so often for its constancy in the same refusal, though, in all other respects, most unworthy of the least of His mercies. II. EXAMINE THE PRETENCES OF RELIGIOUS CRUELTY. They are, either to promote God's glory or our neighbour's good. Cruelty is not proper for either of these purposes. By God's glory is probably meant the improving that notion of God which men have by the light of nature; or making His revealed will to be more readily embraced by them. With mankind in a state of nature, fear forced the acknowledgment of a superior being, so their worship was cruel and their manners were barbarous. When they began to settle into societies, and when they reflected upon the first cause of the benefits they enjoyed, and discovered the goodness of God, then love grew as the principle of their glad obedience, and their worship was bloodless and cheerful, and their manners innocent and endearing. The improvement of human nature consists in the notions of goodness in the Divine. But if, when men had got thus far by the light of nature, anyone should have started up and pretended to have offered violence to his neighbour, by a particular commission from God and for His glory, then love must at once have given place to fear, and human nature turned savage and wild again. Take the other pretence, that violence is intended to promote the Gospel. How contradictory and absurd is this! This is to recommend love by hatred, mercy by cruelty, and forgiveness by destruction. That which distinguishes the Gospel is its being so admirably disposed to beget love and peace, justice and charity, among all men. Here forgiveness is improved into beneficence, and humanity exalted into charity. Here injuries are returned with prayers, and curses with blessings. The Pharisees taught that it was lawful to hate enemies. The Cynics renounced all humanity. The Stoics reckoned compassion an infirmity. All other sects were deficient in this particular. But Christianity improved human nature into the likeness of the Divine. Our Lord's disciples were to be distinguished from the whole world by their "loving one another." And what examples did the great Master leave us? Shall men, then, dare to imprison, impoverish, and murder their brethren in the name of this Jesus? Another pretence of religious cruelty is that it may promote the good of our neighbour. This is generally disguised under the specious pretence

of zeal. But true zeal ought first to be employed upon ourselves. Zeal is as necessary to the life of devotion as the natural heat is to that of the body. Religion must be a free consent of the soul; it can be acceptable to God only as it is voluntary. How can full conviction be wrought but by gentle usage, calm reasoning, and good example. The will can never be forced to give a sincere assent, after all the violence that can be offered. Beside, all error, considering the vanity of mankind, is of a nice and tender nature; it requires a great deal of management and address to make people own that they are in the wrong, especially in matters of religion. The utmost we can expect from force is an outward compliance. Violence may extort confession from the mouth, but will not hinder curses, at the same time, in the heart. It may fright people into counterfeiting, but not persuade them into believing. One particular reason against the rashness of zealous cruelty is because the good should not suffer with the evil. The true causes of religious cruelty are: 1. The pride and haughtiness of power. 2. The endeavouring to recommend ourselves to man rather than to God. 3. The opinion that such violence is meritorious for the expiation of former sins. III. COMPARE THE DELIVERANCE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT WITH OUR OWN. These men trusted in God. (J. Adams.) *The Fiery Trial*.—First, the idolatry is costly. The chapter tells us of an high statue and idol of gold erected by the King of Babylon. Superstition and idolatry will be no niggard, it will spare no cost; but be expensive and sumptuous to maintain an invented and superstitious worship. 1. Nebuchadnezzar must have no petty diminutive god; six cubits in breadth, sixty cubits in height. What's this to the infinite immensity of our God, that fills Heaven and earth? 2. It must be of metal, too, lasting and durable. A mock imitation of the true God's eternity. 3. It must be rich and costly, all of beaten gold. "Their idols," saith David, "are silver and gold." It may shame us Christians, that are so basely penurious in maintaining and beautifying the worship of our God. Secondly, the erecting of this idol is done with the greatest authority. Thirdly, it is done with great pomp and solemnity. Fourthly, it is done with great content and universality. 'All the governors and princes of the provinces are gathered together, all engaged in this idolatrous worship. This sin of idolatry, it hath been an over-spreading evil. Fifthly, it is imposed with all strictness and severity; nay, it is pressed upon the people with cruelty and tyranny. Blood and fire and persecution, they are the great promoters of idolatry. Cruelty, 'tis the brand of the malignant church. Such are the enforcements of idolatry; far from the temper of true Christianity. Sixthly, notwithstanding all this violence in pressing, and this great generality of submitting to this idolatrous injunction, yet, here a few, three men, that deny their conformity, and refuse to engage themselves in this public impiety. In the greatest universality and prevailing of impiety, yet God hath some that withstand superstition and give testimony to His truth. St. Paul speaks it to another purpose, but it is true in this case also, God leaves not Himself without witness. Seventhly, upon these the penalty of the law is inflicted in all extremity. 1. Though but three. 2. They, men of great place and employment, set by the king over the affairs of the province of Babylon, useful to the State. 3. Peaceable, no raisers of sedition and tumult. 4. No blasphemers of this new-made god, but only bare refusers, and that for conscience sake. Here is the rage of idolatry. Well, what is the success? that is extraordinary and miraculous. God gives way to these men of blood, lets them do their utmost; He saves not these three holy men by rescue, or prevention; He keeps them not from the fire, but preserves them in it. They are, like Moses his bush, burning, but not consumed. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. And this deliverance, it is not secret, but conspicuous in the eye and observation of Nebuchadnezzar. So, then, this passage of Scripture reports to us a solemn testimony given by Nebuchadnezzar to this miraculous deliverance of these three holy men. And this, his testimony, will appear in three evidences and manifestations of it. First, it appears in a thankful benediction of Almighty God for this gracious deliverance (v. 28), "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." Secondly, it appears in a strict injunction and provision for His glory, prohibiting all men, upon severe penalty, to blaspheme or say anything amiss against the God of these holy men (v. 29). Thirdly, it appears in an honourable promotion and advancement of these three worthies to places of dignity and authority in the province of Babylon (v. 30). And here we have: First, The action of blessing, together with the agent, Nebuchadnezzar. Secondly, the Object or Person to whom he ascribes this blessedness, that is, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Thirdly, the benefit for which he blesses Him, that is, the sending of His angel to work this deliverance. And, fourthly, The motives acknowledged for which God delivered them. They are four: I. *Quia servi*. They were His servants. II. *Quia confidentes*. Because they trusted in Him. III. *Quia constantes*. They were resolute and constant in their holy profession. They changed the king's word. IV. *Quia martyres*. They chose

to suffer death for their God and their religion; they would rather die than dishonour Him. They yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. They loved not their lives to death that they might be true to Him. Come we to the First, Nebuchadnezzar's act of benediction and blessing, the thankful acknowledgment he makes of this great deliverance. It is much to hear praises and benedictions of God out of such a man's mouth. Well, this blessing of Nebuchadnezzar hath some sparks of humanity in it. To be glad and well pleased for the saving of men's lives, for the sparing of bloodshed, such thanksgivings are comely. To take a more particular notice of this benediction and blessing of Nebuchadnezzar's, let us consider it in a double notion. I. Let us see what was good and commendable in it. (1) That is one thing commendable. He goes not on obstinately, nor renews his persecution; a miracle stops him, and forthwith he desisteth. He is not, as some other persecuting tyrants have been, the more enraged at this strange deliverance. That was Pharaoh's impiety. (2) He blesses God for this deliverance; he quarrels not at the miracle, as wrought by some false deity or by means of delusion. We know Pharaoh and his servants, Jannes and Jambres, withstood the miracles that Moses did work; they counted them but juggling tricks and enchantments, and would not yield to them as Divine operations. Thus did the Pharisees with our Saviour's miracles; He casts out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. It is the usual practice of infidels to question and vilify the wonderful works of God. But this king here is more ingenuous; he speaks rightly and reverently of them. (3) He takes notice of the miracle; doth not labour to conceal it; gives no commandment that no man should speak of it; but is forward to give an honourable testimony of it. Malice loves and labours to darken and obscure such evidences of God's power when they make against them. Of such a spirit were the obstinate Jews. How did they set themselves to smother the glory of Christ's resurrection? Say, "He was stolen away while we slept, His disciples removed His body out of the grave; it was no such matter as a resurrection." We have seen what is commendable in this benediction; but yet it hath its defects; something is wanting here in Nebuchadnezzar, more would have been expected from him. (1) He is well pleased with their deliverance; but yet here is no sign of sorrow or remorse for his cruelty towards them, no confession of his fault. Miraculous evidences of God's power should beget other effects in us besides wonder and admiration; they should make us reflect upon ourselves and our sins. As it was with St. Peter when Christ wrought a miracle in his ship at the great draught of fishes; what said Peter? "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke v. 8). (2) He blesses God and applauds the miracle, and there he stops; but is not drawn by it to a religious conversion, to believe in that God which had wrought such great things for the deliverance of His servants. A man may be much affected with the glory of God's works, and praise and magnify them; but if it have no other work upon us it is lost and spilt. Christ charges this defect upon the Jews. He upbraided the cities, wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. They wrought admiration, but not conversion. (3) He blesses God in the behalf of these men, but not in his own behalf; He blesses not God that had miraculously prevented his wicked design in destroying these holy men. It is a great mercy of God to keep us from suffering evil, but it is a greater mercy of God to keep us from doing evil, that our wicked intendments do not take place. St. Paul makes his acknowledgment of both these mercies, both in delivering him from suffering evil and in preserving him from doing evil (II. Tim. iv. 17). We have done with the benediction. Come we now, secondly, to the Person to whom it is ascribed, the Author of this deliverance; that is, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. See here, he ascribes this great work to the right Author, to the true God; doth not impute it to any false deity. It is He that sends deliverance to His people. It is He that works salvation in the midst of the earth. But yet, why doth he make this acknowledgment of God under this expression, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? This speech of Nebuchadnezzar's: I. Implies three errors in him. II. Implies three truths in itself. (1) Conceive it as the speech of an ignorant man, of one that had no knowledge of the true God but upon this present evidence and manifestation of Him. God had other more ancient titles by which He was known. He was the God of Heaven, the Lord of the whole earth, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob; that was His name for ever, this is His memorial unto all generations (Exod. iii. 15). (2) This speech, proceeding from this king, it is the language of idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar hath his gods, old and new, and he supposes these men have another God by themselves, and he likes well of it. (3) This speech, it is the language of one persisting still in his infidelity. He calls this great wonder-working God the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; he doth not call him his god, for all this great evidence of His Divine majesty. He doth not abandon and cast off his former false gods. These

are the errors in this speech of Nebuchadnezzar's. But look upon this speech in itself, and so it carries with it an intimation of three truths. (1) It shows us the near relation which religion gives us to our God, it appropriates God unto His servants, makes Him to be their God in a special manner. Piety makes God to be our God, and us to be His people. (2) This name and appellation that He is called the God of these three men; it is the honour and dignity of this their noble confession, in sticking to His service, though they die for it. They had honoured His name, and now God honours their names, puts them amongst His titles of honour. They that honour Him shall be honoured by Him. Whereas flinchers and renegades shall be forgotten, their name cast out as vile. Such worthies as these, their names shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life. He will confess their names before His father and His holy angels. (3) This title, the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, implies a new claim that God lays to these three men for working their deliverance; they are become His servants, He is become their God, by right of rescue and deliverance. New deliverances multiply and strengthen God's title to us, as David confesses (Psa. cxvi. 16), "Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine hand-maiden, thou hast loosed my bonds." Come we, thirdly, to the next particular, the working of this deliverance by sending of an angel. I. What is the mercy?—deliverance. II. What is the minister and instrument? how is it wrought?—by the dispatch of an angel. I. The great work here is deliverance, and riddance of these men from a mischief and destruction. Indeed, deliverance is the work that God delights in, by which He will make Himself known to be the true God. Samuel makes it the proof of a false god, "That they cannot profit or deliver" (I. Sam. xii. 21). And the prophet upbraids Amaziah for choosing those gods that could not deliver their own people out of his hands (II. Chron. xxv. 15). And this deliverance, it is the more admirable (1) because from a present destruction. It is not by way of prevention; He keeps them not from the danger, but rescues them out of it. (2) Because it was a deliverance from a dreadful destruction, from a most cruel tormenting death, from the burning furnace. As is the danger, such is the deliverance. (3) Because it was a total deliverance; not the least hurt done, not an hair of their heads perished. II. For the instrument, it was the sending and dispatch of an angel. (1) Admire and glorify our God's great Majesty, who hath His glorious angels always attending, speedily dispatching His will and commands. Nebuchadnezzar hath his princes and governors, and captains and counsellors, all in attendance on him with great pomp and magnificence. Alas, what is this to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? He hath His legions of angels. (2) See here the church's security. The holy angels are ready to rescue and deliver them. (3) Let the church's persecutors see against whom they fight, against a people that can be rescued by force of angels. It should strike terror into the most potent persecutors. Fourthly, the fourth thing remarkable in this acknowledgment of Nebuchadnezzar's is the motives which he alleges why God wrought this deliverance for these three men. They are four: I. See now he speaks honourably of these men, accounts them the servants of the Most High God. Before, he esteemed them factious, refractory, turbulent men, such as will be wiser, forsooth! And this consideration, that they are His servants; it is a well-alleged motive why they are delivered. His faithful service; it is a safe protection. 1. To His servants God promises protection. 2. His servants, upon this title, they plead for protection. II. Because they trusted in Him, therefore He delivered them. And faith hath this prevailing power with God: (1) Because it ascribes to Him the glory of His notice and special care over us. (2) Because it ascribes the glory of His power to Him, that He is abundantly able to save us. These three men said confidently, "Our God is able to deliver us" (v. 17). Faith lays hold on God's strength; when all help fails, then faith rolls itself upon God. This trusting in God is thus prevalent (3) because it keeps us only to use such means for deliverance as God allows us. Infidelity will make us shift for ourselves in unlawful ways. (4) Because it teaches us to rely on Him without limitation, neither prescribing time or way, how or when He should deliver us; but leaves all to Him in a holy submission. The third motive why God delivered them is: III. Because they were constant in their religion. That is expressed in these words, "They have changed the king's word." They would not be overborne by the king's command and so sin against God. There is greater duty and greater safety to obey God rather than man. We come to the last motive that graciously inclined God to work this deliverance; that is: IV. They yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any other god but only their own God. And the goodness of this, their pious adhering to God, will appear in two things: First, in their absolute refusal of this idolatrous command. Secondly, in their ready yielding to the penalty of it upon their refusal. First, see the fulness of their refusal. (1) They were not enjoined any denial or renouncing of their own God, a giving-over of their religion; but only there was

required of them a joint acknowledgment of another god with Him. (2) Their piety appears in that they would not perform so much as one act of unlawful and superstitious worship, not yield to the king in doing of one idolatrous action. (3) They refuse to do any outward bodily adoration, to honour this idol with an outward gesture by bowing or bending to it. (4) They are not moved with the general example and concurrence of all others, can be content to be accounted singular, and bear the scorn and reproach of a dissenting multitude. No; the torrent and stream of the common practice shall not carry them to idolatry. (5) They will not yield, though to avoid and escape an imminent and a deadly danger. So, then, will not these men join the worship of an idol together with the worship of their own God, and that not in the least degree, nor yet to avoid the greatest torment? First, this truth was typified in the Levitical law (Levit. xix.), where all blending and mixture of divers religions are typically forbidden. Secondly, this was represented in that destruction that God brought upon Dagon, the idol of the Philistines. Thirdly, this mixture in religion, to serve the Lord, and yet, withal, to conform to the worship of any other god; it is contrary (1) to the unity of God. (2) It is contrary to His sovereignty. He is the only Ruler, the only Potentate (1. Tim. vi. 15). (3) This worship of any other god but only of the true God, it is contrary to the all-sufficiency of God. (4) This joining other gods with the true God, it is opposite and contrary to the nature of religion, that leads us to the worship of one only God. God commanded His people to use one altar in sign and testimony of one God to be worshipped. Hence it is that (1) religion puts a bond upon us, ties us strictly to the adhering to one God alone. (2) Religion, it is a covenant, and indenting our service, our strength, our devotion only to our God. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We have seen the refusal of these men to worship any other god but only their own God; yet one thing remains, that is their ready yielding themselves to undergo the penalty and to suffer martyrdom. They yielded their bodies, would undergo death, rather than commit idolatry. And this, their yielding, hath four things observable in it: (1) It is passive; they yield themselves to be put to death; they did not rush upon death by their own procurement. (2) Their yielding their bodies, it is submissive; they yielded themselves, did not stubbornly oppose and struggle against it. (3) Their yielding was plenary, and full. They yielded their bodies; they were not content to undergo some less sufferings, the loss of their places, which were great in the province; but they engage their lives for the honour of their God. (4) Their suffering, it is voluntary. Yielding betokens a willing parting with and resigning up their lives. They were passive in the incurring of death, but active in the acceptance. (*G. Stradling*.)

Ver. 29. There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.—The Great Deliverer.—These are the words of a heathen king. They are not the less welcome to us on that account, but perhaps the more so. The testimony of a saint has, of course, its special value, but the witness of a sinner has a worth all its own, especially when it has been compelled from him by the power of God Himself. This unwilling testimony seems to me to exceed in worth the testimony of those from whom we should expect such witness. You may be sure that Nebuchadnezzar was not prejudiced in favour of Jehovah. This he said only through compulsion, yet he spake it with the accent of conviction. It was a matter not of theory but of experience with him. It is true also that this testimony is very far from satisfactory. We find ourselves wishing that Nebuchadnezzar had gone much further. I wish he had left out those last three words. That would have been a grand utterance, "There is no other God that can deliver." But suppose he had left out three other words, and simply said, "There is no other God," what an improvement that would have been. Oh, but he was a young beginner, you must remember; he was only just commencing to come under Divine influences. This is a repeating of the alphabet, and he gets through it wonderfully well considering. Wait till God has done with him, and you will find he has made wonderful progress. Read his testimony after he has been humbled by being driven into the fields to eat grass like the ox. Before God and you have done with him he may have given such a record as Nebuchadnezzar did towards the close of his career—"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." **I. THERE IS NO OTHER GOD THAT CAN DELIVER FROM SUCH OVERWHELMING PERIL.** There are many features connected with this case that make it special. We may extend the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's phrase. 1. There is no other God that can deliver from such strong temptations. Try to put yourselves in the position of these three young men. 2. Moreover, these men were delivered from their accusers, for you will remember that "certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews." I expect they had been on the look-out for this opportunity. Now see—for you know the end of the story—how wonderfully

the Jews were delivered from the hands of those who were trying to trip and destroy them. Hear me, if you are here who, if you told your story, would have to say, "One of my greatest troubles is that I am so watched; they compass me about like bees; I get no rest or peace! they want to trip me up, to catch me in my words, to entangle me in my talk, if they could only find an occasion against me—and I am half afraid they will." I charge you, do not be afraid that they will succeed. If you are afraid, they will; but if you simply trust in God and do the right He will deliver you from the hands of your accusers. You need not fear what man can do unto you. "If God be for you, who can be against you?" 3. Again, the holy children were delivered from the wrath of the king, and I warrant you it was wrath of no ordinary nature. There are indications that Nebuchadnezzar was a fair-minded man, at least to some degree. He gave these offenders an opportunity to recant, and up to a certain point seems to have treated them with a commendable humanity. But when he did get angry, there was no mistaking it. Now read the sequel of the story. The lion has become a lamb; he who was like to leap upon them from the thicket now cringes before them, cowed and cowardly. He who had blasphemed their God now praises Him; He who had threatened to destroy them now sets them on high in the province of Babylon. I wonder if there is anybody present who has to deal with those who give way to evil temper. Well, I am not very much surprised that you are a little fearful of it, but oh, if God is with you and you with Him, He can make the wrath of His enemies praise Him. 4. From the fierceness of the fire also these young men were saved. Oh, how gloriously God delivers! They may do their worst—it only gives God an opportunity to do His best. Let them heap on the fuel, let them say all manner of evil against you falsely for His sake. God is a match for them, and more than equal to the emergency. I wonder what the difficulty is under which you labour just now. Is it the power of inbred sin? "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." You may see on every hard man and woman who have been delivered from the power of sin. Do not suppose that the seas of sorrow must overwhelm you. God can turn your sighing into singing. II. THERE IS NO OTHER GOD THAT DELIVERS BY SUCH MARVELLOUS MEANS. Think of the methods God employed in this case to set His servants free from their extremity. 1. He first of all inspired their confidence. Did you not admire them and rejoice in them as we read the story of their behaviour before the king? They were not in the least cowed by his august presence, nor frightened by his fearful threat. Well, that is God's way of working with the hearts of men. He is fitting them for the ordeal through which they are going to pass. God never sends us through any ordeal without first preparing us. 2. Was it not God also who prompted them to a heroic confession of their faith? I can imagine a man full in his heart with holy boldness, and yet failing to speak it forth. They were altogether regardless of consequences. Yet they were not alone, for God was with them. 3. Then God helped them to marvellous patience. It was the spirit of peace and patience that kept them gentle as well as brave. "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Some men can fight their way through difficulties, but the men whom God helps can stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. 4. Let it be noted, too, that God allowed these young men to be put into the furnace. God has permitted it, but only with the purpose that His strength may be made perfect in your weakness, and that he may eventually bring you out into a wealthy place. 5. Remember, too, that Nebuchadnezzar, to his great surprise, saw the form of a fourth walking amidst the flames. He did not know who it was. He used an expression which has, I think, been somewhat misunderstood. He had no idea that it could be God's dear Son, our blessed Saviour. It is not likely that he had even heard of such an One. He really said, "The form of the fourth is like a Son of God," and later he said that God had sent His angel to save His servants. Oh, if he could have known what I believe is the actual fact, that Jesus Himself, the second Person in the Trinity, put Himself side by side with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, he would have wondered infinitely more. Oh, this is the wonder of wonders, that in the hour of our extremity, Christ comes right down to us, walks by us, holds us by the hand, and does, by His presence, cheer and save us. Oh, what a gracious God is ours! III. THERE IS NO OTHER GOD THAT CAN DELIVER IN SUCH A REMARKABLE MANNER. His methods are remarkable and strange, but the nature of the delivery still more surprises us. 1. No other God saves so readily. There is no sign in all this story of any particular stretching forth of the Divine arm. There is no visible and ostensible exhibition of Divine might. There is, for instance, no sudden burst of a waterspout to quench these flames; no mighty rushing wind to blow the fire away. God wrought a miracle, I gladly own, but the forces He employed were silent and secret. God often works that way. You hope He will deliver you. Yes! but do not dictate to Him the manner of deliverance. He knows in every detail what is best, and we are wise to leave them all to Him. 2. You may be sure He will

work effectually. There is no other god that does his work so thoroughly as the Hebrews' God. So complete was the delivery that the king was astonished at it. I expect that the fetters were forged to the strongest point of resistance, but the fire seems to have centred all its force upon the fetters which the king had put upon his prisoners. Oh, welcome fires of persecution, and of temptation too, if the ultimate end is to set me freer than I was before, to burn the bonds that bound me. But upon themselves the fire had no power. And not so much as the smell of fire passed on them. There is an old legend to the effect that they sang in the midst of the flames, I do not know whether that was really so, but I know that they did not sing in the flames, for God took the power out of the fire, so that they walked unharmed. All things are possible with Heaven. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.—*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*.—Whenever we hear of any one's appointment to a Government place, the first question we ask is, How did he get it? generally, in order to ascertain whether or not we have at command any interest like that which has proved successful. And so it is interesting to enquire how these men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came to be promoted in the province of that Babylon which, after all, is not so unlike this Babylon. Of course, we know how it came to pass, as we have read it in the lesson over and over again. But let us try to place ourselves in the position of persons who did not know any more than the fact that they had been promoted. What would be your conjecture as to the way in which they obtained royal favour? I venture to say that you would at once make up your mind that the promotion had been the result of "trimming" of some kind, or of what is pleasantly called sensible and wise "compromise." I see the spirit everywhere. The genius and the man of principle in politics is nowhere, except he be wanting to do work in a crisis. And, in the most worldly-wise church on earth, the asserting diplomatist is everything and the argumentative genius is nothing. The one is laden with honours; the other is reserved for use, to be turned on and turned off according to circumstances. If you say, "The miracle made all the difference; let there be as much time-serving and compromise as you please in the present day; still, if anything like what we read in the chapter before us actually took place even now, no Government—Liberal or Conservative—could resist the claims of such men as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." Even admitting that, which I do not for a moment, I ask what caused the startling occurrence which you say would have established their claims and ensured their promotion? It did not come down from Heaven as something to mark its favourites, and to terrify the heathen monarch, and cause him to act in a conciliatory spirit towards the subjects of a superior power. No; what did it effect? This only as far as the king was concerned. It impressed upon him the character of the men with whom he had to deal. The deliverance called attention to and attested the character of these men; but it was the character thus attested which secured their promotion. To understand their characters we must, I think, do two things: 1. We must get rid of the very prevalent idea that those who are spoken of with approval in the Bible were good as a matter of course, and breathed in and exhaled piety, virtue, and self-denial, in the ordinary course of things; while, on the other hand, those who are condemned, being, by supposition, in the same atmosphere, are much more inexcusable than we should be for not being good! I cannot attempt to prove the absurdity of this notion; I can only remind you that it is absurd. But besides getting rid of the idea that it was easy for these men to do as they did, I think that, in order to appreciate their character, we must try to ascertain how they could have done otherwise—with a view to "promotion"—if they had lived in our own "enlightened" days. How could they have proceeded to reason with their consciences if they had had the advantage of our superior knowledge? They had many ways of escape. As loyal subjects, it was their duty to do what the king commanded; and, of course, this strong loyal feeling would be somewhat strengthened by the consideration of the alternative of the fire in the event of its repression! These men might, then, have reasoned themselves into compliance on the grounds that they ought to obey the powers that be; and their loyalty might have been stimulated and confirmed by the contemplation of the alternative furnace. When I hear or read the case of these men quoted as instances in which "the Church" opposed "the State," and received Divine sanction, and am asked to regard Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego as prototypes of modern violators of the law as declared by the courts to which they voluntarily submitted themselves when they entered the ministry of the English Church, by virtue of which they hold their position and emoluments, and from which they can withdraw when they please—I feel myself unable to argue with those who can be deluded by that fallacy. The parallel to Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego is not the man who receives position or emolument, or both, from State and from Establishment, and then disobeys the law as declared constitutionally by the State; but the dissenter who refuses to worship what he considers the golden image set up by the State, and who refuses position and emolument rather than be under the control of the State, or, in other words, of the House of Commons. Whether he be right or wrong is another question. But he is intelligible; he may quote Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, because he gets nothing from Nebuchadnezzar the king; but if I disobey the law, I cannot claim martyrdom on such Scriptural authority. I am the recognised officer of Nebuchadnezzar, and my duty is to obey his law, which I accepted with my eyes open, or to cease to be under that law, which I can do when I please. You must bear with me here when I say that my argument will not be touched by saying that these were men serving the true God, and that they were asked to worship an idol. They were asked under pressure to do what they thought to be wrong. Whether or not they judged rightly is not the question. They were men who had no contract with the State. But setting aside the "loyalty" plea altogether, if they had consulted me as to how they had best manage their conscience in view of the objectionable furnace; I mean if they had consulted me as one whose sole business it was to get them out of the difficulty and keep them out of the fire, I should have said, "Look at it in this way; the whole thing is a 'matter of form.' Why should you be burnt for a form? Bow down with your body; that is nothing; you are not bowing down with your heart; that is everything." What would be the answer to this plea about mere form? Simply this: Form is nothing and heart is everything; but the association of ideas is such, with such beings as we are, that when a form becomes associated with an idea, it will be a matter of much time and much labour to sever them. The British flag is so much woollen material, but if you insult it, you insult the great nation which is in idea associated with it. And so, if these men had there and then bowed down—no matter what was in their heart—they would simply have created a wrong impression, sacrificed principle, or, to put it in plainer words, acted a lie. Again, they could have said that they might "cause a disturbance by disobeying the royal command," and that as Jehovah's servants they ought to "promote peace." What is the answer? Certainly peace, but not at the price of principle. Again, they might have said that "everyone was going," and that they had better not be singular. I say they might have said this, for it would be no argument. And looking for a practical answer in this eminently practical age, I should like to know how many of the reforms of various kinds of which we are all proud were brought about and worked by men who were not singular for many a long day. But they might have had a still more subtle and refined reason for obedience. By this single compliance, they might have said in their hearts and said to one another, they should "conciliate" the king, and so be able to do him spiritual good afterwards! But, after all, the very best of their conceivable arguments would come to this. They must sum it up into this simple question, "Shall I do evil that good may come?" They said "No." What was right they knew; what might be the result of doing it they did not know, and it was no concern of theirs. Obedience is our business. Its result, with all reverence I say it, is God's business. Our next step He generally makes plain enough. This was their practical faith, and this must be ours, if we would have the form who walks with us in the midst of our fiery trials—whether seen or hidden—to be "the form of the Son of God." These men were promoted to place; why? Because they had shown themselves to be "a power." And "a power" they would have been—in spite of Nebuchadnezzar and every other king who ever lived before or since, whether they got the places or not. Why? Because against royalty, against public opinion, and in the face of death, they acted according to their conscience, and trusted to that God whose candle within them they knew that conscience to be. The alternative presented to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego is essentially the same as that which presents itself often to everyone, high and low, young and old. We all have to face it, not once, but ten thousand times in life. And we do know that when that Book is opened, the dead—amongst whom you and I must one day be numbered—shall be judged, as we now judge Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, "according to the things that are written in that Book." (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*)

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—18. *Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people.*—*The Proclamation of Peace to all Nations.*—How changed the spirit and deportment of Nebuchadnezzar from

what they were on the plains of Dura. Then, we saw him exulting in the pride of power, and girt with the terrors of tyranny. Then, we saw him in a passion, hot as the furnace he had kindled. Now, nothing but thoughts of peace are in his heart, and the law of kindness is on his tongue. Then, we saw him erecting an image to his idol. Now, we are called upon to listen while he extols and praises the God of Heaven. In early life, when the habits are young, the spirits buoyant, the mind elastic and versatile, a change of character is comparatively easy, and of frequent occurrence. But after a man has passed the middle stage of life, as Nebuchadnezzar had now done, changes are so difficult, and so rare, that we are accustomed to consider his character as fixed. Changes effected upon it, afterwards, even when produced by Divine grace, are very marvellous. To change the character in youth is like altering the channel of a river. To change it in old age is like turning the waters of a river backwards, and making them run upwards, to their source, when they were about to be emptied into the sea. Whether Nebuchadnezzar was truly converted unto God is a question that may afterwards come in our way. Without making any assertion on that head, for the present, it is quite apparent that his character is not only greatly altered, but much improved. The occasion of this change in the character of Nebuchadnezzar was a very remarkable dispensation of the Almighty. He was degraded from his throne, and deprived of his reason, and driven from the dwellings of men, and dwelt amid the cattle in the field. This discipline was severe, but it was salutary. He learned more among the beasts than ever he had learned among men. Is it not a wonderful instance of Divine grace to see the man who had spent so much of his time in war become the advocate, the apostle, the dispenser of peace! The design of this proclamation was to make publicly known the wonderful dealings of God towards himself. Many persons have recorded the more remarkable passages of their history, from a love of fame, from a desire to be spoken of while they are living, and to be remembered after they are dead. No such motive could possibly actuate Nebuchadnezzar. The occurrence, which he was about to relate, was one of the most humbling nature. That which incited Nebuchadnezzar to make his proclamation was a hope that it might be productive of good. "I thought it good to shew the signs and the wonders which the high God hath wrought toward me." It was good for the Divine glory. It showed the greatness of Jehovah, that there was none like him among the sons of the mighty, when he could thus abase the greatest and the haughtiest man upon the earth. It was good for the warning and instruction of mankind. It cried aloud to all transgressors, "Fear and sin not; for if such things be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry." When this haughty spirit, this son of pride, was thus brought down, it cried aloud to all, "Be clothed with humility." This proclamation is addressed "to all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth." We are not to suppose, from this, that Nebuchadnezzar still aspired to universal dominion over his fellow-creatures. There is reason to think that such ambitious thoughts were now dead within him. The proclamation is addressed to all nations, because he considered that a knowledge of the remarkable dispensations of the Most High towards himself might be of universal benefit. To publish this showed an excellent spirit in Nebuchadnezzar—a spirit more concerned for God's glory than his own—more anxious about the welfare of his subjects than about his own reputation. It is easy to proclaim our own excellencies, but, surely, God must touch the heart before we are willing to promote His glory at the expense of our own. When his reason was restored, and he considered the whole way in which God had dealt with him, Nebuchadnezzar is filled with astonishment. "How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" Nebuchadnezzar had now reigned about forty years. During that period he had journeyed far, and seen much of the Divine doings. On the plains of Dura he had seen a noble testimony lifted up for God. He then, also, saw a visible manifestation of God, and witnessed a very wonderful miracle performed in behalf of the faithful witnesses for His glory. We might have supposed that the evidence afforded by such a manifestation, and such a miracle, was sufficient to have carried conviction to every rational mind. It must, however, be remarked that it is not from want of evidence in support of religion that any continue in unbelief; and it is not by evidence alone that any man can be truly converted unto God. The evidence in behalf of religion is of a moral nature, for the practical reception of which there is requisite a certain moral condition of mind, and where this is wanting, evidence, however powerful, will have no more effect in softening the heart than sunshine has upon a rock. Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar saw all these miracles of Divine power and wisdom, and received from them only slight and transient impressions. But now, like one who had been all his days blind, and got his eyes opened to behold the glory of the Lord, he cries out in astonishment, "How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" Jehovah is not only glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, He is a God "ever doing wonders." To a finite mind His works

as Creator must, of necessity, appear marvellous, because of the incomprehensible power and wisdom with which they are all stamped. Every man who is truly converted will be filled with wonder at the doings of the Lord. He will see His loving kindness to be a "wonderful loving kindness," and His condescension to be infinite. And it is one sign of being benefited by the dispensations of Providence when we are led to wonder, and admire, and adore the hand of God. There may be nothing in our history so extraordinary as there was in that of Nebuchadnezzar. But in the life of the humblest individual, in his life who has fewest vicissitudes, there will appear, when it is seriously considered, evidences of Divine care, wisdom, power, long-suffering, sufficient to constrain him to cry out, "O how great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" How often has He disappointed our fears! How often has He exceeded our hopes! If Nebuchadnezzar, on discovering the meaning of one small act of Providence, was filled with such astonishment, how high will their admiration rise, how rich will be their satisfaction, how profound their reverence, who shall have the whole plan of the universe unfolded to their consideration! If he on earth, will not they much more in Heaven sing, "O how great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" God had done much for Nebuchadnezzar. He had raised him to the highest place on earth—He had made him a king of kings—had given success to his counsels, victory to his arms, and bestowed on him every temporal blessing which a mortal could possess. In the day of prosperity God is too generally overlooked. Such was the effect of prosperity on Nebuchadnezzar. He felt and spake as if he were omnipotent, as if there was no power in the universe, above his own, as if he were a god of gods, as well as a king of kings. But behold and adore the power of Jehovah! In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, He makes this proud and presumptuous creature, who feels himself more than a god, less than the meanest of his subjects, less than a man—He makes him a companion of the beasts of the field, and continues him in that situation for seven years. Behold and adore the sovereignty of Divine grace, in sanctifying this affliction! Many who never praised God for their prosperity have praised Him for their adversity, have thanked and adored Him that ever they were afflicted. This was the case with Nebuchadnezzar. He who never praised God for raising him to the throne, adores and magnifies His name for driving him from the dwellings of men. Joyous chastisement! Blessed degradation! Blessed the eclipse of reason to him! By being deprived of his reason, he was taught the right use of his reason. The minions that dwelt in Nebuchadnezzar's court had never approached him without saying, "O king, live for ever." Accustomed to the perpetual incense of their flattery, it is probable that he forgot his mortality, he forgot that changes might come—that changes would come. Now, however, he sees that God is the only monarch who shall live for ever, and His kingdom the only one that shall never be subverted by the storms of time. "His kingdom," says he, "is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation." Change and vicissitude reach not the throne of the Creator. "His kingdom shall for ever stand, His throne through all ages." The life of Nebuchadnezzar had been prosperous from its commencement, but his prosperity never appeared to be so complete as it was immediately before the terrible calamity of which we have an account in this chapter. His wealth is immense—his power is unbounded—all his enemies are conquered, all his provinces are submissive. Crowned with victory, the veteran warrior was at rest in his house, and flourished in his palace. But a more than ordinary share of prosperity is often followed by some great disaster. The time of their greatest prosperity is often the period which God selects for punishing the proud and lofty ones of the earth. (*William White.*)

Ver. 3. How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!—*Man Touching the Inexpressible:*—That the spiritual impression of Nebuchadnezzar was of the right kind is shown by his introductory exclamation—"How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" It is beautiful to see how the shining of God upon the soul affrights all our little speech. Here the man is touching the inexpressible, the infinite; he can only hint at his meaning by way of exclamation: How great His signs, how mighty His wonders! there is no attempt at analysis, explanation, measurement, definite statement. All religious exaltation is overpowering. The mischief of our piety is that we can tell just what we believe and exactly what we feel. When a man can be so definite about his religion, the question is whether he has any religion to be definite about. No religion is complete that does not simply defy the believer to tell what it is in all its scope, in all its indications, in all its exalting enthusiasms. Sometimes we can only tell our creed by our tears. When a man touches the highest point of his faith he is silent; when he does speak he speaks in great bursts of feeling. To those who listen he may indeed be incoherent and unconnected, so that they, listening,

may wonder what he is saying, for the only thing definite about the man is the indefiniteness of unutterable joy. Do not measure God; report nothing concerning His stature; gather up His universe, and regard it as but a symbol, poor and dim, of His majesty. We are the better for these great billows of enthusiasm rolling through the soul; it does us good to be brought into the sanctuary of the unutterable; so long as we can speak all we feel the fountains of the great deep have been broken up. Incoherence in the sanctuary may be but the highest and grandest aspect of eloquence—how great, how noble, how wondrous; all this is but exclamation to the man who carries his religion as a burden; but all this is inspiration to the man of whose soul his religion is an essential part. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.**—*The Kingdom of God*.—I. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THIS KINGDOM—the antecedent is in the verse immediately preceding our text, in which the monarch talks of “showing the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought towards him.” He had not yet got quite into our school, and into the use of the phraseology of the servants of the living God, who call Him the “Most High God.” But by-and-bye you will find this same man learning that phrase also, and putting it forth. However, he calls Him here “the High God,” higher than his own god, higher than all the idols and gods of the heathen, higher even than himself, and he would fain have been a god. Glory to our covenant God, that this is a suitable and proper appellation, for the kingdom is His. The point I wish to establish is, that Jehovah’s kingdom of grace is perfectly distinct from all the kingdoms of the world. We might say much concerning the kingdom of nature, and show how He rules that, as He did in the instance of those three persons, so that even fire should lose its power, and they walk about in it unhurt. And if He were not the God of the kingdom of nature, He could not control and govern it. And, first of all, my Lord says, His kingdom is “not of this world”; it is not carnal, it is not in the might and power of human potentates, it is not submitted to the authority of carnal minds, it is not that which the enemies of Jesus Christ are to lay their hands upon as if they had authority and offices appointed unto them in it. And this will in which the kingdom is founded is of ancient date. Look back to the earliest history we possess, and the account given of what real godliness was in Adam’s days, in Abel’s days, and in Abraham’s days, and we shall find that the kingdom then, and for ages before, was founded in the settled purpose of eternity, in the council of peace, between the persons of Deity. Moreover, it is absolute in the Divine mind—“With whom took He counsel?” or whom did He consult on the matter? Where is the being that gave advice, or communicated understanding to Him? No, His will is absolute law. Probably it would be found a rather dangerous experiment to make the will of a created being absolute law; but there is no such danger with God. We are nowhere so safe, so happy and secure, as under the guidance, control, and management of Jehovah’s absolute will. Moreover, it is a kingdom that has always been advancing, according to the absolute sovereignty of His own will. I know that the powers of darkness have done, and are now doing, all in their power to stop its progress. The more His people were afflicted the more they multiplied and grew. This kingdom, founded in the Divine will, is organised with infinite wisdom. There are privileges, advantages, comforts, pleasures, and usefulness pertaining to the organisation of a Christian church. Believers should not be like a scattered flock of sheep, not knowing one another; but should be knit together as one in heart, in love, and in bearing one another’s burdens. The organisation I mean is that which consists of the people, the principles, and the privileges, all of which are in accordance with, nay, organised by, infinite wisdom. Upon what principles has Jehovah organised His Church, His kingdom upon earth? One word would serve as a title page, a running title, to the whole statute book of the kingdom; and that word is “grace.” It is a grace kingdom. All its principles, doctrines, laws, and statutes emanate from the fulness of grace in the Father’s heart, in the Person of the Son, according to the register of the Holy Ghost. Grace makes the characteristics. Moreover, as regards privileges. Here a vast amount of illustration opens to my view; but I must limit myself to only one or two remarks. This blessed kingdom of our God has privileges for all its subjects, who are declared to be made “kings and priests unto God.” Moreover, if we speak of the privileges under which the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is organised, we find a vast revenue of promises, all of which are “yea and amen” in Jesus Christ, and are to the glory of God in the experience of every subject of His grace. Let us pass on to mark one thing more respecting this kingdom; I mean its unchangeable character; for my text says expressly that “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” It shall know no variation. II. THE INTERESTS OF THIS KINGDOM, which are great and rare, and concern the monarch and the subject both. I shall only mention two or three of those interests; and if one of

them fail, the monarch is injured as well as the subject. The interests, then, are mutual. But whilst we speak of the interests of the kingdom, we must not lose sight of its dignity. All its subjects are dignified characters; and yet all their dignity is concentrated in their glorious sovereign. All His subjects are brought out from the world, washed and made clean, forgiven freely, justified perfectly, accepted cordially, "received graciously, and loved freely." III. DESCRIBE THE NATIVES OF THIS KINGDOM. There is a peculiar description of them given by Haman, when he sought the destruction of God's Church in the time of king Ahasuerus, and the subtle Jesuit cried, "O king, live for ever, there is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws, therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed." And what was the reason? Why, that "their laws were diverse from all people." Now this I think a fine testimony to come from the mouth of so inveterate a foe of God's people, with regard to their peculiar character as natives of His kingdom. "Their laws are diverse from all other peoples." Now, if grace has not made you to differ from the world, if it has not distinguished you as a new creature in another character, I fear it has done very little for you. But, though our laws are diverse from all others, we mean to abide by them, God helping us, and to rejoice in them. When the Jews were apprised of this wicked conspiracy, what course did they take? Did they attempt to alter, modify, or change their laws? Did they attempt to amalgamate their laws with those of the people around them? Did they say, "Well, instead of having a sacrifice once a-morning, let us have one once a-week." No, they would not think of the least alteration. And there stood the people of God adhering constantly to the laws of God. IV. THE GENERATION SPECIFIED IN SUCCESSION—"His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation." Here, be it observed, that we are very fond of a line of succession; but it must not be carnal and fleshly; it must not be secular; it is a spiritual line of succession. This one line of succession has been specified in the Scripture in a text which I have already cited—"instead of the fathers shall come up the children." Whether they were born in antediluvian times, or in the Mosaic times, or under the prophets' ministry, or under the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, or during the apostles' days, or down to the present hour, their family likeness has always exhibited, and always will exhibit, spirituality, separation, and subordination. But they are not only spiritual and separate, but subordinate to the monarch. They have touched His sceptre; they have obtained life Divine from Him. Now mark the subordination—"and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "Thy will be done" is the favourite motto inscribed upon their banners; "not as I will, but as thou wilt," shouted their glorious Captain, and they reiterate the cry. The will of Jehovah is the law of their life. (Joseph Irons.)

Vers. 10-15. I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth.—*The Fall of the Great Tree*:—I. UNDUE EXALTATION OF SPIRIT MAY BRING DEGRADATION OF THE FLESH. Rich men often look over a vast domain which they call their own, and the sight of their outward and visible possessions may inflate their spirit with pride, as air forced into a bladder will expand it to its utmost extent. Yet much that they look upon may have been bought for them by the blood and brain and sweat of others, the thought of whose labour ought to prevent the vain-glory of the possessor. This was the case with this giant king of the olden times (v. 30). And he bestowed no thought on the outstanding debt due to the human beings who had really built the city. If he had looked beyond that which was immediately before him, he would have seen the captives whom he had taken in war toiling to raise for him the stately buildings, those who had wrought for him, and had been repaid with scanty food and an iron rule. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" But he "feared not God, neither regarded man." II. THE DEGRADATION OF THE FLESH MAY LEAD TO A RIGHT EXALTATION OF SPIRIT (v. 34). There are many people whom prosperity fails to bring to a right state of heart before God, and then chastisement becomes a necessity. God is willing to try the rod when nothing but the rod will bring the desired end. There are many men in the world who are much less overbearing towards the weak after they have been knocked down by a stronger arm than their own. III. A DOXOLOGY WILL SPRING FROM A RIGHT EXALTATION OF SPIRIT (v. 37). Praise from a soul that has been humiliated in body and smitten in circumstance is the best sign that it has come into a condition of sound humility, and that the affliction has not been in vain. But praise is the outcome of pain when the pain has been followed by healing. So with Nebuchadnezzar. He passed through a painful experience, but it issued in bringing him to the feet of the Eternal God. Lessons: 1. Divine punishment may become Divine healing. Diseases require treatment in proportion to their

severity, and of all soul-disease there is none more difficult to cure than pride, "which is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 5). But in the case before us, as in many others, the chastisement of the sin became the instrument of its cure. 2. Those who have most sympathy with God are the most bold in declaring the conditions of His mercy. Daniel feared not to tell his king of his sins, and to warn him that repentance was the only way to escape judgment. (*A London Minister.*) *The Tree of Pride*.—There is no narrative in the Scriptures which we may not apply to ourselves. 1. Is there not some portion of that old Babylonish pride in your hearts? You have never committed the same sins as the insane king, it is true. But have you ever been tried as he was—brought up in the midst of royal luxury, taught to regard all men as beneath him and subject to his will, and made absolute from childhood, so that his slightest wish was law? If not you have nothing to boast of, and yet those sins you count so little may be as great as his were to him. That love of dress, that greed of money-making, the forgetfulness of common mercies, the neglect of religious duty, are but developments of the same disease which afflicted him. "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches?" 2. How often have we seen this literally fulfilled—the edifice of pride, which had been erected by the toilsome labour of one man, dashed to the ground in ruin, while the possessor sees his children, bankrupt of youth and innocence, ignorant and regardless of the only treasure they can carry with them into a better world? 3. Can there be a more useful antidote than this chapter for the materialism which prevails, for fraud in high places, for public dishonesty, the mixture of luxury and bankruptcy and business-immorality which threaten to sweep away the barriers of right and truth? What can we apprehend from such scenes but the stern and solemn voice of the watcher, "Hew down the tree?" Surely, then, this record speaks to us to aim at greater purity and simplicity of manner, at greater economy—for a reckless spendthrift must be dishonest, as he spends what he does not earn. We should deny ourselves in the way of vain show, and not be guilty of the folly of endeavouring to outdo each other in finery, in great parties, in luxurious living and magnificent extravagance. The spending of a half-year's earnings in a single day is nothing but insanity. (*J. Medley, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. This matter is by the decree of the watchers—the word of the holy ones.—*A Watcher and a Holy One*.—The word for watcher became an ordinary term in the Syrian church for angel; and Ephrem Syrus classes the watchers with the Seraphim and Cherubim as a special order of Heavenly beings. The use, however, of the word in the Syrian church was probably borrowed from this passage, and it is interesting to find in the Babylonian mythology a complete explanation of its use. For as there are "watchers" mentioned also in the literature of the Parsees, or Persian fire worshippers, it has been argued that the Book of Daniel was a late book, which had borrowed its doctrines of angels from Zoroaster. Our enlarged knowledge of Babylonian literature has revealed to us the fact that they believed in a vast hierarchy of spiritual beings of every rank, some belonging to the earth and some to Heaven; and among these the seven spirits, to whom the seven planets were entrusted, held an important place as the guardians of the universe and of the house. There were also seven warder spirits who kept watch at the gates of Hades. Each dwelling also had special watchers, whose office it was to drive away the wicked and all enemies, and who could even inflict upon them the penalty of death. There have been brought home to our museums figures coarsely fashioned in bronze of these watchers; while in the cuneiform inscriptions there are found solemn forms, directing where, with magical rites, each one of these guardian beings was to be placed, and detailing his attributes of office. The being, therefore, which the king saw in his dream was one of his own guardians, a warder spirit under whose protection he had been placed. (*R. Payne Smith, D.D.*) *The Most High*.—There was something new to the king in this appellation. He had thought of many gods. The heavens were to him a repetition of the earth. There were beings there of every kind and class, good and evil, powerful for mischief, partial, capricious, but useful if propitiated. He thought that these beings existed for man's sake. He was to learn of one God, for and by whom all things exist, and who rules in the kingdom of men. He supposed that men such as himself, kings and princes, ruled, and that the gods would help or try to frustrate these earthly rulers according to the treatment which they themselves received. He had never conceived such a thought as that which is so natural to us, that while man proposes God disposes of earthly things. Even the philosophical Greeks supposed that the Deity was subject to the rule of necessity or fate. Zeus might hold the balance, but the scale would go up or down independently of his will. But during these seven years there was to be a growth of knowledge in the king's mind, until he had mastered the truth that the earth is the Lord's and that all things on earth are as He wills and by His permission. (*Ibid.*) *Decrees and Demands*

of the Watchers:—I. First, THE APPELLATIONS; the watchers and the holy ones. Now here I am obliged again to differ from the commentators, some of whom speak of these watchers and holy ones as being created angels or glorified saints. The saints in glory have entered into rest, and cannot interfere with, nor be disturbed by, earthly affairs. The angels, it is true, are emphatically called “ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation”; but where is the Scripture which gives the least idea of either saints or angels having the prerogative of decreeing and demanding? We have many instances of angels being sent as messengers of vengeance and of mercy, but the prerogative of decreeing and demanding belongs only to Jehovah! I, therefore, conclude that these watchers, these holy ones, are the blessed, glorious, undivided Trinity in unity, distinct in personality, indivisible in essential eternal union. All the solicitude which paternal love can possess—all the affection which can be supposed to exist in the heart of a bridegroom or husband, and all the tenderness and care which the very name of the Comforter implies put forth to watch over and preserve the Zion of our God; this accounts for her safety, and opens to her a never-failing source of consolation, for so long as Jehovah wears the sacred appellations of the watchers and the holy ones, the most vigilant enemies of His Church must be disappointed and frustrated in their malicious assaults because they cannot elude omniscience. The holy ones must cease to be holy ones before they can neglect their charge. These watchers watch over the church publicly, personally, and perpetually. Their public watchings are sometimes for signal judgments and sometimes for special mercies (Jer. xxxi. 28). Now who is so blind as not to see that the watchers have been watching over the professing churches in dear old England. Moreover, the Lord watches over His people personally as well as collectively, as it is written, “The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand” (Ps. cxxi. 5). So that while these holy watchers take special charge of the church as a body, protecting her, providing for her, and present with her; every member, however obscure, is as much His care as the whole body, for the body would not be complete if the least member were missing. He watches the book where all their names are written—He watches the dates there recorded when they are to be regenerated—He watches the instruments and the providences which He has decreed to employ. So that our blessed watchers are never off the watch, though we often are, then let earth and hell assail by day or night, Israel is safe because omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence belong to our watchers, our holy ones, the covenant God of Israel. We ought also to bear in mind that these Heavenly watchers are quite aware of, and well know both the friends and the foes of, the church; so as to be prepared to suppress the one and to succour the other. You and I may be taken by surprise, but our holy watchers cannot. Does the appellation of “the holy ones” find a response in your experience? Does the nature, yea, the very life of these holy ones dwell in you? Then it must and will manifest itself in holy aspirations, holy feastings, holy actions and the like, as it is written, “but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1. Pet. i. 15). II. Let us now proceed to notice THE LEGISLATION SET FORTH IN OUR TEXT in the words “decreeing and demanding,” throughout the wide range of Divine government in the worlds of nature, providence, and grace; and who, I ask, can be trusted to decree and demand, but these Almighty watchers, these holy ones? This glorious Triune Jehovah alone doeth what seemeth Him good in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. Of Him only can it be said, “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”; for “the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.” So that what the watchers decree, the holy ones demand throughout the world of nature. Hence the Psalmist assures us that fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind, mountains and all hills, fulfil His word (Psalm cxlviii. 8). Yea, when He decrees the reversing of nature’s order for any special purpose, He also demands its accomplishment; as when the sun stood still while Joshua completed his victory over Israel’s enemies (Jos. x.); and when the sun went backward ten degrees by the sun-dial of Ahaz to confirm the Lord’s promise of adding unto the king’s days fifteen years (Isai. xxxviii. 8). Let us now turn from the world of nature to the world of providence, and see how Divine legislation rules there without human interference; yea, against human hostility. The history of the patriarch Joseph was a striking exemplification of this principle. The watchers had decreed that he should rise to an eminence above all his brethren for the purpose of saving Egypt from desolation, and the chosen tribes from perishing in the time of famine; but at every step of his advancement human hostility seemed determined to frustrate that decree. Just glance at the history of David in confirmation of the grand truth which we are dwelling upon. “The decree of the watchers” was that he should be King of Israel, that he should slay Goliath and vanquish the Philistines; but everything human seemed to militate against that decree. Take one more sample of sacred history to illustrate this

point, the history of Paul. The decree of the watchers concerning him is recorded thus, "He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." Yet, before the demand is made, "he is breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." But what an imperative demand was that word of the holy ones, "Saul! Saul!" which invincibly struck him to the ground, changed his heart, and made him cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" Still, human hostility determines upon reversing the decree of the watchers, and perverse man sets himself to overturn Divine legislation by conspiring against the life of Paul—yea, against the progress of Christ's Kingdom; but what do all their conspiracies effect, but the very furtherance of that great work which they aimed to destroy? Having thus surveyed the worlds of nature and providence as under this Divine legislation, we will turn our attention to the world of grace; and here our text will be the running title of the statute-book, and the farther we read the more deeply shall we be convinced that decrees and demands made up the whole amount of legislation by which the world of grace is governed. The whole system is ushered in with this royal proclamation, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. xxxiii. 19). III. We will now attend, in the third place, TO THE LESSONS OF INFORMATION SET BEFORE US IN THIS HIGH AND HOLY PROCLAMATION. And the first lesson of information is that there is but one sovereign Ruler of all worlds, all beings, and all things. To throw off Divine authority, and the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah, is the bent and determination of fallen man; "because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). Moreover, His redeemed, grace-taught subjects may well rejoice even now that all nations, all kings, yea, all worlds shall know that the Most High ruleth over all; so that all the great events, the revolutions, the rise and fall of empires are subject to His control, and subservient to the decree of the watchers, and to the demand by the word of the holy ones. Now let us learn a second lesson of information from this subject, the entire dependence of the creature upon these Almighty watchers. (*Joseph Irons.*) *The Fortunes of Kings and Empires are in the Hand of God*:—God was pleased to humble Nebuchadnezzar, and to make him an example to the world and to himself of the frailty of all human power—the instability of all human greatness. Strange as it may seem, notwithstanding Daniel's weight and credit with the king—notwithstanding the consternation of mind into which the dream had thrown him, this warning had no permanent effect. He who was not cured of his overweening pride and vanity till he was overtaken by the threatened judgment. This judgment the text refers to the "decree of the watchers," and the "word of the holy ones." The intent of the matter is to give mankind a proof, in the fall and restoration of this mighty monarch, that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of God—that His providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing crowns and sceptres, always for the good of the faithful primarily, ultimately of his whole creation, but according to His will. It is a mistake to regard these "watchers" and "holy ones" as angels. They are none other than the Three Persons in the Godhead. "Watchers" describes them by the vigilance of their universal providence. "Holy ones" by the transcendent sanctity of their nature. The assertion in the text is that God had decreed to execute a signal judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and impiety. To make the declaration more solemn and striking, the terms in which it is conceived distinctly express that consent and concurrence of all the Persons in the Trinity in the design and execution of this judgment, which must be understood indeed in every act of the Godhead. It is the express assertion of the text that God governs the world according to His will. If this were always present to the minds of men, they would never be cast down beyond measure by the successes of any enemy. And a firm belief in God's providence will moderate our excessive admiration of the virtues and talents of men, and especially of bad men. (*Bishop Horsley.*)

Ver. 18. **This dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, have seen.**—*Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*.—

I. THE SYMBOL. 1. A tree (v. 10). An image common in both Old and New Testament. The image of prosperity; and that both of the righteous, as in Ps. i. 3, and of the wicked, as in Ps. xxxvii. 36 (Prayer Book ver.). In this latter passage note the verbal coincidence between it and Dan. iv. 4. 2. A tree growing to an immense size (v. 11—13). Like that in Matt. xiii. 32; Ezek. xvii. 22—24, xxxi. 3—9. Significant of wide dominion. 3. A tree condemned by a decree from Heaven (v. 13, 14), reminding us of the Baptist's words (Matt. iii. 10), and of our Lord's (Luke xiii. 7; Matt. xxi. 19). 4. A tree spared (v. 15—17); though to be cut down to its stump, it was not to be entirely destroyed, but left to shoot forth and grow again. II. THE INTERPRETATION. 1. The Chaldean magi could not explain its meaning (v. 6, 7). 2. Daniel, being called, felt it to be so terrible that he hesitated to reveal it (v. 18, 19). Like Samuel with Eli (1 Sam. iii. 15). 3. He broke

the dread news gently. Led the king's mind to review his vast power and majesty (v. 20—22). Pointed out his forgetfulness of God in the midst of his earthly splendour (v. 25). Announced the judgment that God had decreed against him to bring down his pride (v. 24). 4. He then became a "preacher of righteousness," in exhorting the king to repentance and amendment, if perchance the chastisement might be averted (v. 27). III. THE FULFILMENT. 1. the king is not ashamed to acknowledge the supremacy of the King of kings, whose royal Heavenly decree was accomplished even upon the mighty monarch of the world (v. 28). 2. But not till a day of grace had been mercifully given. Twelve months passed by, and Nebuchadnezzar was still revelling in his pride and self-exaltation (v. 29, 30). 3. The terrible judgment then fell suddenly upon him (v. 31—33). He became mad, and like a brute beast, for a period denoted by the mystic expression "seven times," which probably means the time of the perfecting of God's purpose concerning him. 4. At the end of this time he was restored to reason and to royal dominion. The lesson had been learnt. He gave God glory, and acknowledged Him as King (v. 34—37). Conclusion. From this page of Old Testament history let us learn: 1. How the effect made upon us by religious impressions wears off in course of time. God has to repeat His revelations and providential dealings. 2. How many ways God has of warning us. 3. How long a time God gives sinners in which to come to repentance. 4. How pure is the fulfilment of His word. (T. H. Barnett.)

Vers. 19—26. **Then Daniel . . . was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him.**—*The Symbolical Tree*:—Being troubled by his dream, Nebuchadnezzar summoned the wise men of Babylon into his presence to explain its meaning. They heard it, and were silent. Daniel arriving afterwards, the king recites his dream a second time. That holy man no sooner heard the dream than the meaning of it was unfolded unto him by the Spirit of inspiration. And if Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by the vision, Daniel is not less troubled by a discovery of its meaning. We cannot, however, suppose that Daniel's agitation was caused by dread of Nebuchadnezzar. We cannot suppose that he was afraid to deliver the message with which God had entrusted him. His perturbation of mind may be accounted for upon principles more accordant with his high character. In interpreting the vision, he had to denounce a judgment from the Lord against the king; and Divine judgments are such as to strike every pious mind with awe. To utter them, is to bear the burden of the Lord. There can be little doubt that Daniel was attached to Nebuchadnezzar, and that this attachment was the cause of his trouble. This agitation of mind is, therefore, highly honourable to Daniel. He would not violate his conscience at the king's command; but men who are loyal to God will always be found to be most loyal to kings. Let adversity come, and they will then find in what hearts the truest loyalty resides. They will find that men like Daniel, though they may refuse to comply with their sinful commands, will be the first to weep for them. We read not that one of all the princes, the governors, the captains, and the sheriffs, that bent before the idol on the plains of Dura, were in the least affected by Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation. Seeing his faithful servant thus agitated, Nebuchadnezzar endeavoured to compose his mind. "The king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee." Thus encouraged, Daniel proceeded to discharge his difficult and solemn duty. The design of this calamity was to teach Nebuchadnezzar that God giveth the kingdoms of men to whomsoever He will. These kingdoms may be acquired by valour, they may be transmitted from a long line of ancestors, yet still they are the gifts of God; and He bestows them in adorable sovereignty. The kings and the princes of the world can give no ultimate reason for the fact that they occupy such exalted stations, except by tracing it to the good pleasure of the Almighty. And God not only appoints the lot of kings; He appoints the lot of all men. We cannot give a rational account of anything about our condition, and especially of what is good about it, apart from the will of God. The fact of this calamity being sent in order to teach Nebuchadnezzar the supremacy of God, reminds us how apt mankind are to forget this truth, and to act as if they were sovereign and independent. Though every object in creation, and every event in providence, speak to us of God, of His power, of His wisdom, of His sovereign majesty, yet how much is He overlooked! How greatly is He forgotten! In the formation of our plans, in the exertion of our influence, in the employment of our faculties, how seldom is He recognised! This arises from the corruption of our nature; from its unbelief of Divine things; its enmity to Divine holiness; its insubordination to Divine authority. In the present disordered state of human nature, two things contribute greatly to make men forget the sovereignty of God. The first of these is the invisibility of the Divine nature, and the consequent invisibility of the Divine agency. A second reason why men so much overlook the Divine supremacy is the manner in which God governs the world. In ruling His intelligent

offspring, God deals with them as creatures possessed of reason, will, and conscience. In fixing their lot in the world, He makes use of their own talents, passions, plans, and efforts. We never can, in any instance, separate the controlling influence of God from the free agency of man. Hence, because the affairs of the world appear to be carried on solely by the operation of secondary causes, we are apt altogether to forget His presence and His power. From the fact of this calamity being sent to teach Nebuchadnezzar the supremacy of God, we learn that it is of great importance to keep this truth constantly in remembrance. Notwithstanding that Nebuchadnezzar was elected to the throne of Babylon by God, he had to use means with as much earnestness and diligence as if his kingdom had not been a gift from the Most High. He had to employ vigilance, and skill, and perseverance, to undergo much anxiety, endure many hardships, encounter many dangers, fight many battles, storm many towns. And notwithstanding that there is an ordination to eternal life, he who would obtain it must use means, just as if there was no ordination. He must watch, he must strive, he must fight. (*W. White.*)

Sad Tidings:—There was silence in the king's chamber whilst the prophet of God meditated on God's mysterious message to the king, and considered how he might best impress upon the king the meaning of the Divine sentence. So for that while, during which Daniel sat mutely pondering the matter, we cannot doubt his heart was lifted up to the throne of the Heavenly Grace to obtain for himself from the Holy Ghost the "power to speak as he ought to speak"; and for the king his master a teachable disposition, and such a penitential submission to the Almighty, as might ensure him forgiveness and mercy. The "one hour" during which Daniel is said to have been "astounded" is an indefinite note of time. Daniel was "astounded and his thoughts troubled him," because in the first place I think (as the LXX expression for his "troubled thoughts" will suggest), Daniel had to unravel and reason out in his own mind the mysterious intimations of the dream, and make it clear to himself, before he ventured to speak. Then, in the second place, the thought of all the indignities and suffering implied in the terms, which described the impending madness, might well make a tender-hearted man hesitate to announce the details of such a calamity about to fall on one whom he regarded with admiration and gratitude. Daniel grieved to think that one who had promoted him to a share in his glory, and to the honour of governing the chief of his provinces, should be in danger of such a terrible reverse! And then again—as he thought over the humiliating decree of Heaven, this question would rise in his mind—how would the king receive the announcement? If Nebuchadnezzar required such a chastisement for his pride, would he be in the temper to listen patiently to the declaration of such a rebuke from the God of the Jews, whom as yet he had not learnt to honour? But Daniel knew (in the conflict of his feelings) how to gain courage and strength; and how to "set his face as a flint," and deliver without finching the word of the Lord. If the Spirit of God was in him, could it be there except he prayed? Now see how God had strengthened him! Not only did Daniel interpret the dream, but (with an earnest concern for the king's welfare) he dared to speak to him of his sins—which were bringing this dreadful punishment upon him! And Daniel could do this with a clear conscience, since he was ruling his province well himself to the benefit of his people, and doing his best to "show mercy to the poor"—not living in luxury at their expense, nor exalting himself to their hurt.

I. IN HIS ANXIETY TO HELP HIS ROYAL MASTER, DANIEL PRESENTS A CONSPICUOUS EXAMPLE OF THE VALUE AND POWER OF SYMPATHY. During that "one hour," as he sat "astounded," mutely contemplating the abstruse subject, on which the king not only demanded an explanation, but asked for it with such evident desire for relief from a pressing anxiety and trouble—Daniel felt for the king; and with all his heart he laboured to find words which would meet the case, and which should not merely solve the mystery, but should at the same time touch the king's conscience and heart. He studied the case with the penetrating interest of a good physician. As he contemplated the pitiful sight of the grand monarch become a grovelling maniac, driven from the dwellings of men, and left to the full sway of his mental aberration—Daniel could not but feel as Elisha felt when he "settled his countenance steadfastly" upon Hazael till he wept at the thought of all the misery which God had showed him the murderer of Benhadad and the usurper of his throne would cause. Daniel yearned to impress the king with the same vivid apprehension of impending danger as he himself had, that it might lead him to an effectual repentance. Sympathy is one great element of success in winning souls to God; without sympathy religious influence is scarcely possible. In the present state of society, when at the same time that class-distinctions are becoming less rigidly marked class feelings are often being deeply stirred, and when the lowest grades are gladly accepting the newly invented ministrations of men and women from amongst themselves—it is of paramount consequence to the church that it should be plainly seen her ministers have a real love and concern for all, however far removed in the social scale. How is this

sympathy to be cultivated? Few are intensely sympathetic by nature; others must supply the default of nature by much "stirring up of the gift that is in them" through the laying on of hands. True Christian sympathy proceeds from love of souls; it is the result of having mastered the fact that every soul is of value to Christ, who gave His blood to redeem it. The sympathy of Jesus Christ can only be reflected in our ministry for Him, when we are willing to study each particular soul's need; and that upon our knees in prayer. If the message we have to deliver is to be regarded by those who listen to us, they must perceive that we believe it ourselves; and, in the next place, that our thoughts trouble us with sorrow for those whom our words condemn. Daniel (as he pondered over the future of Nebuchadnezzar) evidently perceived further terrors than the insanity which was to reduce the king to such a vile estate; he feared his waking from the dust of the earth, in the latter day, to "shame and everlasting contempt." Hence his earnestness. But it might seem as if Daniel's sympathy was wasted, since we are told of no immediate results. Not so however; though the king may have remained unaffected by it till his reason was restored to him, after the "seven times had passed over him," still it is clear he then submitted to be taught by the man of God, whose word had not failed, whose heart he knew he might trust. II. In the second place, DANIEL MAY BE LOOKED UPON AS THE THOUGHTFUL AND REVERENT STUDENT OF GOD'S WORD. The Bible is full of mysteries, which it is our bounden duty to look into; and full of difficulties which must be faced. Thoughtful and educated men in every congregation are demanding of the clergy not only more heart, but more intelligence and more culture. They have grown tired of sermons that shirk the difficulties which perplex their own minds. "Knowledge is power," but there is no power like the power of the Holy Ghost. The mere cultivated intellect is no adequate weapon wherewith to fight against sin. III. Again, we cannot fail to see in Daniel (to whom God had given such insight into Divine mysteries) THE TYPE OF ONE WHO IS PURE IN HEART AND PURE IN LIFE. At the period of his life which we are considering, Daniel allowed himself (it would appear from what he says in the tenth chapter) a moderate use of "pleasant bread" with flesh and wine for his usual diet; when, however, he was the recipient of Divine communications, he fasted, and (as a strict observer of the law) he would not fail to fast often. But we remember, when he was only a boy of 14, with a wonderfully precocious faith, he had denied himself all the dainties of the king's table lest he should be defiled by what had been offered to idols. He knew that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," and God's word, heard in his own heart, was "abstain." We learn from the first chapter that God gave him for his reward (above and beyond the skill in all learning and wisdom which his three companions were blessed with) "understanding in all visions and dreams." How good for the Church of England it would be if those who are to be her future ministers would make that noble venture of faith; "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink." Happy those who, when called in the exercise of their office to rebuke sin in others, have no rebuke of conscience to make the words falter on their lips! Daniel's thoughts troubled him; but no regrets for his own misconduct made him dumb, nor mingled with his sad forebodings as to the fate of one whom he saw pursuing with headstrong course the road to ruin. (W. Morrison.)

Vers. 19—37. *Moments of Astonishment*:—"Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him." There are moments of astonishment in all true ministries. The word "hour" should be replaced by the word "moment": Then Daniel was astonished for one moment. But into one moment how many hours may be condensed! Into one feeling a whole lifetime, with manifold and tragical experience, may enter. We have nothing to do with mere time in calculating spiritual impression, spiritual service, spiritual enjoyment. Daniel was not a man to be easily affrighted; the astonishment which befell him was moral, imaginative, not in the sense of fancying things that did not exist, but in the sense of giving realities their largest scope and meaning. He was astonished that such a fate was awaiting king Nebuchadnezzar. It was like a blow struck upon the very centre of his forehead; when he saw what was going to befall the king he was struck, as it were, with a spear of lightning, his voice faltered, as did the fashion of his countenance. He had a message to deliver, and yet he delivered it with tears that were hidden in the tone of his voice. He was not flippant; he was solemn with an ineffable solemnity. Never was he in such a position before. Only the Divine Spirit could make him equal to the responsibilities of that critical hour. Many words we can utter easily, but to pronounce doom upon a life, any life, old man's or little child's, is a task which drives our words back again down the throat. We cannot utter them, yet we must do so; we wait in the hope that

some relief will come, but relief does not come from this burden-bearing in the sanctuary of life. The preacher is often as much astonished as the hearer, and as much terrified. In proportion as the preacher is faithful to the book which he has to read, expound, and enforce, will he sometimes come to passages that he would rather not read. It would be delightful if we could expel the idea of penalty from our human intercommunion. Men have tried to fill up the pit of hell with flowers, and all the flowers have been consumed. It would be delightful to hide by concealment of any kind the horrors that await the wicked man, but to hide those horrors is to aggravate them. It can be no joy to any man to go forth and say, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." No man could utter such words but in obedience to the election and ordination of God. It is easy, if we consult our own flesh and sense and taste alone, to hide the Cross of agony and shame; but he who hides the Cross hides the salvation which it symbolises, and without which it is impossible. It is not easy for any man, Jonah or Daniel, Hosea or Joel, to say unto the wicked, It shall be ill with thee. We would rather live upon the other side of the hill, where the sun smiles all day, where the flowers grow as if they would never cease to unfold some new secret of colour and beauty, and where the birds trill a song from hour to hour, as if growing in capacity as they multiply in service. But the hill of the Lord is many-sided; we should be unfaithful and unjust if we did not recognise its multifold aspects, and show them to those who have come to see the reality and the mystery of the Divine Kingdom amongst men. Daniel looks wondrously well in the moment of his astonishment. The man's best self is now in his face. How quiet he is, and what singular tenderness plays around the sternness which befits the message that he is about to deliver! What a mixture of emotion, what an interplay of colour, what an agony of sensation! yet Daniel is a true man, and he will speak the true word, come of it what may, so far as he himself is concerned; furnace of fire or den of lions, he must speak the word which the Lord has given to him. Why do we not follow his example? Why do we try to take out of the Divine word all things offensive? It would be easy to pander to human taste, and to flatter human vanity, and to assure the half-damned man that the process cannot be completed, but that after all he will be taken to Heaven and made a seraph of. Who can tell lies so thick, so black? Let him eschew the altar and the Cross. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 25. **The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.**—*God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms:*—That this world owes its existence to the creating power of God, and that He established its laws, and put its every wheel in motion, is a truth so evident that it has extorted the consent of all mankind. But did He then exhaust His omnipotence? And has He been inactive ever since? Did He cast it off His hand, as an orphan-world, deprived of His paternal care, and left to shift for itself? In the rational world, events are frequently brought to pass by the instrumentality of free agents; but still they are under the direction of the universal cause; and their liberty is not inconsistent with His sovereign dominion, nor does it exempt them from it. Though He makes us of secondary causes, yet He reserves to Himself the important character of the Ruler of the universe, and is the Supreme Disposer of all events. This is a truth of infinite moment, and fundamental to all religion. But if Almighty God does not govern the world, and order all the affairs of men according to His pleasure, where is the expediency or necessity of imploring His blessing and protection? **I. THAT THE MOST HIGH IS THE SOLE DISPOSER OF THE FATES OF KINGDOMS, AND THE EVENTS OF WAR, IS DEMONSTRABLE FROM HIS PERFECTIONS.** We may infer from His wisdom that He formed the world, and particularly man, for some important design, which He determined to accomplish; but could He expect that this design would be accomplished by free agents, left entirely to themselves, without any direction or control from Him? Or would it be consistent with wisdom to form creatures incapable of self-government, and fit subjects for Him to rule, and yet exercise no government over them, but leave them entirely to themselves? Justice is an awful and amiable attribute. And on whom shall He display it, but on rational creatures, who are capable of moral good and evil? Indeed, the display of justice on particular persons may be deferred, as it generally is, to another state; but on societies, as such, it cannot be displayed but in this life; for it is only in this life that they subsist in that capacity; and, therefore, guilty nations must feel Divine judgments in the present state, which supposes that God disposes of them as He pleases. His goodness, that favourite perfection, is diffusive and unbounded; but how shall this be displayed in this world, unless He holds the reins of government in His own hands, and distributes His blessings to what kingdom or nation He pleases! If He do not manage their concerns, His mercy cannot be shown in delivering them from calamities; nor His patience in bearing with their provocations. His power is

infinite, and, therefore, the management of all the worlds He has made is as easy to Him as the concerns of one individual. He knows all things, and is everywhere present; and can He be an unconcerned spectator of the affairs of His own creatures, and see them run on at random, without interposing? We may as well say in our hearts, with the fool, "There is no God" (Ps. liii. 1), as entertain such mean ideas of Him, as an idle being, whose happiness consists in inactivity. He will display His perfections in the most God-like manner, and this was His design in the creation of the universe; and since He cannot do this without exercising a perpetual providence over it, we may be assured He will do "according to His will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. iv. 35). Indeed, there is something unnatural in the idea of a creator who takes no care of his own creatures. II. THAT GOD IS THE SUPREME DISPOSER OF THE FATES OF KINGDOMS, AND OF THE EVENTS OF WAR, IS DEMONSTRABLE FROM THE REPEATED DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE; and this alone is sufficient proof to those that believe their Divine authority. This great truth, in one form or other, runs through the whole Bible. Sometimes the Divine government is asserted to be universal, supreme and uncontrollable. Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased (Ps. cxv. 3). The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom ruleth over all (Ps. ciii. 19). He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest thou? (Dan. iv. 35). Now His universal government, which is so strongly asserted in these passages, implies His particular government of the affairs of kingdoms and nations; and the Scriptures declare that the care of Providence extends to the most minute and inconsiderable parts of the creation; and, therefore, much more does it extend to the affairs of men and the fates of kingdoms. He giveth the beast his food, and the young ravens that cry (Ps. cxlvii. 9): Behold, the fowls of the air; they sow not; neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Hence Christ draws the inference now in view, "Are not ye much better, or of more importance, than they?" The Scriptures farther expressly assert that the promotion and degradation of princes, the prosperity and destruction of kingdoms, are from God. "Promotion," says the Psalmist, "cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Ps. lxxv. 6). Hence pious warriors have confided for victory in the providence of God, and been sensible that without Him all their military forces were in vain. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." And observe difference; "They are brought down and fallen; but we, who put our trust in the Lord, are risen, and stand upright" (Ps. xx. 8; xxxiii. 16, 17). Again, we find many instances in the sacred writings of God's over-ruling the conduct of men, even of the wicked, to accomplish His own great designs, when the persons themselves had nothing in view but their own interest. Who could have had any raised expectations from the sale of Joseph, a poor helpless youth, as a slave into Egypt? His brethren had no other end in it than to remove out of their way the object of their envy, and their rival to their father's affection. But God had a very important design in it, even the deliverance of the holy family and thousands of others from famishing. And, therefore, Joseph tells his brethren, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. xlv. 8). The crucifixion of Christ was the most wicked action that ever was committed on this guilty globe; and the Jews freely followed their own malignant passions, and were not prompted to it by any influence from God, who cannot tempt to evil. But I need not tell you that this greatest evil is over-ruled for the greatest good of mankind. III. IT IS THE COMMON SENSE OF ALL MANKIND THAT THE AFFAIRS OF KINGDOMS, AND PARTICULARLY SUCCESS IN WAR, DEPEND UPON GOD. Read over the historical parts of the Old Testament, and you will find it the common sense of the Jews that they should never engage in war without first consulting God, and imploring His blessing. And since Christian kingdoms have been formed, we find the same sense prevailing among them, even in the darkest times. Nay, the very heathens were taught this by their reason, as one of the plainest dictates of the light of nature. They had a Mars and a Minerva; the one the god, and the other the goddess of war. They never engaged in war without anxiously consulting oracles, and offering a profusion of sacrifices and prayers. Now that which is common to all mankind, in all countries, in all ages, and of every religion, seems to be implanted in their nature by its author; and, consequently, must be true. IV. THE INTERPOSITION OF PROVIDENCE IS FREQUENTLY VISIBLE IN THE REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES TO ACCOMPLISH SOME IMPORTANT END IN CRITICAL TIMES. Can we suppose that mere natural causes, that act without design, or that free agents, who act as they please, and who have different views, different prejudices, and contrary interests and inclinations—can we suppose that all these should conspire to promote one design unless they were under the over-ruling influence of Divine providence? Must not such a remarkable and even preternatural

concurrence of various circumstances convince us of the truth of Solomon's remark, "There are many devices in the heart of man; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand!" (Prov. xix. 21). Both sacred and profane history may furnish us with many instances of such remarkable interpositions of Providence. The first oritioal time which I would call to your remembrance, is the Spanish invasion in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1588. The Spaniards, enriched with the gold of the new world, America, then lately discovered, and their king enraged against England with all the malignity of a papist, and a disappointed expectant of the crown, fitted out a fleet of such a force as the world had never before seen. They proudly called it the invincible armada; and, indeed, it seemed to deserve the name. "The seas were overspread with their burden, and the ocean groaned with their weight." England then was but weak by sea, and in no condition to make a defence; so that she seemed on the very brink of popery, and slavery, and ruin. But she had little else to do but to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus xiv. 13). Scarce had they displayed their sails to the inviting gales, when He who holds the winds in His treasures let them loose upon the face of the deep. They were scattered—they were dashed in pieces against one another—they foundered in the mighty waters. And of this mighty fleet there was hardly one left to carry back the dismal news. And was not this "the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes?" (Ps. cxviii. 23). Did He not make the winds, in their courses, fight for England? If any of you should ask, "In what manner does He do this? Or how is it possible He should do it, when we see no sensible appearances of His controlling the laws of nature, or restraining the liberty of men? Natural causes produce their proper effects; and men fight against men; and perceive they are free to act or not to act, as they please. Where, then, is there any room for the agency of Providence?" I answer, it is the excellency of the Divine government to accomplish its purposes without throwing the world into disturbance and confusion by great breaches upon its established laws; it accomplishes them either by continuing the course of nature or by altering it in so gentle and easy a manner that it is hardly, if at all, perceivable. And as to men, God carries them on to effect His designs, without offering the least violence to their free and rational nature; and sways their minds so gently that while they are performing His orders they often seem to themselves to act from principles wholly within themselves. What a surprising, mysterious government; what a perfect administration is this! Yet, I think, we can form some general ideas how the Lord manages the affairs of men, and particularly determines victory in the field of battle as He pleases. The event of war often depends in a great measure upon the winds and waves, clouds and rain. And why may not He, by a secret touch of His hand, order these so as to favour one party and incommode the other? The fate of war greatly depends on the prudence of counsels, and the courage of the soldiers; and why may we not suppose that He who formed the souls of men, and knows all their secret springs of action, and how to manage them—why may we not suppose that He may imperceptibly direct the minds of the one party to concert proper measures and darken and confuse the understandings of the other, to take measures injurious to themselves, and advantageous to the enemy, though they appear right to them, until the event shows them mistaken? He may suggest hints of thoughts, and secretly bias the mind to a certain set of counsels. 1. If God rule in the kingdoms of men, and manage the affairs of the world, then we should live upon earth as in a world governed by Divine providence. This rebellious temper may show itself about the smallest things. When you find fault with the winds or weather, the heat of summer, or the cold of winter, whom do you find fault with? Is it not with Him that is the Disposer of these things? 2. If the affairs of nations are at the disposal of the King of Heaven, then how dreadful is the case of a guilty, provoking, impenitent nation! 3. That we should humble ourselves before the King of kings, and take all proper means to gain His protection. If God dispose the victory as He pleases, then it is most fit, and absolutely necessary, that we should seek to secure His friendship. 4. If God govern the world by means of second causes, it is our duty, according to our characters, to use all proper means to defend our country, and stop the encroachments of our enemies. (*S. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 26. *The heavens do rule.*—*The All-embracing Providence of God:*—"The heavens," emblem of that Divine government that encircles the universe, the all-embracing superintendence of Almighty love. I. It rules MIND as well as MATTER. The whole material universe, organic and inorganic, from the smallest atom and the tiniest insect, are under its absolute direction. There is no chance in the formation, posture, or motion of any particle of the creation. But "the heavens do rule" mind as well as matter. All the impulses, thoughts, and volitions of every intelligent mind are under Divine control. The "heavens do rule" matter by force, and mind by motive. II. It rules the

MINUTE as well as the VAST. Great and small are relative terms. In the eye of God they have no existence; and what we call little not only influences the great, but reveals as much too of the interest of the Almighty love. III. It rules the EVIL as well as the GOOD. The "heavens do rule" sinners as well as saints, devils as well as angels. "The wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain." 1. A word to the materialist. Why be so foolish as to regard matter as at once the subject and the sovereign, the ruled and the ruler? 2. A word to the rebellious. Why oppose the Divine? You cannot master the heavens. Their bursting storms will shatter your bark, and kindle lightnings that will scathe you. 3. A word to the Christly. Let faith in the all-embracing Providence inspire you with a heroism which shall brave all enemies, a magnanimity that shall raise you above the crushing power of the greatest trials. (*Hcmilist.*)

Vers. 27—37. **Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee.**—*Daniel's Counsel*:—Daniel gives counsel to the king like a man of God, directing him to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities or oppressions by showing mercy to the poor, if it might be a lengthening of his tranquility, and thus in some degree mitigating the punishment that was coming upon him. We see here brought out some of the excellencies of Daniel. 1. The kindness of his heart. In the yearnings of compassion which he felt when he heard the king's dream, and discerned its import. He was troubled with tender concern for the king, though he was an oppressive and haughty monarch. This is the true spirit of benevolence and piety, for it should ever appear in the exercise of some compassion and kindness, even towards those who have brought upon themselves tokens of the Divine pleasure. 2. The wisdom with which he was endowed. He was enabled at once to discern what God designed to communicate by this dream of the king. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." 3. The faithful spirit of this servant of God. Daniel stands before this mighty monarch of Babylon; he knows that his passions are strong, and that his pride is as great as his power; yet, guided by his God, and looking up, no doubt, for support from above, he ventures to give counsel to the king, exhorting him to the duties of penitence and reformation. He gave him clearly to understand that it was a rebuke from the great Supreme Ruler for his sins of pride, impurity, and oppression. As Daniel had been faithful to his God and his king, he could leave the matter in the highest hands, however he might be treated by an earthly monarch. (*Thomas Coleman.*) *The Valley of Humiliation*:—In all cases, when God visits an individual with chastisement, sin is the procuring cause, and reformation is the end in view. When warned of coming calamity, repentance is the only means by which it can be averted, and the best frame in which to endure it, if inflicted. Having interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which was prophetic of evil to that monarch, Daniel exhorted him "to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing kindness to the poor." Very awful was the threatening denounced against Nebuchadnezzar, to be not only degraded from his throne, but deprived of his reason, and have his dwelling among the beasts. A denunciation, infinitely more awful than this, has gone forth against every son and daughter of humanity. Let us then break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing kindness to the poor. In exhorting Nebuchadnezzar to this, Daniel could only hold out a peradventure of his tranquility being lengthened. But we are warranted, in the name of God, to assure every sinner, that in the way of returning to God, the punishment denounced against sin shall not only be suspended for a time, but cancelled for ever. This is genuine repentance. This is genuine religion. Holiness of life, springing from holiness of heart. We may suppose that Nebuchadnezzar would be greatly troubled by the interpretation of his dream. Whether his soul was benefited by it does not appear. Probably the impression, though strong at first, became gradually more faint. Day after day passed, and brought him nearer to the period when the calamity must occur. Instead of becoming alarmed by their approach to death and eternity, we every day see sinners becoming more hardened and callous. At the end of twelve months, Nebuchadnezzar walked in the palace of his kingdom. The place, in which he was walking, is generally supposed to have been the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. These were one of the most stupendous erections ever devised by genius for the gratification of pride. A stranger, gazing on this astonishing spectacle, must have felt his heart swell within him. No wonder, then, that the mind of its proprietor was moved. All that he beheld was his own. Much of it had been made by him, and it was all made for him. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" In these expressions, we discern ambition with her lofty eyes, and her presumptuous tongue, and her selfish heart. He looks upon himself as the author and

the end of all. No reference to Divine providence in bestowing this—no reference to the Divine glory in using it—no indication that he felt the awful responsibility of one to whom so much had been entrusted. It is all viewed in reference to himself. But oh! even Babylon was little, when considered as the only portion of an immortal soul. The poorest of God's children, the least of all saints, is infinitely better provided for than Nebuchadnezzar. All things show the vanity of the world, considered as the portion of man. At the moment when Nebuchadnezzar cried aloud, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built," there were, probably, few men in his empire who would not have panted to be in his place. But the next moment, the lowest, the vilest, the most wretched slave in the monarchy of Babylon would not, on any account, not for a crown—not for a kingdom—not for a world—have been Nebuchadnezzar. The next moment Nebuchadnezzar is a madman. O the uncertainty of all beneath the sun! But power is nothing, and wisdom is nothing, and courage is nothing, when God is the adversary. When it is said that a beast's heart was given to Nebuchadnezzar, we are not to suppose that his rational soul was extinguished, and that a beast's heart was instead thereof transfused into his body. His reason was not annihilated, the use of it was merely suspended. By a Divine infliction on the sensitive part of his nature, he ceased to have the sensations proper to a man, and began to feel as if he were an ox. It is well known that, in certain diseases of the nervous system, persons often lose the feelings common to mankind, and look upon themselves as if they were formed of other materials than dust, and placed in other circumstances than those which they actually occupy. Swayed by hope, some have fancied that they were kings, though occupying the humblest stations. Others, under the predominating influence of fear, have fancied that they were formed of such fragile materials that they would be destroyed by moving. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been exposed to a similar derangement. His sentient nature obtained a predominance over his rational. He fancied he was an ox. He felt and acted as if he had been one, imitating its actions, submitting to its treatment, shunning the society of men, dwelling in the open field, and eating grass for his food. At the end of seven years his understanding returned to him. What a change would this be! It would be more than health after sickness, more than liberty after a long captivity. It would be like awaking from the dead, as if he had undergone the fabled metempsychosis, and after existing, for his allotted period, as an inferior animal, he had entered upon the higher destiny of a rational being. He now ceased to look down to the earth as an ox. He looked up to the heavens as a man. He did more. He looked, above the moon and stars, above the thrones of angels, unto God. From this passage we may learn the value of sanctified affliction. "No affliction for the present is joyous, but rather grievous." Sorely was Nebuchadnezzar tried. He was brought lower than ever we read of another in sacred or profane history. This seemed very bad for him, but in reality it was very good. It was the best thing that ever befell him on earth. Had he not been smitten down by this humbling stroke, he would have remained proud and presumptuous to the end of his days. But God brought him low, that he might raise him to a higher elevation than the throne of Babylon. He was evidently a very changed man, and there is every reason to hope that he was a new creature. One of the best tests of saintship is to meet God with exercise suited to His dispensations. And did not Nebuchadnezzar act suitably to the case of one who has been sorely chastised, and then delivered from affliction? Does not this proclamation bear upon it the stamp of genuine religious feeling? Does he not praise God for correcting him? And could an unrenewed man do so? Is not his conduct changed? Formerly he was a man of war; now, he says to all nations, peace be multiplied unto you. Formerly, self was his end; now, he makes use of his royal station for promoting the glory of God and the good of men. But this decree was issued after mature deliberation. In it, we see the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which affliction afterwards produces. We may also learn, from this passage, that God adapts his corrections to the sins of those to whom they are sent. It is said that God does not afflict willingly, and it may be said, with equal truth, that He doth not afflict at random, nor arbitrarily. Every individual, and especially everyone who, like Nebuchadnezzar, has a strongly marked character, has what may be called his master passion, his imperial sin, to which all the rest are subordinate. This is the stronghold of sin, the citadel of the city. And as a city can only be permanently recovered from the hands of an enemy by forcing the citadel to surrender, so the soul of man can only be recovered to the love of God by the subduing of this besetting sin or ruling passion. Nebuchadnezzar's punishment was continued until he learned that the Most High ruleth among the kingdoms of men. So soon as this lesson was taught the discipline was removed. From this we may learn that God will continue his corrections as long, but no longer than is needful. Affliction is a Divine ordinance, for the improvement of which we are responsible. In many instances, besides that of Nebuchadnezzar, it has been the means, in the

hands of God's Spirit, of awaking sinners to a sense of their condition. But there are few vows worse kept than those which have been made in the day of trouble. With the return of health solemn impressions wear away, the world fills the heart, and leaves no room for God. The king of Babylon will rise up in judgment against all who have been afflicted, and whose afflictions have not brought forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. (W. White.)

Ver. 30. Is not this great Babylon, that I have built.—*The Pride of Nebuchadnezzar*:—First, we have not so wonderful an opinion of God, or of His word, or of His heaven, as we have of our own acts, although we be never able to do half that Nebuchadnezzar did. Secondly, this is our manner, to attribute all to ourselves, whatsoever it be, riches, honour, health, or knowledge; as though all came by labour, or policy, or art, or literature. If we cannot draw it to one of these, then we think it fortune, although we understand not what fortune is. If we did count ourselves beholden unto God for them, then we would find some time to be thankful unto Him. Lastly, when we overview these matters, this is our solace and comfort, to think these are the things which make me famous and spoken of; and then we end as though it were enough to be pointed at, "Is not this great Babel?" That which one loves seems greater and more precious above all which he loveth not, although they be better than it; so did these buildings seem to Nebuchadnezzar. One would not think that a house were a matter to make a king proud, although it were never so fair; stone walls are not so precious that he should repose all his honour upon lime and mortar. Therefore, as the faithful soul looketh up to God, or upon the Word, or up to Heaven, and saith to itself, Is not this my hope? is not this my joy? is not this my inheritance? so the carnal man, when he looketh upon his buildings, or his ground, or his money, saith to himself, Is not this my joy? is not this my life? is not this my comfort? So, while he pores and gapes upon it, by little and little the love of it grows more and more in his heart, until at last he hath mind on nothing else. This was the first dotage of Nebuchadnezzar; the second was, "which I have built by the might of my power." What a vaunt was this, to say that he built Babylon! when all histories accord that it was built by Semiramis before Nebuchadnezzar was born. Therefore, why doth he boast of that which another did? The answer is easy. We see that everyone doth labour to obscure the fame of others, that they may shine alone, and bear the name themselves, especially in great buildings; for if they do but add or alter anything in schools, or hospitals, or colleges, they look straight to be counted the founders of them, and so the founders of many places are forgotten. So it is like that Nebuchadnezzar did add or alter something in this city, and therefore, he took all to himself, as the fashion hath been ever since. Lastly, when he putteth in "for the honour of my majesty," he sheweth that he was of Absalom's humour, who, although he had deserved shame, yet he would have fame. So when Nebuchadnezzar came to himself again, he showed that when he sought his own honour, honour departed from him, and he was made like a beast; but when he sought God's honour, honour came to him again, and he was made a king. Thus you have heard what Nebuchadnezzar spake in secret, as though God would display the thoughts and pride of such builders. These are the meditations of princes and noblemen; when they behold their buildings, or open their coffers, or look upon their train swimming after them, they think as Nebuchadnezzar thought, "Is not this great Babel?" Is not this great glory? Is not this the train that maketh me revered in the streets? Are not these the things which shall make my children rich? Is not this the house that shall keep my name, and cause me to be remembered, and make them which are children now to speak of me hereafter? Now Babel is destroyed, and the king that built it laid in the dust; had it not been better to have built a house in Heaven, which might have received him when he died? Thus you have heard what the voice spake from earth; now you shall hear what the voice spake from Heaven; for it followeth, "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from Heaven, and said, O king, to thee be it spoken; thy kingdom shall be taken from thee," &c. God will warn him no more by dreams nor by prophets, as He did; but His judgments shall speak (Job xxxiii. 14). The first note in this verse is the time when God spake from Heaven. "Pride," saith Solomon, "goeth before the fall"; so when pride had spoken, then judgment spake, even while the proud word was in his mouth. See how God shows that these brags offended Him, and, therefore, He judges while he speaks. How short is the triumph of the wicked! When they begin to crow, God stoppeth their breath, and judgment seizeth upon them when they think no danger near them. We cannot sin so quickly, but God seeth us as quickly. How many have been stricken while the oath have been in their mouths! as Jeroboam was stricken while he struck, that they might see why they were stricken, and yet all this will not keep us from swearing. (H. Smith.) *Danger of*

Prosperity.—I. WE SEE WHAT SHOULD BE THE END OF ALL GOVERNMENT (v. 11, 12). A great man is often symbolized by a tree in ancient and Oriental writers. The king's tree gave shelter to some, a home to others, and protection to all. As the shade and fruits of trees protect and support the beasts that seek shelter under them, so governments should protect and support their people. The end of every government should be the greatest possible amount of freedom and happiness to all the people. It should protect the weak, give shelter to the oppressed, hope and employment to the poor, and provide for the diffusion of useful knowledge. By the stump of the roots remaining is meant that his kingdom should not be destroyed or alienated from him during his affliction. A regent, probably his own son, Evil-merodach, governed for him during his insanity. II. This history teaches us another thing—THAT PROSPERITY IS DANGEROUS. It is not always the beggar that loses his soul. The man who has just lost all his property is oftentimes not in as much danger as the man who has just gained a large fortune. It requires more care to hold a full cup than an empty one. "Adversity may depress, but prosperity elevates to presumption." On the lofty pinnacle, where all is sunshine, we need a special power to keep us, a special arm to sustain us. Let me warn you, then, to remember that prosperity is not always permanent. Commercial disasters often come in a way and at a time least expected. The tendency of prosperity is to lead to dangerous expenditures and speculations. What now seems so promising may result in disappointment. III. THAT PRIDE IS IN ITSELF AND IN ITS UTTERANCES AN EXCEEDINGLY DANGEROUS THING, AND ODIUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. "And those that walk in pride, He is able to abase" (v. 29—35). IV. We have here one of the most striking and instructive lessons of GOD'S POWER TO HUMBLE THE PROUD that is recorded in the Bible. Babylon's mighty monarch had made many successful campaigns, and obtained great glory. He was the head of the mightiest kingdom and ruler over the greatest city then in the world; but his riches and his fame, his treasures and his power, could not preserve his peace of mind. His well-appointed guards and numerous army could not keep him from being terrified by dreams. The majesty and all-governing influence of God are here displayed in his acknowledged, absolute, undisputed sovereignty over the world. God's victory over the mightiest and proudest conqueror was easy and complete. How utterly in vain, then, for the impenitent to hope to escape from the presence of God! (W. A. Scott, D.D.) *Pride Goeth Before Destruction*.—I. THE FALL OF PRIDE WARNS YOU OF THE SINFULNESS AND DANGER OF PRESUMPTION AND VANITY. "Pride goeth before destruction." "Those that walk in pride, He is able to abase." II. IT IS A GREAT MISFORTUNE TO BE DEPRIVED OF REASON. It is one of the greatest calamities that can befall men in this life. You should be thankful for the use of reason and speech, and for the flowings forth of human sympathy. These are all God's gifts to you. You should be careful not to impair your understanding by neglecting to use it, or by abusing it. III. The king of Babylon TESTIFIES TO THE BENEFITS OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION. No doubt Nebuchadnezzar found, as David did, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." There are lessons in affliction that we never can learn in prosperity. When God hides the sun from us He reveals to us a thousand suns by night. You know that on a sick bed, or in the moment of an unexpected shipwreck, in the hour of bitter and sorrowful bereavement, vows and resolutions are formed which, if kept, would lead to great zeal in behalf of religion. IV. YOU ARE HERE TAUGHT THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD. The king was walking on his palace top, and he said to himself, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" And, at the end of days, he "lifted up his eyes unto Heaven." In both instances God was nigh unto him. He heard the thoughts of his heart in his pride, and he heard the whispering of his soul in his penitence. There is not a thought that flutters in your hearts—there is not a purpose in your mind formed for to-morrow or for the future—there is not a secret spring of wickedness arising in any bosom—there is not a design that is cherished in the secrecy of any heart, either for good or evil, that you can hide from God. His eye pierces the darkness—His ear hears in silence—His laws and His presence are everywhere. He is the final Judge who will bring every secret thing to light, and judge every man according to the thoughts of his heart, the words of his mouth, and the deeds of his body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. (W. A. Scott, D.D.) *Impious and Ruinous Exultation*.—I. HERE IS AN IMPIOUS EXULTATION. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom?" Here: 1. There is no recognition of the services of others. "I have built." Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men had worked hard in the undertaking; and without them it would never have been accomplished, if begun. Personally the king did nothing but order, and yet he takes to himself the credit. This conduct is repeated every day. Men say, I have made a fortune, I have built mansions, I have won battles, etc. The services of others are not taken into account. 2. There is no recognition of the help of God. Who gave him the workmen? Who gave him the materials? Who gave him the

time? God. And yet He is not mentioned. What impiety then is there in this boasting! II. **HERE IS A RUINOUS SELF-EXULTATION.** "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee." Whilst he was glorifying himself as the greatest of kings, he was hurled down into companionship with cattle. It is often thus. Just when a man has reached the great object of his ambition, and is flushed with exultant pride, ruin befalls him. When the rich man was saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up," etc., the voice came to him, and said, "Thou fool." "When," writes Dean Milman, "John XXI., Pope of Rome, was contemplating with too great pride the work of his own hands, and burst out into laughter, at that instant the avenging roof came down on his own head." Thousands of examples can be quoted. It has been said that every wave of prosperity has its reacting surge, and we are often overwhelmed by the very billow on which we thought to be wafted on to the haven of our hopes. "This is the state of man," says Wolsey; "To-day he puts forth the tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms, and bears his blushing honours thick upon him; the third day comes a frost, a killing frost; and—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely his greatness is a-ripening—nips his root, and then he falls." (*Homilist.*) *Pride and its Punishment.*—Nebuchadnezzar had reigned over the kingdom of Chaldea for forty years. At the end of this long lapse of time, sated with victory, and weary of excitement, he determined to dwell at Babylon, and gather about him, in this city of his greatness, enduring monuments of his wide-spread renown. In enlarging upon this portion of Nebuchadnezzar's history, we shall be guided by the three prominent points. I. **HIS SIN.** It was no crime in Nebuchadnezzar that he was a great man. There was no harm at all in being the ruler of a mighty kingdom, provided that his elevation to so high a place had been accomplished by honest means. His sin was pride. His success, in everything he undertook, called forth no gratitude to God. His constant prosperity only hardened his heart. He drank with greediness the fulsome flatteries with which fawning courtiers filled his ears. Pride has its degrees. It is measured by circumstances. None of us can reach the giddy height where Chaldea's monarch stood. The hero, of nerve and judgment, and military skill, who can direct the movements of armies, and plan the successful assault, and head the fierce onset, is proud of this. The man of letters, who can read with fluency the languages of the dead, and tell the measure of the stars, and trace out the pathway of comets, is more than gratified with his complete success. The individual possessed of neither genius nor learning, but who, by plodding industry and far-sighted investments, or by lucky speculations, gathers up a heap of gold, gazes upon it with heartfelt satisfaction, as the fruit of his labours. We need not go into the higher ranks of life to witness the effects of pride. They may be found in the humblest mechanic, the farmer, the day-labourer of any sort. (Deut. viii. 11—13, 14—17.) II. **HIS PUNISHMENT.** Daniel had foretold it in these dreadful words: "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken," &c. No further time is allowed for repentance. The day of mercy had gone by. The same hour was the sentence carried into execution. Had trembling princes bowed before his throne, anxious to win his favour, or turn aside his wrath? Now is he banished from the abodes of men, an object of pity or contempt; "and none so poor to do him reverence." Did a hundred provinces send in their yearly tribute, to swell the coffers of the king, and purchase dainties for his festive board? Grovelling in the dust, crushed in mind, lost to all the tastes and habits of a man, "he did eat grass like an ox." Had the carved and gilded roofs of magnificent palaces shielded him from the heat and cold? Not even a tattered tent was left. His body was wet with the dew of Heaven, and the pitiless storm spent its fury upon his defenceless head. (Isa. xiv. 12.) The degree of punishment is determined by the degree of pride. Few can be guilty to the extent that Nebuchadnezzar was. Few can fall so terribly and so low. But pride is always hateful unto God. Pride will certainly be punished. (Prov. xvi. 5; St. James iv. 6; Prov. xxix. 23.) Can you call to mind no instances, within your own remembrance, in which pride has been most signally punished? Can you think of no one who boasted of the abundance of his wealth, afterward crippled by misfortune, and brought down to want and beggary? (Jer. ix. 23, 24.) One stage more in Nebuchadnezzar's history is left. III. **HIS REPENTANCE.** Seven long years of wretchedness accomplished that blessed work. Listen to his own touching account of it: "At the end of the days I lifted up mine eyes unto Heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever and ever." With humble and contrite heart he now confessed that God's judgments, although so terrible, had been good and just. This sincere acknowledgment received its merited reward. The glory and greatness of his kingdom was again restored. How kind and merciful is God! The first and faintest prayer of the returning penitent is heard in Heaven. Does the possession of money fill your heart with delight, and

lessen your desire for better things? God will find means to take it away. Are the powers of mind which He has given used only to advance your selfish purposes, or turned against the cause of truth? The palsy or madness may be near to put an end to your hopes. (J. N. Norton.)

Ver. 33. **He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen.**—*Broken Pride*:—This chapter, which is a rescript to all the provinces of his empire, was written by king Nebuchadnezzar. It is a frank, affecting, and instructive chapter of autobiography. I. **PRIDE WARNED.** Success had crowned Nebuchadnezzar, and now he "was at rest in his house, flourishing (as a tree) in his palace." But "a dream which made him afraid" came to him. Astonished to silence stood Daniel before the king. He hears the dream, and he knows the meaning of it. Wonder, pity, sorrow, as for a friend, locked Daniel's lips in silence. At last he finds voice, and stammers out the wish that the strange impending doom had been for the king's enemies rather than for the king. The cry of the holy one, "Hew down the tree," was to find bitter fulfilment in the king's experience. Strange warning for the ear accustomed to flattery. Daniel is more than a court official. He will be faithful adviser of the man. He would have him escape the coming doom. The cause of the approaching calamity was not physical, but moral. "Break off thy sins by righteousness," etc. The Divine threatenings are conditional. If the sinner repent, punishment is averted. Nebuchadnezzar is warned. He has a year's grace. Let him use it well. II. **PRIDE EXULTANT.** The king was warned in vain. The year of grace left him as it had found him. "His heart was lifted up," and his mind hardened in pride. As he walked on his palace roof, which overlooked Babylon, he cried, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" By his own might he has done it all. "God is not in all his thoughts." What of us? Pride is not confined to king's houses or bosoms. Of what are men not proud? Are we free from this sin? Let us question ourselves. III. **PRIDE BROKEN.** A man, smitten with the melancholy madness known as lycanthropy, he imagined himself an animal, and that animal an ox. This form of insanity is still known to medical science. Insane upon one point, he may have been sane upon every other. With beast imagination, he may still have preserved his consciousness of personal identity. This strange double consciousness! He felt like an ox; he knew he was a man. And so, with beast-heart, he wandered an outcast from his glory. Till seven times (perhaps years) passed over him, he dwelt with beast-heart among the beasts, and then reason returned. He looked up—sign that it had returned. He praised the God he had forgotten. Humbled, he was humble. No proud boasting now. He makes his boast in the Lord. And what have we worth having that we have not received? Let us live in the constant recognition of God as the fountain of all our blessings, and so escape the ingratitude of pride. From this sin, as from every other, only One can save us. In the Almighty, the lowly Saviour, let us find our refuge. He can forgive us for the past. He can aid us to watchfulness for the future. He can—he waits—to aid us to resist this and every sin. (G. T. Coster.) *The Fall of Nebuchadnezzar*:—"After twelve months," saith Daniel, that is, twelve months after God had warned this king by dreams, and by Daniel, to repent his sins, he was strutting in his galleries, and thought what sin should be next, as though he had never heard of dream or prophet. By this computation of sin, wherein the months are observed so exactly; how long Nebuchadnezzar rebelled after he was warned, Daniel shows what reckoning God keeps of our months, and weeks, and days, which He gives us to repent, as He did Nebuchadnezzar, and what an account we shall make of them, as Nebuchadnezzar did. Daniel names there twelve months, as though he would speak of a great matter, and shows how worthy Nebuchadnezzar was to be punished, because he might have reformed his life since he was warned; for there were twelve months between his dreams and his punishment. When dream and Daniel had done what they could, now God calls forth His judgments, and bids them see what they can do, and commands them to chase Nebuchadnezzar, until he have lost his kingdom, until he be driven out of his palace, until he be fled into the wilderness, until he be degenerate like a beast, until his subjects, and servants, and pages make their sport, and gaze and wonder at him, like a fool which goeth unto the stocks, or a trespasser, which is gazed at upon the pillory; so the king was debased, when God heard him but vaunt of his buildings. Therefore, let us take heed and be careful after what sort we speak, and what words slip from us, lest God take us in our lies, or oaths, or slanders, or ribaldry, as he took Nebuchadnezzar when his tongue walked without a bit, for if he had supposed that God had been so near, and that He would have answered him as He did, he would have held his peace, and laid his hand upon his mouth, rather than pay so dear for a vain word, which did him no good when it was spoken. The second note is of the judge, "A voice came down

from Heaven," the controlling voice came down from Heaven. God is most offended with our sin, for Nebuchadnezzar might have spoken more than this, before any other man; and no man could control him, because he was king, and kings delight in greater vanities than buildings, yet no man saith, Why doest thou so? When the voice from earth spake vainly, the voice from Heaven spake judgment. Here is the King of Heaven against the king of earth; the voice of God against the voice of man; a Divine wrath warring with a human pride; the fire is kindled, woe to the stubble. Now he comes to the arraignment, and calls him to the bar: "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee be it spoken." Here a king is arraigned in his own kingdom, and no evidence given against him; but as though he had witnessed against himself, as all sinners do, God condemneth him out of his own mouth, and to open his ears, he calleth him by his own name, "O king Nebuchadnezzar," as the prisoner is called when he holds up his hand at the bar. How doth this speech differ from Nebuchadnezzar's speech. His words were but words, but God's words were, "He spake and it was done." For "in the same hour that which was spoken was done," saith Daniel, and whatsoever the voice threatened unto our sins, or unto the sinner, shall be done at first or at last. This voice came from Heaven, and, therefore, it spake home; not like them which glide by the faults of princes, and whisper behind their backs, as though they would reprove them if they durst, but for fear lest the prince, or councillor, or judge, or magistrate should take it as he means it, and think that he aims at them; which makes them speak in parables, as though they would cast a veil over their reproof, and eat their message before they have spoken it. The Holy Ghost teacheth us here to reprove, so that whosoever sinneth may know that thou speakest to him. Now the decree goeth forth that Nebuchadnezzar shall be king no more, "Thy kingdom is departed from thee." Now followeth the execution of His judgment, for Daniel saith, "The same hour all this was fulfilled." Then was fulfilled, "the pride of man shall bring him low." Even in the hour that Nebuchadnezzar advanced himself more than before, in the same hour he was brought under all his subjects, all his servants and pages; so he which setteth up can pull down, he which gave can take, he which made can destroy. Therefore, let no man vaunt, though he were a king, of his house, or laud, or farm, or children, but know that he should have nothing, if God did not regard him more than others; and think when thou dost read this story, whether thou be not as proud of thy wealth as Nebuchadnezzar was of his palace, whether thou be not as proud of thy children as Nebuchadnezzar was of his kingdom; whether thou be not as proud of thy parentage as Nebuchadnezzar was of his honour; whether thou be not so proud of thy learning as Nebuchadnezzar was of his train. If thou be so proud, then God doth say no more, "O king, to thee be it spoken," but, O subject, to thee be it spoken, these blessings shall be taken from thee. For, hath God taken no man's kingdom from him but Nebuchadnezzar's? Now, if any man long to be resolved how this king was changed to a beast, he must not imagine any strange metamorphosis, as though his shape were altered, or his manhood removed, or that he put on horns and hoofs, as poets feign Actæon; for the voice doth not say that he should become a beast, but that he should dwell with the beasts. Daniel doth not say that his head, or arms, or legs were transformed; but that the hair of his head, and the nails of his fingers, did grow like eagles' feathers, and like birds' claws, as every man's hair and nails will do if he do not pare them. Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar saith not that his shape was restored unto him, but that his understanding was restored unto him; all which declare he was not changed in body, but in mind, not in shape, but in quality. A savage mind came on him, like that which drove Cain from the company of men (Gen. iv. 12), and he became like a satyr, or wild man, which differeth not from a beast but in shape; though he was not turned to a beast, yet this was a strange alteration to be so changed in an hour, that his nobles abhorred him, his subjects despised him, his servants forsook him, none would company with him but the beasts. Consider this, all that advance yourselves against God, and despise His word, as Nebuchadnezzar did. This was to show that God makes no more account of the wicked than of beasts, and, therefore, the Holy Ghost calleth them often by the name of beasts; showing how that sin and pleasure make them like beasts. When they have abused their wits often, and perverted their reason, at last God taketh their understanding from them, and they become like beasts, loathsome to themselves and others. Many such beasts we have still like Nebuchadnezzar, who were fitter to live in the desert among lions, where they might not annoy others, than in towns amongst men, where they infect more than the plague. (*H. Smith.*) *Nebuchadnezzar's Distraction Considered and Improved.*—The great God, in order to describe his own power, calls upon Job to "behold everyone that is proud, and abase him. Look on everyone that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place; then will I confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee" (Job xl. 11); thereby intimating that it is the prerogative

or peculiar glory of God to humble proud oppressors, and that one look of His eye can bring them down. I. THE CALAMITY ITSELF. In order to show how awful and remarkable this was, it will be necessary a little to consider the dignity of this monarch, and the state of his affairs. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon, the capital city of the Chaldean empire. He had been engaged in successful wars against the Tyrians, the Jews, and other neighbouring nations. He had overrun almost all Asia, and carried his arms into Africa. He had brought the Chaldean empire to the highest pitch of power and grandeur, and enriched his capital with the plunder of all the neighbouring nations.

II. THE CAUSE OF THE CALAMITY. And that was his pride. This vice provoked God to make him such a miserable spectacle. This unhappy monarch was strutting about contemplating its grandeur, and thinking himself a god, surveying the glories of his own creation, when this mortifying change came upon him. He lived about a year after this restoration, and one would hope he kept in this good mind, and died under the serious impression of these important truths. And it was happy for him to have lost his senses for a time, if it was the means of saving his soul. Having thus viewed this very affecting and miserable spectacle, let us receive instruction from it; and endeavour to enter into the following useful reflections upon this surprising event. 1. Let us reverence the almighty power of God, so illustriously displayed in it. "Where the word of a king is," saith Solomon, "there is power." Nebuchadnezzar's royal word had been accompanied with power to raise the grandeur of Babylon, and to conquer and impoverish whole nations. But when the royal word of the King of kings "fell from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom is departed from thee; the same hour was the thing fulfilled" (v. 31). And all his wise counsellors, skilful physicians, and mighty forces, could neither prevent nor remove the affliction. How easily can God bring down the highest! See how easily God can destroy the brightest genius, and confound the most subtle politician. This story is a glorious and everlasting proof of his supremacy and irresistible power. In this view let us consider it, and reverence the Almighty God. Nebuchadnezzar takes pains to inculcate these ideas of God upon all to whom this decree is made known. 2. See how abominable pride is in the sight of God. It is the observation of a noble writer that this story is one of the finest, most humbling, and most instructive lessons to human vanity that ever was exhibited to it. It shows how detestable pride is in the sight of God, and informs us (they are Nebuchadnezzar's own words) that "those who walk in pride, God is able to abase." So his royal proclamation concludes; and it is a truth that we should never forget. "Pride was not made for man." It is unreasonable and absurd for a creature weak, dependent, and sinful, to be proud, a creature who derives all from God, owes everything to Him, and lives and moves and hath his being in Him. There are other instances of the loss of understanding besides this of Nebuchadnezzar, which are very mortifying to human vanity; instances where the faculties decayed by age, and where there appeared no immediate hand of Providence in them. Are you proud of your wit and sprightly parts? Think of Swift, who, having been generally admired for them, though in some instances he had abused them to vilify human nature, insult our present happy establishment, and ridicule many serious and exemplary Christians, became at last a mere child, had not the sense of a brute to feed himself, and was shown by his servants, for gain, as a curiosity. Are you proud of great learning and profound skill in the sciences? Think of Swisset, a celebrated German mathematician, of whom it was said by his learned contemporaries that "his capacities were almost above human." Yet in the advance of life he lost his understanding so far that he could scarce count twenty, and used to weep because he could not understand the arguments and demonstrations which he had published. Are you proud of honour, courage, conduct, and high reputation? Think of the great Duke of Marlborough, who, after he had been for so many years the pride of England, the terror of France, and wonder of Europe, became an idiot, and had not understanding sufficient to perform the common actions of life. Are you proud of wealth and power; your buildings, equipages, and attendants; the numbers who are submissive and obedient to you? Think of Nebuchadnezzar. Amidst such affecting scenes, let not our eyes be lofty, nor our hearts haughty. Let us remember that "we hold even reason itself, that ennobling quality, that boasted prerogative and distinguishing perfection of human nature, upon a very precarious tenure; and, as one expresseth it, something with a human shape and voice hath often survived everything human besides." Let us attend to that charge of God by Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches" (Jer. ix. 23). We may learn: 3. How much are they to be pitied who have lost their understanding. After having considered the case of Nebuchadnezzar, let us think with compassion on others, who in this respect resemble him, that they are destitute of reason. This is the case of those who are naturally idiots, and never discovered any

considerable degree of rational thought, or manly actions. It is the case of those who, by violent disorders of body, are become delirious, or so overwhelmed with melancholy, that they think and judge wrong of themselves, and take everything by the worst handle. This is the case of many in the decline of life. Their faculties decay; they outlive even themselves, and become children a second time. 4. How thankful should we be for the continued exercise of our reason. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." It is God's constant visitation that preserveth that spirit, and continueth the exercise of our faculties. Whoever seriously considers the intimate connection between the soul and body, and how easily and frequently the faculties of the mind are affected by the disorders and injuries of the body, will see constant cause to magnify the goodness of God, that there are not more persons deprived of their understanding; or who have it weakened to such a degree as to render them useless and burthensome to others. It is really astonishing that there are not more idiots and mad people, considering how tender and delicate the texture of the brain is, which is the seat of the soul and its sensations; considering how many accidents children are liable to, even under the care of the fondest mothers, much more while in the hands of mercenary nurses, from whom tenderness for other persons' children can never be expected, after they have put off all tenderness for their own. If our understandings remain, and our spirits are not wounded, we have ten thousand times more reason for thankfulness than complaint. 5. How careful should we be to preserve our reason, to improve it, and employ it to the best purposes! Understanding and knowledge is the highest natural perfection. Reason is the distinguishing glory of men above the brutes; and we should carefully avoid everything that tends to destroy or impair it. In this view I must solemnly warn you against gluttony and drunkenness. Every excess hurts the soul. It was Nebuchadnezzar's punishment to have "a beast's heart given to him"; it is a pity that any rational creatures should make beasts of themselves. There is nothing which is a greater enemy to the understanding than idleness. The faculties of many rust away for want of use or employment. They doze away their senses and become stupid and unprofitable. Finally, let us be careful to improve our understandings continually, by reading and reflection, by conversing with the wise and good, and especially by meditation on Divine things, and daily fervent prayer to the Father of lights and wisdom. Let us employ our faculties in a manner becoming rational creatures. Reason was given us that we might know God and ourselves; that we might contemplate His works and consider His doings; that we might know and practise the duties of our connections and relations in life, and especially study the glorious Gospel, which is able to make us "wise unto salvation." (*Job Orton.*) *Nebuchadnezzar's Mania*:—The mental alienation of Nebuchadnezzar was undoubtedly the form of madness known as "lycanthropy," in which the habits of animals are in some form assumed by the insane person. (Lycanthropy means literally the change of a man into a wolf.) Instances of those afflicted in this way eating grass, leaves, twigs, etc., like the great king, are familiar to medical men. Nor is it uncommon for the mind to lose its balance in some direction, in one raised so far above all other men as a mighty despot, and so irresponsible. Many of the Cæsars undoubtedly suffered this terrible penalty of solitary greatness, nor are theirs the only instances of the kind in history. That any allusion to such a humiliating calamity should be found recorded in the Babylonian annals is not, however, to be expected. It would be carefully guarded from the knowledge of chroniclers as a state secret. But that some terrible illness seized Nebuchadnezzar is strangely proved by the recent discovery of a bronze doorstep, presented by him to the great temple of El Saggil, at Borsippa, one of the suburbs or divisions of Babylon. It speaks of his having been afflicted, and of his restoration to health, and may well have been a votive offering to the gods on his recovery from the attack mentioned by Daniel. Nor is this at all inconsistent with his recorded homage to Jehovah. Though he honoured the whole of the gods, his inscriptions show that, in a restricted sense, he always worshipped one god especially. While he built temples to various divinities, and acknowledged not only the "great gods," but at least thirteen besides, he also speaks constantly of the "Chief of the gods," the "King of the gods," the "God of gods." He might, therefore, have, for a time, transferred to Jehovah, perhaps as another name for Merodach, the homage hitherto rendered to the Babylonian idol. (*Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*) *A King Eating Grass*:—1. What an incongruous thing it is for a king to be eating grass. It is good for cattle, but not fit for man. Yet the scene is as common as daylight. When I see a man of regal nature made to rule in realms of thought, capable of all moral elevation, besotting his faculties, attempting out of low sensualities to satisfy his immortal energies, coming down off his throne of power into brutalities, sacrificing his higher nature to his lower nature, coming down, and coming down, until his influence for good is gone, I cry out, "There is a king eating grass like an ox." 2. Conviction

is not conversion. Who is this man who makes the boast about Babylon? The very man who, under the revelation of dreams that Daniel made from Heaven, deeply humbled himself while he confessed that God is a God of gods and a Lord of lords; yet behold that humbling and arousing did not result in a radical change. Conviction is merely a sight of sin; conversion is a view of pardon. Conviction is the pain, conversion is the messenger that cures it. Thousands have experienced the former who never experienced the latter. 3. Pride is the precursor of overthrow. He who is down cannot fall. 4. What a terrible thing is the loss of reason! In this world of sad sights, the saddest is the idiot's stare. Strong drink is the cause of more insanity than anything else. 5. How quickly turns the wheel of fortune, from how high up to how far down went Nebuchadnezzar. Of all fickle people in the world, Fortune is the most fickle. 6. Learn the comforting truth, that afflictions are arrested as soon as they have accomplished their mission; and 7. Connected with the most distressing judgments of God there are displays of Divine mercy. God might justly have left Nebuchadnezzar in the field, but infinite compassion brought him back to the palace. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Mental Faculties Suspended*:—There is no ground for concluding that the king was turned into an ox—that is absurd—or that he was made literally a beast of the earth; but that his reason was taken from him. God laid his finger on the brain, and all its intellectual and moral action was instantly suspended. When we think what a delicate structure the brain is, and what an immensity of things depend upon it, we wonder that it does not give way oftener than it does. The king's last thoughts were connected with his first. I have read somewhere that when persons had lost, or had suspended for a season, the power of reasoning, or had become what is commonly called maniacs, as soon as they are restored by the removal of the pressure that prevents the action of the mind—for it is not the mind but its physical channels that are disordered by mania—the last thought that they had before they were struck with mania is the very first thought that occurs the instant they recover; and that, though a period of years has elapsed, they are utterly unconscious of their flight or number, and refer to old events as recent. I have read of a sailor, a portion of whose brain was carried away by a shot; the part of the brain injured I cannot specify. This man was for years a maniac. After some six years he recovered, and the first words he uttered were, "Is the ship ashore?" When he was struck the ship was nearly on shore; the orders at the time referred to this, and of this he was speaking. So his last words were the first he uttered on recovering, and he was entirely unconscious that years had elapsed. In Nebuchadnezzar's case there was a suspension of the faculties of the mind. (*John Cumming, D.D.*) *History of Nebuchadnezzar*:—I. THE LEADING EVENTS IN HIS HISTORY. Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar, and succeeded that monarch in the government of Chaldea in the year of the world 3399. He attacked and overcame Jehoiakim, robbed him of his treasures, and afterwards subdued and destroyed him (II. Kings xxiv. 1). He also took Zedekiah captive, put out his eyes, and bound him in chains, after having put his sons to death in his presence. He plundered Jerusalem of its riches. The vessels of the temple he placed in the temples of his idols at Babylon. II. THE MORE STRIKING FEATURES OF HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER. 1. He was a public notorious idolater. Yea, he was a maker and patroniser of idols (Dan. iii. 1). 2. He was noted for his relentless cruelty. Case of Zedekiah (II. Kings xxv. 7). Also casting into the fiery furnace the Hebrew children (Dan. iii. 22). 3. He was distinguished for his insatiable ambition. 4. He was also proud, haughty, and impious. Hence his language respecting his gods (Dan. iii. 14; iv. 30). III. AS THE SUBJECT BOTH OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT AND MERCY. God brought His judgments upon him. His affliction: 1. Was insanity. 2. Was Divine. God entered into the lists with him. 3. It was severe. Loss of property, of friends, of health, reputation, &c., often distressing. 4. It was singularly appropriate to his crimes. He made himself as God; God made him as a brute. He boasted of his glory; God made him utterly despicable. 5. Limited and followed by Divine mercy. Had it not, he would have been utterly consumed. God's mercy did not utterly forsake him. 6. Produced reformation. Hence he blessed God; and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever. Learn: 1. The universal government of God. 2. The wickedness of pride. 3. The greatness of Divine mercy. 4. The importance of the Divine favour. (*J. Burns.*)

Vers. 34, 37. I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto Heaven.—*An Unlikely Convert*:—I. HIS CONVERSION OUT OF A STATE OF HEATHENISM. There was a mass of idolatrous opinion and vicious custom, in the midst of which Nebuchadnezzar was brought up, and by which he was configured. He was ill-placed so far as an opportunity of conversion, or a radical change of heart and life, are concerned. II. HIS CONVERSION OUT OF A STATE OF WORLDLY PRIDE. He was uniformly prosperous. He had no change, no checks, no defeats; therefore, he was filled with the thought of himself, so as to

shut out the thought of a higher. III. THE UNUSUAL MEANS EMPLOYED IN SECURING HIS CONVERSION. He had to be humbled. His reason was taken from him, and he became like a beast in his habits. It was the greatest humiliation that could have been sent on earth's monarch. IV. THE EVIDENCES NEBUCHADNEZZAR GAVE OF HIS BEING CONVERTED. 1. There is no reason why grace should not have worked in Nebuchadnezzar's heart. Full and accurate knowledge is not an essential for salvation. Nebuchadnezzar was not entirely shut in by heathenism; for in the course of his life he was brought into contact with the servants of God, and he would learn from them the part assigned to him in prophecy. 2. We are not to expect too much in the way of evidence. It was not to be expected of one who was in Nebuchadnezzar's position that he would be the saint John or Paul was. His antecedents and surroundings would operate against him, so that there would be only an imperfect development of grace, and he would do many things a Christian knows to be wrong. 3. We have a very imperfect record of what he was after conversion; but what we have is encouraging. Nebuchadnezzar disappears from our view here under a favourable light. We remark then (1) In the way of evidence of his conversion, his clear recognition of the Divine sovereignty. That is implied in the description of God as the King of Heaven, One whose sovereignty was not connected with a single planet and baulked here and there by others, but who had the whole dome of Heaven, and, therefore, the whole range of earth, under His potent sway. Indeed, there is no more frequently quoted or more satisfactory expression of the Divine sovereignty than that which we have from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 34, 35). He felt that he had been in the grasp of that sovereignty; he had been sovereignly humbled, and he had been sovereignly delivered. Now it is true that a recognition of the Divine sovereignty is not enough to save us, but there must be something like this in every saved person. As it is true of the sinner that he says, "I am my own; who is Lord over me?" so it is a mark of a converted man that he recognises that God has a propriety in him, and a right to dispose of him for His own glory. We remark (2) That he had a clear recognition of the righteousness of God's dealings with him. All whose works are truth, and His ways judgment. He was not the erring, fickle tyrant such as he had been taught to regard the objects of his worship; but He was One who, truthfully observing all that takes place, and above all possibility of deception, applies a just and equal test to every man's conduct, and appoints for him what is right. We do not suppose that he saw the righteousness of God in many of its bearings, that he could spell out a tenth part of what we can do; but he did not rest in the general idea of righteousness, but felt it in its application to himself, that God had not gone beyond right in degrading him as He had done to the condition of a beast. To have learned such a lesson as that from his life, was that not the mark of a saved person? We remark (3) That there was the clear recognition of what had been the blot and sin of his precious life, what he calls walking in pride, and a humbling of himself for it. "As the rhetorician, being asked what was the first thing in the rules of eloquence, answered, pronunciation; what was the second, pronunciation; what was the third, still he answered, pronunciation—so if you should ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I would answer firstly, and secondly, and thirdly, and for ever, humility." There is nothing more insisted on in Scripture, and there is nothing in which hypocrites so grossly fail in; and, therefore, when we see it present we may entertain a good hope regarding a man. Nebuchadnezzar could not have such an emptying of his own goodness, such a realisation of personal violence as we may have, to whom have been disclosed the holiness and the love of God in the cross of Christ. But if he abased himself according to his light, accepting of the mercy of God, he would be accepted of God according to the words, "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation," &c. There is a beautiful exhibition of humility in what the whole of this fourth chapter is—a royal proclamation. It begins, "Nebuchadnezzar the king unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth." Its design was to magnify God in his humiliation and in his restoration to his reason and to his kingdom; and it is an unvarnished record, concealing nothing, extenuating nothing. If Nebuchadnezzar gained admittance, why may not we? There is no restraining of the Spirit, no loss of virtue in the blood of Christ, no withdrawing of the Divine promise. Let us strive then to enter in while the door of mercy is standing open. (R. Finlayson, B.A.) *Restitution of Nebuchadnezzar*:—First, Nebuchadnezzar was humbled as God humbleth His enemies; now he is humbled as God humbleth His children; that although he had more honour than he had before, yet he is not proud of it as he was before, but crieth with the prophet David (Ps. cxv. 1), "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name, give the glory." In these verses two things show themselves at the first view, that is, Nebuchadnezzar's restitution, and his thankfulness in his restitution. First, he sheweth the time when he was restored, in these words, "At the end of these days," then he

showeth the manner how he was restored, in these words, "I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes to heaven, and mine understanding was restored to me." In his thankfulness, first, he extolled God's power in setting him up, and pulling him down, and raising him again; then he commendeth God's justice and truth, which deserves to be praised for His judgments as much as for His mercy, as though he rejoiced that God hath made him like a beast, that he might die like a man. "At the end of these days." As Daniel noted the time of his pride when he walked in his palace, to show how pride grows out of buildings, and wealth, and apparel, and such roots, so he noteth the time of his fall, "while the words were in his mouth," to show that he was punished for his pride and ignorance, that he might know where to begin his conversion, and abate his pride. And when he had taken away the cause, then God would take away the punishment, so likewise he noteth the time of his restitution, "at the end of these days," that is, after seven years were expired, to show how long the sickness of pride is in curing, and to show how everything was fulfilled which was prophesied, even to the point of time. Yet another note is set upon this beast; lest we should think that God only regardeth the season, and thinks seven years' punishment enough for such a sin, he saith not barely, that his understanding and honour was restored unto him when seven years were ended, but that they were restored unto him when he began to lift up his eyes to Heaven, to show that this blessing came from above, and that He which had humbled him had restored him again; as if he should say to all that are cast down with sickness, or poverty, or infamy, or any trouble whatsoever in body or mind, He which hath humbled you will raise you, as He hath done me; but you must look up unto Heaven, and lift up your hearts to Him, and then your understanding, and comfort, and wealth, and pleasure, and health, and liberty, and good name, and all, shall return unto you again, like Job's sheep, and camels, and oxen, in greater number than he had before. Like a man which is wakened out of a long trance, now he began to stir and lift up his eyes. When the heart is once lift up, it will lift up the eyes, and the hand, and voice, and all to Heaven. He which never looked up to Heaven so long as his comfort was upon the earth, now his mind is changed, his looks, and gestures, and speeches, and all are changed with it, as though God would show a visible difference between the spiritual and carnal, even in their looks and gestures, as there is between a child and an old man. The spiritual minds are heavenly, and look up, because their joy is above. Now he talks no more of his palace, nor his power, nor his majesty, though it be greater than it was; but he looked above his own palace to another palace, from whence that terrible voice came down unto him, "Thy kingdom is departed from thee"; which expreseth his contrite heart and wounded spirit, how many passions battled within, as if he should chide himself and say, Unthankful man, my power ever descended from above, and I ever looked upon the earth and mine honour came down from Heaven, and I never lift up mine eyes before; but now, saith he, go up, my voice, and my hands, and my eyes. How long will ye pore upon the earth like a beast? So he lifted up his eyes unto Heaven. After he had lifted up his eyes, he beginneth to pray, and praise, and give thanks to God, which sheweth that he did not only lift up his eyes, but his heart too (Ps. xxv. 1). Now God thinks the time long enough; and as He reformed the ground after the flood with fruit, and herbs, and flowers again, so He reformed Nebuchadnezzar with understanding, and beauty, and honour again. As when he repented himself and said, I will drown the earth no more (Gen. viii. 21), so I will chase Nebuchadnezzar no more. Now he knows a King above him, he shall be a king again; now he seeks my honour, I will give him honour; now he magnifieth him that debased him, I will return to exalt him. So the voice which thundered from Heaven, "Thy kingdom is departed from thee," sounds again, "Thy kingdom is restored to thee." Thus the displeasure of God is but an interim, until we know something that we should know, and then Nebuchadnezzar shall be king again, then the sick man shall be whole again, then the bondman shall be free again, then the poor man shall be rich again. His mercies are called everlasting, because they endure for ever (Ps. cxxxvi. 1, 2); but His anger is compared to the clouds, because it lasteth but a season. Now the first cure of the king's restitution was of his mind: "Mine understanding," saith Nebuchadnezzar, "was restored unto me." To show what an inestimable gift our understanding and reason is, whereby we differ from beasts, for which we cannot be thankful enough, therefore he records it twice, as though his heart did flow with gladness, and his tongue could not choose but speak often of it, as a man thinketh and speaketh of that which he loveth: "Mine understanding was restored unto me," &c. That which was first taken away was first restored again, which so soon as it was gone, he was counted a man no more, but a beast. After he had said "Mine understanding was restored to me," he annexeth, "mine honour was restored to me"; so he grew to a king again. As he was wont to put on one robe after another when he was a king, so when God would make him a king again, first he puts upon him the robe

of understanding, as it were the foundation of a king, like the princely spirit which came upon Saul (I. Sam. x. 9); and when he had a prince's heart, then God gave him a prince's power, and proclaimed, like a voice from Heaven, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babel; so gloriously he rose again like the sun, with a triumph of his restitution, and welcome of his subjects, like the shout which went before Solomon (I. Kings i. 34). Here a wise man may study and wonder, like Elisha, when his master was rapt to Heaven. For as though a snuff had been taken from the ground, and set in the candlestick again, and shined brighter than it did before; so Nebuchadnezzar was raised from the dust and set in the throne; even now no man cared for him, and now no man dare displease him. That which Solomon saith in Prov. xvi. 7, "When the ways of a man please the Lord, he will make all his enemies at peace with him"; so when Nebuchadnezzar pleased the Lord, God gave him grace with men, and his glory was augmented: "My glory was increased," &c. That is, he received not only his kingdom, and power, and honour again, but he received usury of them. When he sought God's honour, and cared not for his own, honour was increased, according to that (I. Sam. ii. 30), "I will honour them that honour me." Now he hath received grace, let us examine his thankfulness. Now let us see the parts of this king's confession, that we may see how his thankfulness did answer to his sin. Before, he had robbed God of his honour; now, as though he came to make restitution, he brings praise, and thanks, and glory in his mouth. First, he advanceth God's power, and saith that His "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom"; in which words he confesseth that God was above him, because that his kingdom was not an everlasting kingdom, but a momentary kingdom, like a spark, which riseth from the fire, and falleth into the fire again. Therefore, he sheweth what a fool he was to vaunt of his kingdom, as though it were like God's kingdom, which lasteth for ever. Secondly, he magnifieth the power of God, and saith that God "doth what he listeth both in heaven and earth," and nothing can hinder him, or "say unto him, What dost thou?" Under which words he confesseth again that God was above him, because he could not reign as he listed: for when he thought to live at his pleasure, he was thrust out at doors, and God said not to him, What doest thou? but "Thy kingdom shall depart from thee." Therefore, he sheweth what a fool he was to vaunt of his power, as though it had been like God's power, which cannot be checked. Thirdly, he commendeth the justice of God, and saith that His works were all truth, and His ways were all judgment. Under which words he confesseth again that God was above him; for his ways were all errors, and his works were all sins, as the end proved. Therefore, he shows what a fool he was to vaunt of his works, as though they had been like God's works, which cannot be blamed: therefore, he concludes, "I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and magnify the King of heaven." Such a schoolmaster is affliction, to teach that which prophets and angels cannot teach. Thus you have seen pride and humility, one pulling Nebuchadnezzar out of his throne, the other lifting him into his throne; whereby they which stand may take heed lest they fall, and they which are fallen may learn to rise again. (H. Smith.)

Ver. 35. He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven.—*The Unconquerable King*.—I. Consider THE DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION here given to us. 1. We have here plainly stated the doctrine of the eternal self-existence of God. "I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever." "We," as a venerable Puritan observes, "have more of nothing than of being," but it is God's prerogative to be. He alone can say, "I am God, and beside me there is none else." He declares "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever." He is the one only undervived, self-existent, self-sustained Being. Let us know of a surety that the Lord God whom we worship is the only Being who necessarily and from His own nature exists. No other being could have been but for His sovereign will, nor could it continue were that will suspended. He is the only light of life, all others are reflections of His beams. There must be God, but there was no such necessity that there should be any other intelligences. God is independent—the only being who is so. We must find food with which to repair the daily wastes of the body; we are dependent upon light and heat, and innumerable external agencies, and above all and primarily dependent upon the outgoings of the Divine power towards us. But the I am is self-sufficient and all-sufficient. He was as glorious before He made the world as He is now; He was as great, as blessed, as Divine in all His attributes before sun and moon and stars leaped into existence as He is now; and if He should blot all out as a man erases the writing of his pen, or as a potter breaks the vessel he has made, He would be none the less the supreme and ever-blessed God. Nothing of God's being is derived from another, but all that exists is derived from Him. God ever liveth in this respect, that He undergoes no sort of change; all His creatures must from their constitution undergo more or less of mutation. That He lives for ever is the result, not only of His essential and necessary self-existence, of His in-

dependence, and of His unchangeableness, but of the fact that there is no conceivable force that can ever wound, injure, or destroy Him. 2. In our text we next find Nebuchadnezzar asserting the everlasting dominion of God. He saith, "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." The God whom we serve not only exists, but reigns. "The most high God, possessor of heaven and earth hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." As David said so also say we, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." The Lord is naturally the ruler of all, but who shall pretend to rule over Him? He is not to be judged of man's finite reason, for He doeth great things which we cannot comprehend. Events appear to fly at random like the dust in the whirlwind, but it is not so. The rule of the Omnipotent extends over all things at all times. Nothing is left to its own chance hap, but in wisdom all things are governed. Glory be unto the omnipresent and invisible Lord of all. This Divine kingdom appeared very plainly to the once proud monarch of Babylon to be an everlasting one. The reign of the Everliving extends as other kingdoms cannot, "from generation to generation." The mightiest king inherits power and soon yields his sceptre to his successor; the Lord hath no beginning of days nor end of years; predecessor or successor are words inapplicable to Him. Other monarchies stand while their power is unsubdued, but in an evil hour a greater power may crush them down. There is no greater power than God; yea, there is no other power but that which proceeds from God, for "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God"; hence His monarchy cannot be subdued, and must be everlasting. All the elements of His kingdom are most conservative, because radically right. Oh, happy subjects, who have such a throne to look to! Oh, blessed children, who have such a King to be your Father! 3. Nebuchadnezzar, humbled before God, uses, in the third place, extraordinary language with regard to the nothingness of mankind. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing." This is Nebuchadnezzar, but his words are confirmed by Isaiah, "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket," the unnoticed drop which remains in the bucket after it has been emptied into the trough, or the drip which falls from it as it is uplifted from the well, a thing too inconsiderable to be worthy of notice. "And are counted as the small dust of the balance"; as the dust which falls upon scales, but is not sufficient to affect the balance in any degree whatever. "Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Whole archipelagos He uplifts as unconsidered trifles. This triple kingdom of ours He reckons not only to be little, but "a very little thing." Of what account at this day are all the antediluvian millions? What are the hosts of Nimrod, of Shishak, of Sennacherib, of Cyrus? What recks the world of the myriads who followed the march of Nebuchadnezzar, who obeyed the beck of Cyrus, who passed away before the eyes of Xerxes? The nations are nothing in comparison with God. As you may place as many ciphers as you like together, and they all make nothing, so you may add up as many men, with all their supposed force and wisdom, as you please, and they are all nothing in comparison with God. He is the unit. He stands for all in all, and comprehendeth all; and all the rest are but so many valueless ciphers till His unity makes them of account. We shall, when we get to Heaven, make it part of our adoration to confess that we are less than nothing and vanity, but that God is all in all; therefore shall we cast our crowns at His feet, and give Him all the praise for ever and ever. Herein is His greatness, that it comprehends all littlenesses without a strain; the glory of His wisdom is as astonishing as the majesty of His power, and the splendours of His love and of His grace are as amazing as the terror of His sovereignty. He may do what He wills, for none can stay him; but He never wills to do in any case aught that is unjust, unholy, unmerciful, or in anyway inconsistent with the perfection of His matchless character. We turn now to the next sentence, which reveals the Divine power at work sovereignly. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." This is easy to understand in reference to the celestial host, for we know that God's will is done in Heaven; we devoutly pray that it may yet be done on earth after the same fashion. The angels find it their heaven to be obedient to the God of Heaven. If God does not rule everywhere, then something rules where He does not, and so He is not omnipresently supreme. If God does not have His will, someone else does, and so far that someone is a rival to God. I dare not believe even sin itself to be exempted from the control of Providence, or from the overruling dominion of the Judge of all the earth. Let us now consider the fifth part of the text—"None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" I gather from this that God's fiat is irresistible and unimpeachable. We are told by some annotators that the original has in it an allusion to a blow given to a

child's hand to make him cease from some forbidden action. None can treat the Lord in that manner. None can hinder Him, or cause Him to pause. He has might to do what He wills. So also says Isaiah: "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" Man is powerless, then, to resist the fiat of God. Usually he does not know God's design, although he blunderingly thinks he does; often in opposing that apparent design he fulfils the secret design of God against his will. II. Now consider its PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. 1. I think the first lesson is, how wise to be at one with Him! 2. How encouraging this is to those who are at one with God! If He be on our side, who shall be against us? "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." 3. How joyful this thought ought to be to all holy workers! 4. How this should help you that suffer! If God does it all, and nothing happens apart from God, even the wickedness and cruelty of man being still over-ruled by Him, you readily may submit. II. What is THE RIGHT SPIRIT in which to contemplate all this? 1. The first is humble adoration. We do not worship enough. Worship Him with lowliest reverence, for you are nothing, and He is all in all. 2. Next let the spirit of your hearts be that of unquestioning acquiescence. He wills it! I will do it or I will bear it. God help you to live in perfect resignation. 3. Next to that, exercise the spirit of reverent love. 4. Lastly, let our spirit be that of profound delight. I believe there is no doctrine to the advanced Christian which contains such a deep sea of delight as this. The Lord reigns! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Majesty and Government of God*:—I. THE MAJESTY OF THE ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD. He is here styled "Most High," is said to "live for ever," and "all the inhabitants of the earth" are declared to be "reputed as nothing" before Him. He is the Most High; that is, He is exalted, not only in authority and power, of which I shall speak afterwards, but in the perfections of his nature, above every other being in the universe. I need not say, no man, but no angel, no archangel, no being whatever, can vie with Him in any perfection (*Isai. xl. 25*). In Him they are absolute. In them they are a mere stream, derived, and that from Him. In Him they exist as in their fountain, undervived. In them they are dependent, and that on Him; in Him independent. In them they are mutable; in Him immutable. In them they are finite; in Him infinite. In them they are temporal; in Him eternal. For, to pass from the consideration of these perfections to His existence; He "liveth for ever." This implies—His strict and proper Eternity. His existence is from everlasting, as well as to everlasting. He is without beginning, as well as without end. How mysterious! Therefore, "all the inhabitants of the earth," nay, and the highest creatures, "are reputed as nothing." 1. They are as nothing compared to Him. Dead and unorganised matter is as nothing compared with the vegetable creation, the herbs, plants, flowers, fruits. One vegetable is as nothing compared to another; suppose the moss on a building to a cedar in Lebanon. All vegetables are as nothing compared with animals which are endued with sensation, voluntary motion, perception, instinct, or discretion. One animal, suppose a worm, or mite, is as nothing compared to another, suppose to an eagle, a lion, an elephant, a whale. One man far exceeds another; Sir Isaac Newton far exceeded an uneducated peasant, or the Apostle Paul a wicked profligate. Men in their present state are as nothing compared to angels, or to what they themselves shall be in a future state. But all are as nothing to God. For, what is a shadow to the substance? What is a candle to the sun; a drop to the ocean; a grain of sand to the globe of earth? What is a finite being, however exalted, to an Infinite? especially a being so limited as man, a worm, a blast, a shade, a clod of clay, a speck of dust? What is a created and dependent being to one uncreated and independent? What is the work to the workman? the creature to the Creator? the clay to the potter? 2. They are as nothing without Him. They are as nothing to help. Favoured, befriended, and surrounded by the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God, we need not fear the ignorance or weakness of man. 3. They are nothing in themselves. They are nothing in duration. "As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth" (*Ps. xxxix. 5; xc. 4; ciii. 15*). II. HIS GOVERNMENT. 1. It is everlasting. As He liveth for ever, so His dominion is, if not from eternity (for a king supposes subjects) yet to eternity. As He is the Most High above every other being in the excellencies of His nature, so His authority and empire are unlimited over every other. 2. His SOVEREIGNTY is absolute and unconfin'd, and His power irresistible. His will is His law. None can resist His purpose. 3. His government is wise, just, and good, yea, infinitely so. III. THE USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF THIS DOCTRINE. We should make the same use of it which Nebuchadnezzar did. We should "bless the Most High, and praise, and honour him that liveth for ever," &c. To be more particular—we should learn to admire and adore His infinite condescension and love in so peculiarly noticing and regarding us (*Ps. viii. 4; Job vii. 17, 18*). We should observe the ground afforded us for trusting in

Him at all times, and in all situations and circumstances. (*J. Benson.*) *Of God, as the Governor and Judge of the Moral World, Angels, and Men:*—I. God is the sovereign lord and governor of angels, who are described by the Apostle to the Hebrews as ministering spirits. They are spirits, that is, rational and intelligent agents, perfectly free from the gross incumbrance of matter; though upon occasion capable of assuming bodies, and appearing in human shape, as they frequently did under the Old Testament. The angels are endued with greater and more excellent perfections than man, as they not only discern between good and evil, but know all things that are in the earth (II. Sam. xiv. 17, 20). They excel in strength, and on account of their great activity and swiftness of motion are represented with wings flying through the midst of Heaven (Jer. viii. 13). The angels are divided into the good and the evil. II. We proceed to consider the government of God over MANKIND, or the inhabitants of the earth. Man is a free agent, endued with a power of determining his own actions; not a machine, or piece of clock-work moved by weights and pulleys, but so far free as to be accountable for all his actions, and consequently the subject of moral government. The government of God over men may be divided into providential and rectoral. 1. The providential government of God is His directing and influencing the actions of men and the occurrences of the world, so as to make them subservient to the purposes of his own pleasure. It is absurd to suppose a creature to act independently of his Creator. We are to act upon the stage of life, are lively demonstrations of the wisdom of the Creator; but when God has furnished us with these qualifications it is not to be supposed that He turns us loose to act at random, but like a skilful mariner at the helm of the ship, influences and directs our conduct to serve the purposes of His government. The fortuitous actions of men are managed and overruled by an infinitely wise God; the archer draws his bow at a venture, but the arrow is directed by a higher hand between the joints of the harness. The Divine influence extends over the whole universe, from the highest angel to the smallest and most inconsiderable insect. No second cause, though never so powerful, can act independently on the first. Though God is not visible to our bodily senses, He is present in all places, and interests Himself in all human affairs. 2. We are to enquire into God's rectoral government, and to consider Him as the sovereign lawgiver and judge of His rational creatures; and: 1. What laws has God established and settled for the government of mankind? (1) God has appointed the moral law, or the light of nature, as a rule of duty to his reasonable creatures (Rom. ii. 14, 15). Every man's conscience is a law to himself, and will accuse or excuse him according as he acts agreeably or disagreeably to its dictates; and though it must be confessed that the light of nature is dim and imperfect, yet it remains a rule still. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, and is divided by our Saviour into these two branches: the love of God and of our neighbour (Matt. xxii. 37, 38). These two capital precepts are obligatory upon all mankind, because they are the result of that Light which enlightens every man that comes into the world. Everyone's conscience must condemn him if he hates God, or does to another that which he would be unwilling to have done to himself in the like circumstances, whether he has his Bible to consult or not. They are also unchangeable, because founded not only in the will of God but in the nature of things; no change of circumstances or force of human laws can dispense with our observation of them. (2) There are laws of a mixed nature, which, though not evident by the light of reason, yet when revealed appear most consonant and agreeable to it. They are an improvement of the moral law, and render it more beautiful and perfect; such are those precepts of our blessed Saviour (Matt. xv. 44). Natural reason, in its highest improvements, did not dictate these things to the wise and learned philosophers of ancient times; but being taught, and commanded by our blessed Saviour, they appear highly deserving our regard, and are binding upon all Christians, not only as part of our Master's will, but from their own intrinsic fitness and excellence. (3) There are also positive and ritual laws, which depend entirely upon the will of God, and are obligatory only because He enjoined them; such were the rites and ceremonies of the Old Testament as circumcision, the passover, sacrifices, purifications, the distinction of meats, &c., which had their uses, not from any inherent virtue, but from the appointment of God. 2. We are to consider in what manner God has provided for the due observation of His laws. (1) God has provided for the honour of His laws by extraordinary rewards and punishments. (2) God has further promised all necessary assistance to those who sincerely endeavour the discharge of their duty; for since the fall of our first parents no man is, of himself able perfectly to fulfil the law of God. (3) Besides the necessary assistance to duty, God has promised to subdue our indwelling corruptions, and to check the malice and rage of Satan. The seeds of wickedness in the hearts of men would produce most direful effects in the world if they were not under a Divine restraint. If our blessed Saviour spoiled principalities and powers when He hung upon the Cross, much more now

He is upon the throne will He reign, till He has put all His enemies under His feet. (4) God is pleased further to excite in His people's hearts such good motions and dispositions as make the ways of religion appear both reasonable and pleasant. For which purpose He not only enlightens their minds and awakens their consciences by His Holy Spirit, but makes them willing in the day of His power, which is the primary cause of their conversion to God. 3. We are to consider the account to be given of our obedience to the Divine laws. Practical remarks on this discourse: 1. This view of the Divine government may lead us to a contemplation of the infinite perfections of that Being who does whatsoever He pleases in both worlds. If the most consummate human wisdom and policy is requisite to govern a small kingdom among men, how much surpassing ours must that wisdom be that conducts the affairs of the whole universe, and whose providential influence extends equally to the meanest insect and the noblest seraph! How great must be His power who reigns sovereign over all the worlds, and whose government is without limit or control. 2. We may learn from hence the nature of the Divine government over the rational world; which, though absolute, is nevertheless directed by the other perfections of His nature, and suited to the different capacities of His creatures. It is not fit that sovereign and irresistible power should be lodged in the hands of earthly governors. All God's determinations and acts of government are under the direction of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness; He cannot do an unwise, an unreasonable, or an unkind thing, but is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. He governs His creatures by laws suited to their moral natures. 3. The consideration of the Divine direction and influence over all human affairs may administer some relief to good men under the afflictions and troubles of the present life; "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." Chance and fortune is the language of atheists; but if there is a God, there must certainly be a Providence, which has the direction of everything that comes to pass. 4. We may observe from hence the excellency and perfection of those laws by which God governs His reasonable creatures (Ps. xix. 7). Every part of our conduct is under a law; our very thoughts, as well as our words and actions; the law of God forbids concupiscence, or committing adultery in the heart; it forbids evil-speaking, and assures us that every work will be brought into judgment. 5. Since we are to pass under so strict and impartial a trial, what obligations are we under to the Lord Jesus for the covenant of grace, by which penitent sinners are assured of pardon and acceptance through the merits of His death. How hopeless would our condition be if our happiness depended on our perfect obedience. 6. Though the law of works is no longer a covenant of life, it will always remain a rule of duty. "Think not that I have come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil it." And again, Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law (Rom. iii. 31). (*Daniel Neal.*) *Principles of Moral Government*.—Principles are elementary and constant truths. They are the ground-work, the beginnings, in accordance with which all things exist and have their course. In a series of facts, they are its rules, its original causes, its ultimate ends. In a course of arguments, they are its boundaries, and determine its methods. In a system of doctrines, they are its axioms, its postulates that cannot be denied. Of some principles we have an intuitive knowledge. They are written in our hearts, the law of our instinctive nature. We do not learn them. They do not come into our minds through the avenues of sense. But we know them, so as to act upon them, from the first. Of other principles we gain knowledge through an induction of facts more or less extensive. We compare various facts with each other, and designate the points in which they all agree, or the causes which have operated alike to produce them, or the issues to which they invariably tend. The greatest part of human study is to discover the principles of the innumerable events and movements that make up so much of the present and the past. But there are other principles than those with which we become acquainted either intuitively or inductively. They are revealed to our faith. We accept them, we act upon them, we know them because we believe in God and in the gospel of His Son. They are not, indeed, inconsistent in any particular with truths of which we become cognizant in other ways; but they are above such truths. At the present period, and especially in communities where the gospel has been preached with power, and many churches of the faithful are gathered, the principles of revelation have been stated so often and so explicitly as to have commanded in general the nominal assent of unconverted men. Many of these men have in consequence applied to them their methods of reasoning and their rules of faith. The result has been that the teachings of the Holy Ghost have been subjected to the tests of mere carnal philosophy, and the life has been burnt out of them in that ordeal. The inductive understanding and the intuitive reason—to adopt a modern distinction—have usurped the place of faith. In the text, God is declared to be the ruler and governor of the universe. His government is a moral government.

because He, a Spirit, is infinitely right; because His law is holy, just, and good; because all beings to whom it applies directly are free, moral agents; and because the whole inferior creation, animate and inanimate, actually and prospectively, stands related to His moral system. I. I remark in the first place, THAT IT IS A PRINCIPLE OF MORAL GOVERNMENT THAT THERE IS NO APPEAL FROM THE AUTHORITY OF THE SOVEREIGN. That is supreme and final. There was no God before God, there is none beside Him, and there will be none after Him. His sole supremacy is declared over and over again in the Scriptures. It is asserted in the first commandment of the law given on Sinai. In the whole course of the Jewish Theocracy it was the theme of prophet, psalmist, and all holy men. Even the kings of the Gentiles were forced to assent to it. Said Nebuchadnezzar upon his recovery, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" This authority of God is supreme in respect of His commands. That He has commanded is warrant enough in all cases for obedience. No being on whom His commands are laid has any right, on any pretence, to question their justice, or to hesitate in his own obedience. If He commands all men everywhere to repent, then no sinner has any excuse for an instant's impenitence. Whatever may be the reasons that influence God to give the command, the command itself is reason enough for our obedience. No being in the universe could justify himself in his neglect to obey a single precept of the Almighty. Again, God's authority is supreme in respect of His own purposes. Whatever they are, He had a right to conceive, and He has a right to execute them. He has a right to make His Divine purpose and energy paramount to the will and activity of any free agents angelic or human, working in them accordingly to will and to do of His good pleasure. The creation cannot complain that it was created; the church cannot complain of its salvation; the wicked world cannot complain of its destruction. Once more, God's authority is supreme in respect of our faith. As whatever of preceptive truth He has revealed is entitled to our unquestioning obedience, so whatever of doctrinal truth He has revealed is entitled to be held by us as an axiom in all our reasonings. But it should be remembered that in none of these particulars is God's authority arbitrary. That is not implied by its supremacy. God never commands, never purposes, never reveals anything against reason, or without reason, however it may be altogether above and beyond reason. His supremacy pertains to His infinite perfections, and because they are infinite. II. It is a principle of moral government THAT ITS METHODS CORRESPOND PERFECTLY WITH THE CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, AND ARE PRECISELY ADAPTED TO THE NATURE OF THE BEINGS SUBJECT TO IT. In the whole administration of the universe, the wisdom, holiness and goodness of God are displayed. There is not a movement throughout the entire economy of creation and providence which does not attest the excellent glory of God. Any contradiction between the nature and the works of the Supreme Being would confound the whole system of the universe. If there is a God, Jehovah, His government must be in all particulars accordant with His character. Such as He is, it must be. But it is also adapted to the nature of its subjects. It is adapted to them in its general idea and chief element. That is holiness, absolute and entire rectitude. All rational beings naturally respond to this idea. They cannot help doing it. It is a necessity of their nature. They may respond negatively as well as affirmatively; by hating as well as by loving; by disobedience as well as by submission; but respond one way or the other they must, just as surely as they exist, and think, and feel. This is a fact without exception in Heaven, earth, or hell. Again, God's government is adapted to its subjects in its requirements. It requires them in the first instance to be right, to be holy. Is not this a suitable requirement for every rational creature that God has made? Is it not proper for him, in view of all his faculties and all their relations, to be holy, to be conformed to the will of God? Whenever God makes specific requisitions upon men, are these requisitions ever contrary to our nature as that nature was originally constituted? Because we are wrong, is it improper that we should be required to be right? Because our fathers were sinners, is that a reason why we should be free from moral obligation? Because Adam sinned, and so brought the curse upon us and all his descendants, are they justified in sin? Will any man's conscience excuse him on that ground? Again, God's government is adapted to its subjects in its sanctions. Does not the connection between holiness and happiness, and between sin and misery strike the mind as most appropriate? Would it not be doing violence to rational natures to reverse this order, and make holiness productive of misery as its genuine result, and sin productive of happiness? If then God's government is precisely adapted to the nature of all its subjects, it may be asked where is the fault that so much disorder and misery exist in

a world that He governs? I repeat the question, where is the fault? Is it in God? What in Him is at fault? Shall He be less holy, less wise, less good; for more holy, wise, and good He cannot be? If He were other than He is, would you, a rational being, trust Him any longer, and in your joy give Him praise, or in your despair cry out to Him for help? Is the fault in His law; admitting, for the instant, that the law of a perfect being could be imperfect? What provision of that law will you change? What principle of His government will you modify? Shall the idea, the element of holiness be struck out of it? Do the experiments which Satan made in Heaven, and Adam made in Paradise, give much encouragement to such a change? Shall the requirements of the law be annulled or qualified? If you would like this for yourself, would you like it for your neighbour? Is the law any too stringent for him? Would you be willing to live in this world, do you suppose you could live in it, if the restraint imposed upon the conscience of mankind by the stringency of the law were removed? And shall the sanctions of law be abrogated? Do you think it best for fire not to burn you, vice not to sting you, crime not to blast you, sin not to destroy you? Where then is the fault? Is it not in you; is it not in your father; is it not in Adam; is it not in man? "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin is the fault, the first sin and all consequent sins; the last sin, and all preceding sins. And no man may think to shift the blame of his sin, or of any sin, upon the law which is broken, or the God who is offended. III. It is a principle of moral government THAT NONE OF ITS SUBJECTS CAN ESCAPE FROM IT. It controls the infinitude of space, the extent of eternity, and every creature whom God has made. Nowhere, nowhen, and nohow can a moral agent pass without its scope. You cannot escape from it by reason of the feebleness of your powers and the fewness of your talents. If you have but one talent, or half a talent, or the infinitesimal fraction of one, if you are not verily a brute whose spirit goeth downward, then are you a subject of moral government, you ought to be right, you are guilty for being wrong, you can be saved only through the blood of atonement and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. You cannot escape from it by reason of the might of your intellect, and the multiplicity of your endowments. They will not enable you to set up against God and in distinction from Him. Nor can you escape from God's government by reason of your circumstances and relations. It would be needless to say anything on this point, if it were not for the practical infidelity of so many persons in regard to it. No man can be so situated as to avoid responsibility to God. The subject is responsible to God, however related he may be to the magistrate. The soldier is responsible to God, however his superior officer may say to him, "Do this," or "Do that." The office-holder is responsible to God, however his movements may be directed by higher authorities. The man of business is responsible to God, however he may be connected with his associates. The son is responsible to God, however he may have inherited his father's disposition and been controlled by his influence. Wherever a moral being is, the law is, and there does moral government extend. If he be in Heaven, God is there; if he make his bed in hell, God is there; and if he fly on the wings of the morning as fast and as far as light can travel, still God will be with him, and God's law rest upon him. IV. It is a principle of moral government THAT THE SIN OF ONE INDIVIDUAL ENTAILS INJURIOUS CONSEQUENCES UPON THOSE WHO ARE RELATED TO HIM, even if they had not concurred in his particular sin. God treats mankind as a unity; if one sins, others suffer. A vicious man will bring sorrow upon all connected with him. Very few, if any persons, have not experienced some inconvenience if not positive suffering on account of another's transgression. Let us notice another class of illustrations. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram offered strange fire before the Lord, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. When Achan committed trespass in the matter of the accursed thing, the army of Israel was smitten before the king of Ai. Let us glance at another class of illustrative facts. A man is pointed out to your notice in the midst of a crowd. There is nothing peculiar in his appearance, and you can hear of nothing disreputable in his character, and of nothing good or bad of and in himself that should mark him for observation. Why, then, is he pointed out, and gazed at with curious eyes, as if he were a monster? He is a murderer's son. V. It is a principle of moral government THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL ENTAILS BLESSINGS UPON THOSE WHO ARE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM. By reason of a virtuous and holy man, his parents, his wife, his children, his friends, his neighbours, and his country are blessed of God. God would have spared Sodom, had ten righteous men been found therein. But the chief instance illustrating this truth is the blessing that comes upon the believer through his connection with Christ. VI. Lastly, it is a principle of moral government THAT THE WHOLE COURSE OF PROVIDENCE TENDS TOWARDS THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD. God's government does not consist

in meeting emergencies as they arise. There is to God no emergency, no contingency, that calls for new combinations and unexpected exertion on His part. Nor does any event occur out of place, and devoid of relation to other events, and to the general plan of the universe. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He will yet maintain the integrity of His administration. He will yet rectify the disorders that prevail, and set up amid more than earthly splendours, and with demonstrations of almighty power and holiness, the throne of Him, before whom "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord." Not one sinner in all this multitude can escape the wrath to come, but by faith in the sacrifice of atonement. The earth is filled with wars and rumours of wars. But all is coming right now. The judgment is hastening on, and the hosts of earth and hell are marshalling therefor. Ere long the ends of moral government will all be answered, and "The kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God." (*J. K. Lord.*)

The Government of the World.—I. GOD'S GOVERNMENT IS HIMSELF. "He doeth." Human governments are not men, but systems. Men govern by institutes or laws. Not so with God. He is the essence of all forms, the spring of all movements, the force of all forces.

1. The science that comes between us and God is a false science. That is the truest science that brings God nearest to our reason, our consciousness, our soul. 2. The science that comes between us and God is a baneful science. A constant conscious contact with God is essential to our spiritual life, development, perfection, and blessedness.

II. GOD'S GOVERNMENT IS IRRESPONSIBLE. "He doeth according to His will." He has no one to counsel, to persuade, to restrain, or to stimulate Him. He is absolutely free. 1. The righteousness of His procedure. Men are often bound to do the right, not for the right's sake, but because they are answerable to higher authorities. But God does the right because it is agreeable to His nature. The fact of His irresponsibility reveals in the strongest light—2. The benevolence of His heart. Were He a malevolent Being, being absolutely irresponsible as He is, He would make the universe one great hell; but the whole universe overflows with happiness. How glorious is God! III. GOD'S GOVERNMENT IS UNIVERSAL. "In the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." 1. He controls all the ordinary as well as the extraordinary. Men are more disposed to see Him in the unusual and the strange, than in what is common and uniform. Men see Him in the manna, but not in the corn-fields; they hear Him in the booming thunder, but not in the whispering breeze; they feel His touch in the forked lightning, but not in the solar floods. Albeit He is in all common objects and events. 2. He controls the spiritual as well as the material. "The army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." 3. He controls the evil as well as the good. (*Homilist.*)

The Providence of God Elucidated.—These words were spoken by a very extraordinary character, on a very remarkable occasion. They are the confession or testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, when his reason, which for a length of time had been judiciously suspended, was restored to him by Almighty God. I. The first point which the text virtually presents to our attention is UNLIMITED RECOGNITION. It is one of the leading principles of Deism that the great Creator, having furnished mankind with a code of laws written on the conscience, and tending, if faithfully obeyed, to ensure general happiness, retired from the scene of human actions into the solitude of His own being, or perhaps to hold converse with other intelligences more lofty and more dignified than man. With the Deist, however, as we have no feeling in common, so have we no point to discuss. Having a better light than his wintry moon-gleams to guide us, we go immediately to the volume of revelation, and there we learn that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place"; that the attribute of omniscience is not, as the Deist would persuade us, a sleeping attribute, but that it is exercised in all the plenitude of its waking cognizance, in connection with the affairs of this our world. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord?" He holds the aspect and the attitude of kings and potentates; He looks upon the proceedings of statesmen and governors. In the unwearied exercise of the same glorious attribute, the same Holy One walks in the midst of the churches, taking cognizance of what is passing among them; surveying ministers and people; noting how far the spiritualities of the kingdom of grace are infused into their several constitutions. The thought of God's recognition of all things and all events is at once simple and sublime. It is a source of terror to the sinner, and a ground of consolation to the saint. II. The doctrine set forth in the text comprehends UNIVERSAL AGENCY. Jehovah is not a mere looker on. The piercing glance of His omniscient eye is accompanied with the active and incessant workings of His Divine hand. Hence the prophet exclaims, "Is there evil

in a oily, and the Lord hath not done it?" And the passage under consideration speaks of God "as doing according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." This branch of the subject is much too copious to be discussed at large. If followed out, it would lead us through the whole range of creation, natural and moral, and would scarcely afford a resting place for the sole of the foot, while the physical powers of discussion remained. I shall, therefore, confine the few remarks I have to offer to Divine agency as it stands immediately associated with the general concerns of the church, and with the private interests of those individuals who compose its members. When God would lead His ancient people through the windings of that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, His promise was, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And hence the history of the Israelites, during their memorable journey to the promised land, is, from first to last, an exemplification of His protecting and interposing agency. The infidel scoffs, and the sceptic sneers, when we affirm that the world exists for the sake of the church, and that all human affairs are bearing upon the consummation of the Divine purposes in behalf of an elect people. And yet, to an enlightened reader of the Scriptures, no truth can be plainer than this. Trace the history of the four great empires, the Chaldean, the Medo-Persian, the Macedonian or Grecian, and the Roman. The plans and the purposes of the Great Eternal are ripening amidst all the distraction of a fallen world. His master-design runs, like a golden thread, through the mazy intricacies of human infatuation. It flows on, like a pure and peaceful stream, which neither mixes with the muddled waters through which it passes nor is disturbed by their commotions. Again, the agency of which we are speaking is particular as well as general. The contemplative mind will, at once, perceive that it must be so of necessity, inasmuch as the most important and the greatest events are, in numberless instances, suspended upon the insulated movements of individuals; and, therefore, if God does not attend to their concerns, He must cease to attend to the concerns of empires and to the destiny of worlds. The Christian is no more at his own disposal, or subject to the caprice of his fellow-mortals, in regard to the occurrences of life, than he is in connection with his future and final destiny. He is as much the child of Providence as he is the child of grace. His history, like the spangled heavens, is studded with bright indications of the Divine presence. He looks backward with gratitude, and he looks forward with confidence. Here, however, we must again remember that the great principles which actuate our heavenly Friend, in His dealings with His people, are enshrouded in the impenetrable darkness of His incomprehensible nature. The "why" and the "wherefore" are not made known as a matter of course; neither, on the other hand, do they return upon us like a rebounding echo, to be lost in eternal silence, and wasted in a dreary vacuity. Do I ask why? A voice from Heaven replies, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Do I say, wherefore? The answer is: "Be patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." One of the finest views which revelation affords us of the greatness of God, is that which represents Him as bringing light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and holiness out of sin. III. The third point which our subject leads us to notice is SOVEREIGN VOLITION. Not only are chance and fatality excluded from any share in the concerns of mankind, but every other power is likewise excluded, save what may be employed, or permitted to operate, in subordination to Him who is alone independent and almighty. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Connected with this point, in its moral bearing, I am aware of a gigantic difficulty. How, it may be asked, is it to be accounted for, seeing that God is at once infinite in power, in holiness, and in compassion, that He permits the world to exhibit its present aspect of moral irregularity? Why does He not, at once, exert His sovereign sway in crushing the monster sin, and reducing the whole of His intelligent creation to the obedience of His eternal truth? True it is that omnipotence could, in a moment, hush the groans of nature, and stay the march of iniquity, and heal the desolations which overspread the earth. But it is equally true that, inasmuch as omnipotence does not thus exert itself, there is a reason amply sufficient, though hid in the impenetrable recesses of unbounded wisdom, why it should be otherwise. The view, however, which Scripture affords of sovereign volition, as an active and operative principle, demands our closest attention. Where God's will resolves itself into the form of a determination, it has all the force of an irresistible law, and all the certainty of an unalterable decree. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God permitted the children of Abraham to be carried captive into Babylon; but He willed that, after a period of seventy years, they should return to their own land; and for that simple reason they did return. Need I add that volition is certainty, as it bears upon the circumstances and prospects of individual believers? IV. On the last point proposed to be noticed, viz., UNIMPEACHABLE RECTITUDE, I add but a very few words. "The ways of the Lord are equal."

He never violates one attribute in order to exalt another; perfect equity runs through all His proceedings, and pervades the whole system of His moral government. In each particular dispensation, whether it affects empires, churches, families, or individuals, all is right. Not a single mistake nor a single defect finds admission into the administration of His providence. In His sovereignty there is nothing that is arbitrary; in His vengeance there is nothing that is unjust; in the afflictive visitations with which He tries His people there is nothing that is unkind. 1. It is calculated to pacify fear. Why art thou cast down, O believer, and why art thou disquieted within thee? Is it because evil men abound, and because apostate spirits walk up and down in the earth? Is it because the church is assailed by the weapons of an unhallowed warfare? or is it because some family comfort is placed in jeopardy, or some favourite interest threatened? Remember, "the Lord reigneth"; this is enough for thee to know. 2. The subject is calculated to suppress rebellion. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Hear ye, then, the voice which says, "Glorify ye me in the fires." 3. The subject of God's directing and overruling providence is abundantly calculated to cherish Christian confidence. The covenant of grace is "ordered in all things and sure," and the whole system of providence grows out of its perfect and unalterable arrangements. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." (*W. Knight, M.A.*)

The Providence of God:—The text asserts the absolute control and superintending providence of Almighty God over the universe He has made; a momentous truth, demanding the fixed and devout attention of every individual in this assembly. I. In the first instance, it may be necessary to consider THE EVIDENCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF A WISE, GOOD, AND EFFICIENT PROVIDENCE OVER HUMAN AFFAIRS. 1. The proof that Jehovah superintends and governs the world is equal to the proof that He made it; creation and providence must stand or fall together. That the system of things which surrounds us—so beautiful, so stupendous—is the production of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-benevolent hand, must be evident to an observer, even comparatively ignorant and defective. The argument from a Creator to a providence is simple and conclusive; not intricate and metaphysical, but obvious to the plainest capacity. Could it be worth Jehovah's while to create what it is not worth His while to survey and govern? Every unprejudiced mind must answer, No. 2. The proof of a superintending and gracious providence, over human affairs at least, is equal to the proof of human redemption. This is the memorable argument used by an inspired apostle; hear the happy principle he assumes, and the delightful consequences he deduces: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (*Rom. viii. 32.*) Has He exhibited such prodigies of compassion and power to raise us to His Heaven, and will He leave us unguided, unprotected, while we sojourn on earth? 3. This momentous and pleasing truth is a constant doctrine in the word of life. In God "we live, and move, and have our being" (*Acts xvii. 28.*) "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that" (*James iv. 15.*) But nowhere is it expressed with such beauty and power as in our blessed Lord's discourse on the mount. 4. That Almighty God inspects, controls, and governs the world is a truth not left to be discovered by a process of difficult ratiocination; not founded on the teachings of revelation merely; it is a truth attested by the bright, bold, unquestioned, and unquestionable seal of fact. We may instance this: (1) In the detection of secret crime. (2) We may adduce as a second instance that character of retribution which marks so many of this world's events. (3) The good hand of our God is no less visibly, no less affectingly seen in those surprising escapes, those wonderful deliverances which many in this audience have doubtless experienced. These are proofs of a Divine providence, immediate, direct, and personal; to forget, or to dispute them, were as ungrateful and wicked as it were unreasonable and absurd. II. Although the evidence of the existence of a wise, good, and efficient Providence is so full and satisfactory, IT MUST BE ADMITTED THAT ITS DISPENSATIONS ARE OFTEN INSCRUTABLY, and to the feelings of our nature, painfully mysterious. Sometimes they are found in sad collision with the most tender and virtuous of our affections; as for example in the death of children. Sometimes they are opposed to what seems the truest interest and welfare of a family; as in the death of some parents. Sometimes the dispensations of Providence clash with the purposes and exertions of our most Christian benevolence, at least in appearance. What shall we say to the early death of some Christian missionaries? In some cases the superficial observer would be ready to conclude that there exists no superintendency or control over passing events; that either there is no God, or that God has abandoned the world to the caprice and misery of a blind chance. As, when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. III. Though mysterious, THE MOVEMENTS OF PROVIDENCE ARE EVER WISE, AND EVER GOOD. 1. Let it then be seriously reflected upon that the provi-

dence of God is a system, and a system of which we see, and can see, but a small part. In this respect it is like every other work of the infinitely wise Jehovah; nothing is wrought in confusion, nothing is left in disorder; harmony, order, and system pervade the whole. But then it is a system whose deep principles, whose stupendous objects, whose manifold operations, defy the puny comprehension of mortals. In a word, the provisions and workings of this system reach to moral things as well as natural, to angels as well as men, to the stupendous and ever-during realities of eternity as well as the transitory affairs of time. A plan like this must needs lie beyond the grasp of the human mind; the mighty whole is surveyed, is understood by the Infinite Mind alone. It becomes us, therefore, not to arraign the proceedings of Providence at the bar of our limited reason; not to question its wisdom in one event, or its goodness in another. Could we comprehend the whole, we should perceive the fitness and kindness of every part. 2. When surveying the more dark and afflictive dispensations of Providence, it should ever be kept in mind that all the dealings of God with men have a connection with religion, and are designed, in some way or other, to promote the spiritual kingdom of Messiah. This observation applies to those great events which involve the rise, revolutions, or fall of states and empires. This observation applies no less to events of a more partial and local description. We may go further and apply the remark to those events which concern us as families and as individuals. 3. The providence of God is indeed often mysterious; but it is that mystery which, sooner or later, will explain and develop itself. Like children, we are impatient to come at once to the close and catastrophe of events. Let us correct this folly; let us calmly wait until it shall please God to become the interpreter of His own proceedings. As the flower, when it first puts forth, appears wrapt in a close and unsightly cover, but warmed by the sun and freshened by the breeze, its leaves at length open, its beauties unfold, and its fragrance is wide diffused, so to the submissive and patient soul, the wisdom and goodness of the severest and most unpromising of the Divine dispensations shall sooner or later appear. In eternity, if not before, the ways of God to men shall be fully justified. Conclusion: 1. Take from it a lesson of gratitude. This Providence has ever been kind to you; and of its dealings you cannot, dare not complain. 2. Learn from this subject to exercise confidence. Let anxious, corroding, distressful care be driven from your soul; honour the providence of our God by a simple, childlike, affectionate confidence. 3. From the views of Providence we have been endeavouring to inculcate, learn submission. The ways of Heaven are laid before us for our admiration, and not for our animadversion. Finally, from all that we have said, learn that holy and happy art, which turns every occurrence to your religious, to your eternal advantage. In reality, nothing is a good to you but what brings you nearer to God, and makes you more meet for Heaven; and in reality, everything which so advances your soul's interest is a good, however otherwise it may be regarded. (*J. Bromley.*) *Irresistible Sovereignty*:—In times of discouragement and trial, the church itself is not free from distressing doubts and anxieties respecting the overruling hand of God. The Psalmist could say, under the impulse of bewildering temptations, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" and Zion, in the hour of calamity, could pour forth the doubting and the doleful wail, "Surely God hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me!" The mind, buried in the depths of its present cares, and bowed down by the burden of oppressive and painful thoughts, is unfitted for taking those large views of the Divine character and works, which are alone just in themselves, and able to give calm and quiet to the soul. Who is there among the sons of the mighty, angel or archangel, cherubim or seraphim, that can understand the mind of the Lord? They see His works, they wonder, they adore, but they confess that He is "past finding out." And "canst thou," a creature lower than angels, lower by creation, lower still by the fall, "canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" No. Show thyself a man, and acknowledge, with one whom you need not be ashamed to follow, "when I thought to know this, it was too hard for me." I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. It embraces the Divine sovereignty and the Divine working. Much as men dislike the sovereignty of God, it may be argued from His very existence. Is He a self-existent, omnipotent, eternal Being, then absolute sovereignty is His essential and inalienable right. We see this in the work of nature. Who created the earth? who preserves it and all that it contains? Do we not in Him live and move and have our being? Are we not dependent upon Him every day and at every moment? And is He not, then, the Supreme Governor? We see His sovereignty in the kingdom of grace. If we are now His people, what was there in any of us to merit His esteem? But the words also set forth the Divine working. Yet it is a doctrine which not a few have openly denied and many secretly disbelieve. That God has been at work in the world of which we are inhabitants, and in the mighty fields of space which spread around us, is too evident for

most men to deny. And I must pass on to say that he who would exclude God from the world of providence might as well exclude Him from the world of nature. He who can attribute the events which are continually coming to pass to human agency, is not less an unbeliever than the man who ascribes the birth and being of the universe to the dance of atoms or an unknown chance. The Divine attributes of truth, righteousness, and holiness are just as clear in the arrangements of the moral world as the characters of His eternal power and Godhead are graven in strong and striking lines upon the natural world. The path of Divine Providence may be often trackless, yet here and there justice or mercy has raised a monument to mark its course. From a humble consideration of the mysterious method in which God is pleased to carry out His vast designs, we may learn many a valuable lesson; it may deepen our humility, it may call faith into more vigorous play, it may increase our admiration of a Being who, whilst wonderful in counsel, is excellent in working. Are we willing to stand by and see our hopes frustrated, our notions contradicted, and our views thwarted? Then have we learned what human wisdom could not teach, and what human pride would never stoop to learn. He works by means of His own choosing, and yet He works effectually. The process may be so slow that unbelievers shall take occasion to triumph, the means be so weak that the world shall laugh them to scorn; the mode in which He works shall be so His own that no ingenuity of man can comprehend it, and yet the issue of the whole is sure, "I will perform all My pleasure." II. Let us now consider the declaration of the text. "None can stay His hand or say, what doest Thou?" The declaration supposes opposition, and we ought to be prepared to witness a conflict. Doubtless, so far as power is concerned, this opposition might have been crushed in the bud by the omnipotence of Him against whom it is arrayed. But omnipotence has no need thus to anticipate the designs of its enemies. The throne and authority of God are not to be endangered by the collective force of all created beings, and, therefore, He can afford, shall I say, to let wickedness run its course, exert all its violence, to rise and swell to the utmost limits of its strength, to proceed for ages in its bold and impious career, and then with a word or with a look rebuke its arrogance, expose its native weakness, and lay its power in the dust, "none can stay His hand." The very opposition of men and devils shall but serve more abundantly to illustrate His omnipotence and wisdom. "Let Satan tear up the whole fabric of human happiness and virtue to its foundation; let man become the foolish ally of this his bitterest foe; let all nature be moved from its course; still I will counteract the mischief, will repair the ruin, will restore all things, will gain to Myself a glorious name, and 'who shall hinder it?'" It is not to be denied that the whole history of the world, to the present time, is but the history of one continued effort to resist and thwart the purpose of the Most High. But this resistance, fierce as it has proved, has only served to unfold more clearly the nature of that purpose against which it has been turned. Truly, God foresaw how dreadfully the children of men would set themselves against Him when He sent forth His Son, His only Son, to seek and to save the lost. (*S. Bridge, M.A.*)

Ver. 36. *At the same time my reason returned unto me.—Human Reason:—*
I. PERVERTED. 1. In his practical atheism. This man has no God, no being higher than himself. In all the achievements in which he glories there is no recognition of a supreme power. The perversion of this man's reason is seen: 2. In his self-adoration. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" There was nothing greater in the universe to this man than himself. What a perversion of reason was this! A poor, frail, dying, mortal regarding himself as the greatest being. Human reason is here presented as:
II. BRUTALISED. "While the word was in the king's mouth," &c. Reason perverted soon becomes brutalised, brutalised in its gratifications and habits. Look at the life of the beasts of the field. 1. What are their supplies? The productions of the earth, the grass, nothing else. What other supplies does the mere worldly man seek? What is of the "earth, earthy," nothing else. 2. What are their animating impulses? The gastric, the gregarious, the sexual. What else are the governing impulses of worldly men? 3. What are their prospects? All present and material, nothing in the future or spiritual. The fact is that all men who practically ignore God live the life of brutes. Human reason is here presented as:
III. RESTORED. "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me." With his restored reason there came three things: 1. Transcendent thought. (1) He thought upon the existence of God. "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him." When reason returns, when the sinner comes to himself, he begins to think on God. He lifts up his eyes to the Infinite. (2) He thought upon the dominion

of God. He regarded His dominion as everlasting; "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion"; as supreme; as utterly irresponsible to any. "None can stay His hand," &c. With his returned reason there came: 2. Social elevation. When man is restored to true reason he will rise to honour and immortality. With his returned reason there came: 3. Devotional life. Worship is at once the highest development and the highest delight of reason. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 37. **And those that walk in pride He is able to abase.**—*Nebuchadnezzar*:—There is a grandeur and at the same time an awe cast around the history of Nebuchadnezzar which draws out the reverential attention of childhood, and the careful investigation of those who are interested in watching the course of human character and motive. His terrible invasion of the Holy Land; the way in which the Almighty seemed to go before and to follow him; the voice of prophecy, which proclaimed his advent from time to time; his evident fulfilment of God's own designs with regard to his sinful people, and the remarkable pride of his disposition meeting with so signal a punishment from Heaven; all alike invest him with an importance which forbids us to pass him by in the study of the characters of the Old Testament. 1. See what his position historically was. He is a person of considerable interest in connection with the providential dealings of God with the human race. His name, his character, and his punishment, are alike a proverb. His connection with the Church of God and the people whom Jehovah loved, and the way in which he is made the subject of prophetic revelations, excite our surprise when we consider the marked manner in which his personal conduct is condemned and punished by a signal display of God's chastening anger. His position, therefore, as well as his personal character, become matters of interesting consideration. The point with which we have to deal in this character is the paradoxical union of overbearing pride with the strong conviction of the almighty power of God. This was not only a conviction, but a fully realised truth, and one which frequently affected the practice of the king in such a way as to induce him to alter his whole mode of life; nor only that, but to go to the humbling extent of recognising before his people the errors of his idolatry and the purity of the persecuted religion. 2. The first question we have to consider is the nature of pride itself. It is one of the most inexplicable of the feelings to which we are subject. It is by many looked upon as of the same family with vanity, though, perhaps, no two faults are more widely apart. It is often applauded in the same breath with self-respect and independence of character, on occasions when it is a simple scandal upon those attributes to class them with it. In some of its manifestations it is capable of defying God; in others it is simply reducible to that amount of self-reliance and manly energy which is one of the highest and noblest attributes of man. There are so many gradations of pride, and so many feelings akin to it, that one of the best ways of ascertaining its distinctive nature is seeing it by contrasts. Compare the pride of Nebuchadnezzar with that of Saul, and with that of Herod. Amongst the holy and eminent servants of God, Moses had the tendency towards the fault of Herod. Paul, perhaps, more than any other among the saints of God, resembles in natural character that of Saul; while the character that most resembles Nebuchadnezzar amongst the servants of God is that of Jehoshaphat. Saul's was a character of genuine pride; one which firmly believed in its own inherent power of existence and action, independently of any superior authority or source; and if he professed belief in such, he only did so in conformity with national prejudice, or the associations of education. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar, on the other hand, rested on circumstances which were the adventitious accidents of his life; his empire, his successes, his vast dominion, and his prestige of conquest; while side by side with the pomp of circumstance he clearly saw the present Deity, acknowledged His power, and humbly bent beneath His vengeance. He was not essentially proud, though "his heart was lifted up within him." With these two cases, what is strictly called pride ceases, for Herod's case is one of vanity—a fault far removed from genuine pride. Pride recognises some positive, indefeasible claim to independence of action, and irresponsibility, and is pained rather than otherwise when others attribute to it its own quality. Vanity simply takes pleasure in being praised for the possession of what it very often does not possess, cares far less for having it than being thought to have it. 3. In the world there are many representatives of both these classes. There is the man who has the impression that he stands independent of any being or power. There is the man who bases his sense of independence on some special attribute or circumstance connected with his life. The modes in which these two men should deal with themselves are very various. Representatives of the former class are Saul, using Samuel but as a tool, and the Mosaic law but as a machine. There, too, in the elder world is Cato, the representative of Roman independence; and Diogenes, the cynic philosopher, who, wrapped round in the ragged mantle of humility, covered

a bosom essentially proud. Widely different, and vastly more numerous, are the followers in that other wake; men proud of something; an attribute, a talent, or a circumstance. Nebuchadnezzar, boasting of his vast dominion; Sardanapalus, tenacious to the death of indomitable purpose. Xerxes, proud of millions; and Leonidas, proud of tens. Pompey, proud of being leader of the aristocratic East; and Cæsar, proud of guiding the destinies of the more popular West. Alexander, boasting of worlds which left no more to conquer. If members of the former class would correct their faults, they must first try to realise definite and dogmatic Christianity; they must hold and gaze at the creed, as if it were a limited, impersonating form of truth revealed by God. They must get rid of their tendency to subjectivity and contemplation, leading them into scepticism or latitudinarianism in their views of religion, and consent to become dogmatic. They are worshipping an idol made without hands, even "self." (*E. Monro.*) *Pride Abased:*—There is in this dream much of that incongruity which is characteristic of dreams; yet the turn of the angel's words, whereby he indicated that the tree represented a man, and the moral purpose of the whole, as expressed in the concluding phrases, could not but impress the heart of Nebuchadnezzar; and even before he had received the interpretation from Daniel his conscience must have whispered that the tree was designed to represent himself. But his conscience only gave him a vague presentiment of its real meaning. When Daniel had interpreted the dream, he passed into the counsellor, and valuing the welfare of the monarch more than his good opinion for the moment, and fearing degradation for him more than the loss of favour for himself, he added these words, which are not more remarkable for the courtesy of their tone than for the sternness of their fidelity. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." We do not know how this wise advice was received. For a full year things went on as before. But though God's retribution may come slowly, it comes surely, and ere long all that Daniel described was realised. Much has been written by commentators in all ages on the illness of Nebuchadnezzar, but it is generally agreed that he became insane. The disease from which he suffered goes under the generic name, zoanthropia. After seven times had gone, the king lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and his understanding came to him again, but came in a form more clear than before, for now he perceived that his greatness was not all his own. He discovered that he had nothing which he had not received, and he was disposed to give to the Most High God the glory of all he was, and all that he had done. With this recognition of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, his reason came to him, and the glory of his kingdom and the honour and brightness of his court were restored. What did Nebuchadnezzar design by the publication of the decree in which these facts are here preserved? Did he mean to represent himself as having become an adherent of the Jewish faith? Probably, while acknowledging the supremacy of Jehovah as the Most High, he still clung to the worship and service of inferior divinities. His was but an imperfect conversion. 1. We have here a very solemn warning against pride and vainglory. With all his ability, Nebuchadnezzar had nothing which he had not received from God. Whoever plumes himself upon what he has done in the world, as if he were the author of it all, and not simply the instrument in the hand of God, is as really and truly proud and haughty as was Nebuchadnezzar here. The merchant who speaks of his business as the sole result of his ability, and calls himself, with supreme satisfaction, "the architect of his own fortunes"; the author who thinks of his book as the creation of his own genius; the statesman who looks upon his position as entirely self-made, the artisan who prides himself upon his foremanship; and the millionaire who, looking upon his glittering heaps, congratulates himself as the sole author of his gains—all alike are guilty of Nebuchadnezzar's sin; for they have shut God out of their hearts, and they have not given Him the acknowledgment and the honour to which He is entitled. Then let us be "clothed with humility," and, wherever we are, and whatever we have, let us acknowledge God. 2. An illustration of the proverb that "pride goeth before a fall." Sooner or later the spirit which I have been now exposing will bring punishment upon him who cherishes it, and the punishment will be of such a nature as to make the sinner see and know the heinousness of his sin. 3. A beautiful illustration of fidelity in the proclamation of God's truth. It cost Daniel a great deal to give this interpretation of the dream to the monarch. The king had been very kind to him. But necessity was laid upon him, and faithfulness, alike to Jehovah and to Nebuchadnezzar, required that he should speak the whole truth. Hence he gave the interpretation with the utmost exactness; and then, in the most courteous manner, he advised the king to repentance. 4. A loud call to us to thank God for the continuance of our reason. How seldom we think of this! 5. We are here reminded that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men. God is the King of kings. This is our comfort amid the movements

of our times. (W. M. Taylor, D.D.) *The Downfall of Pride*:—This is a very remarkable confession, considering it only as the acknowledgment of a mighty and proud king, thoroughly and sincerely humbled before his God. The humiliation of so great a monarch in the sight of the whole world—both of the Jews, whom he had brought low, and of the Babylonians, who were inclined to make him an idol—was in itself a great example of God's power over the hearts of men, and a powerful witness before the heathen to the name and honour of the true and only God. But the case is full of deeper and diviner meaning, when we regard Nebuchadnezzar as the type and pattern of the great anti-Christian power, the power of the world, opposed from the beginning to the Kingdom of the saints of the Most High, and the power of His Christ. In this light we see that the king's humiliation was also a type and pattern of the complete victory, one day to be attained, of the Christian Church over all opposing forces. That Nebuchadnezzar was a type or pattern of the great anti-Christian power we may discern from the following considerations. 1. Babylon is in Scripture opposed to Jerusalem. It is the proper name of the city of the world, as opposed to the city of God. 2. Nebuchadnezzar was a king of extraordinary valour, wisdom, and spirit; a thorough sample or specimen of what this world entitles "a great man." He had been influenced for good by a former dream: still the great change, from pride to humility, remained to be wrought in Nebuchadnezzar. A complete victory was obtained by God's almighty grace and providence over the spirit of the world and of anti-Christ in the person of this great king. . . . These astonishing providences of old, these dealings of God with His people on a large scale, are in reality and substance the same as His dealings with each individual among us. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

The Mos: Hig's Able to Abase the Proud:—I. WHO THEY ARE THAT WALK IN PRIDE. There is not a man, however near his walk may be with God, but he hath cause, abundant cause, to deplore his self-seeking, his want of entire motive in following after God, and that sad admixture of self, that defiles all that he does, and all that he thinks. And, I believe, the nearer is the approach to the living God, the more is the soul made conscious of the hatefulfulness of that pride that lurketh within it. The cross is the great revener of it. And yet, though believers in the Lord are ever constrained to mourn over the pride that is in them, they are not "those that walk in" it. This is the feature of the unregenerate soul: and it is true of all of them. I need hardly attempt to prove that the careless sinner "walketh" altogether "in pride"; for he setteth up his own will, his own pleasure, above the will, and above the pleasure, of God; he is his own rule, and his own master. The self-righteous formalist, who "goeth about to establish his own righteousness," "walketh in pride"; it is a remarkable expression—he will "not submit himself to the righteousness of God"; he cannot stoop so low. Need I attempt to prove that the mere lover of the world "walketh in" his "pride"? "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," mark out his features, and at once disclose his character. And what is that lofty, independent spirit, which the self-important man has, that will not for one moment allow that all he is, and all he has, and all he can do, belongs to God? II. THEY THAT WALK IN PRIDE SHALL BE ABASED. God hath said it; and what He has said He will most surely accomplish. Both the apostle James and the apostle Peter make use of the same words: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble." If you ask why so great a stress is laid upon this in God's Word, it is because pride is infinitely hateful to God. There is in all sin that which stands opposed to God; but there is in pride that which insults Him, that which rejects Him, that which dethrones Him. And as destructive is it to the soul. For no proud, unsubdued spirit can ever see aught of beauty in Christ. III. But now observe that GOD IS ABLE TO ABASE THEM. So Nebuchadnezzar knew. Truly he had lessons, awful lessons; he had proof, awful proof, laid upon him, that God "is able to abase." There are some striking exhibitions of this same truth in the prophets. In the sixteenth chapter of Isaiah, we have a particular notice of proud Moab; observe, in the sixth verse, "We have heard of the pride of Moab (he is very proud), even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath"—so notorious, it is mentioned thrice in one verse—"Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab; every one shall howl; for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; surely they are stricken." Look at the thirteenth of Jeremiah, and there see how awfully the Holy Ghost directeth us to Jerusalem (in the eighth and ninth verses), "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, Thus saith the Lord, after this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem; this evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart; and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing." Remark what the Lord says of Babylon, in the fiftieth of this same prophet, the twenty-eighth verse: "The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the

vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of His temple; call together the archers against Babylon; all ye that bend the bow camp against it round about; let none thereof escape; recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her, for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel; therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord; behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of Hosts, for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee; and the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him." Observe how again and again the Lord speaketh of her as most proud. I beseech you mark His dealings with His own people. They know it. Look at the great work of conversion. How He layeth low! For in what doth the life of faith consist? Many a believer here present can reply, "Dependent upon Christ for all I want and all I have; just as poor at the last as at the first; Christ my 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption'; living upon Him for what He has done, receiving from Him what He has promised, and having not one thing in myself to recommend me to His notice, but bringing my poor empty vessel to receive out of His inexhaustible abundance." What is this but the "abasing" of those that did "walk in pride?" And what is the very life of a close walking with God? Why, it is but the continued denial of self. For what is the Spirit's victory? It is but His victory over that nature of mine that would always lead me to self; it is but substituting, as it were, the love of Christ for the love of the creature. Truly God is able to do this; and no one but God is able to do it. Afflictions cannot do it—the deepest awe upon the conscience cannot do it—the most alarming representations of eternal woe cannot do it—and the most winning unfoldings of Divine glory cannot do it. The ministers of Christ cannot abase the soul of man—angels and archangels cannot; they can rejoice over the abased spirit, but abase the soul they cannot. It is the work of God, the eternal Spirit, and no one but Him. And by what simple means can He do it! By a word, by a thought, by a glance of the mind, by a conversation, by a text, or by bringing before us some glimpse of the cross of Jesus. And the same power doth it take to keep them low. He always abases, that He may exalt. How patiently, then, ought you to submit yourselves to the will of God! "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." And, above all, He would have you learn the perpetual causes for abasement. That is how we ought to reason—what cause have I for deep abasement, that I require it so much? (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *God Abasing the Proud*:—

1. **PRIDE AND VANITY.** In one of our famous English universities an annual sermon is preached on "Pride." No one will say that once a year is too often for a congregation, young and old, to be bidden to meditate on that thesis. Many learned things have been said and written upon the nature and essence of pride. Probably none of them could equal in impressiveness this account of pride-speaking, this repeated pronoun, the personal and the possessive: "Great Babylon, that I have builded by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty." Whatever other definitions may be given of pride, certainly this is true of it, that it is the contemplation of self, a concentration in self, the having self in the throne of the being, as the one object of attention, of observation, of consideration, always, everywhere, and in all things. It is often assumed that this attention given to self is of necessity the contemplation of supposed excellence, that it is, therefore, so far as it is characteristic of pride, of the nature of self-complacency, or self-admiration, and yet some of the proudest of men have been at the very antipodes of self-satisfaction. It is the very consciousness of their own deformity, moral or physical, of their own inferiority in some prized or coveted particular of birth, gift, or grace, which has driven them in upon themselves in an unlovely and unloving isolation. Self-complacency is not the only form of pride. It is doubtful whether that self-complacency does not rather belong to the very different title of vanity. A beggar may be proud; a cripple may be proud; failure takes refuge in pride. Pride is self-contemplation, but not necessarily self-admiration; self-absorption, but not necessarily self-adoration. It is not quite evident from the words of King Nebuchadnezzar whether his besetting sin was pride or vanity. Something may turn upon the unanswerable question whether he thought or whether he spoke the "Is not this great Babylon?" I think that vanity always speaks. I doubt if the vain man ever keeps his vanity to himself. I am sure that pride can be silent; I am not sure that pride, as pride, ever speaks. If I would ascertain which of the two was Nebuchadnezzar's failing, I should look rather to the hints dropped first in the judgment upon him, and then in the account of the recovery. From the one I learn that what he had to be taught was that "the heavens do rule"; from the other I learn that he then first praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever. This decides me that, however pride and vanity may have mingled (if they ever do mingle) in his composition, pride was the differentia; that pride which

contemplates self as the all in all of life and being, not necessarily as beautiful, or perfect, or happy; not necessarily as satisfactory, either in circumstance or in character, but as practically independent of all above and all below it—the one object of importance, and interest, and devotion; knowing neither a superior to reverence, nor an inferior to regard. Vanity, though, or perhaps because, a poorer and meaner thing, is also a shallower thing, and less vital. Vanity may still be kind, a charity. Vanity may still love and be loved. Vanity, I had almost said, and I will say it, vanity may still worship. Vanity does not absolutely need to be taught the great lesson that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men,” or “does according to His will in the army of heaven.” Pride and vanity both ask, “Is not this great Babylon?” but vanity asks it for applause from below, pride asks it in disdain of One above. But in all this we may not have found our own likeness. There may be some here who are not by natural temperament either proud or vain; and yet when I think once again what pride is, I doubt whether anyone is born without it. We may not dwell complacently upon our own merits. Certainly we may not be guilty of the weakness and the bad taste which would parade those supposed merits before others. Pride itself often casts out vanity, and refuses to make itself ridiculous by saying aloud, “Is not this great Babylon?” But the question is not whether we are self-admirers, but whether we are self-contemplators; not whether we are conceited in our estimate of gifts or graces, in our retrospect of attainments or successes, in our consciousness of power, or our supposition of greatness, but whether, on the contrary, we have constantly in our remembrance the derivation and the responsibility, and the accountableness of all that we have and are; whether there is a higher presence and a diviner being always in our view, making it impossible to admire or to adore that self which is so feeble and so contemptible in comparison; whether we are so in the habit of asking ourselves the two questions: “What hast thou which thou hast not received?” and “What hast thou for which thou shalt not give an account?” as to maintain always the attitude of worship, and the attitude of devotion within, and this superscription ever upon the doors and gates of the spiritual being, “Whose I am and Whom I serve.”

II. GOD’S JUDGMENT ON PRIDE. We have formed now from the history perhaps some idea of pride. We have heard what pride says to itself in the secrecy of its solitude. The same history shall suggest another thought or two about it, and the first of these is its penal, its judicial isolation. “They shall drive thee from men.” We are not going to explain away the literal, or at least the substantial fulfilment of this prophecy. Though it would be untrue to say that medical history furnishes a complete illustration of the judgment threatened and executed upon King Nebuchadnezzar, yet medical history does afford a sufficient likeness of it to render the fact, not credible only, for that its being written in the Bible would make it, but approximately intelligible. Some grievous forms of insanity in which the sufferer finds himself transfigured, in imagination at least, into an irrational creature, of which he adopts the actions and gestures, the tones and the habits, under which, in that harsh and cruel treatment of madness, from which even kings down to our own age were not exempt, the dweller in a palace might find himself exiled from the society and companionship of men. Something of this kind may seem to be indicated in this touching and thrilling description, and the use now to be made of it requires no more than this brief and general recognition of the particulars of the history from which it is drawn. He was driven from men; the Nemesis of pride is isolation. The proud man is placed alone in the universe, even while he dwells in a home. This is a terrible feature; this is the condemning brand of that self-contemplation, that self-concentration, that self-absorption, which we have thought to be the essence of pride. The proud man is driven by his own act, even before judgment speaks, if not from the presence, if not from the companionship, at least from the sympathy of his fellows. This isolation of heart and soul is the Cain-like mark set upon the unnaturalness of the spirit which it punishes. No sooner is self made the idol, than it shuts the windows of the inner being alike against God above and man below. “They shall drive thee from men.” Thou hast driven thyself from God! Another thought comes to us out of the history. Mark the words describing the discovery, “Mine understanding returned unto me; my reason returned unto me.” What was the first use of it? “I blessed the Most High; I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever.” It is deeply interesting to notice, and it fully accords with the observations of medical men, that the return of reason is here prefaced by a lifting up of the eyes to Heaven as though in quest of reconciliation and recognition. Yes, prayer is no stranger to the hospitals and asylums of the insane. Our moral is, the pride which will not worship is of itself an insanity. Worship is the rational attitude of the creature towards the Creator. Pride, dreaming of independence; pride, placing self where God ought to be; pride, telling of the Babylon which it has builded; refusing to recognise any being above or below external to it, yet possessing claims upon it, is a non-natural condition.

Before it can recover intellect it must look upward. The first sign of that recovery will be the acknowledgment of the Eternal. We have yet one word, and it is that of the text itself: "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase." Nebuchadnezzar puts it into his proclamation of thanksgiving: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of Heaven, all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment, and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." King Nebuchadnezzar knew it by experience; he had lived in ignorance, he had lived in defiance of it, he had reaped as he had sown, he had walked in pride, he had been driven from men. "Seven times had passed over him." Not till he had lifted his eyes to Heaven, not till he knew that self was not all, did reason return to him. Honour and brightness came back with it. His councillors and his lords sought him. We in England know, by tradition at least, what the rejoicings are when a monarch recovers his understanding, though there may have been no judgment in that insanity which was the calamity and the sorrow of an earlier generation of Englishmen. Nebuchadnezzar may have meant only to enthrone the God of Heaven as one God, though the chief God of the crowded Pantheon. That is nothing to us now. We can read his words and put our own construction: "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase." Solemn, awful, terrible confession; verified day by day in history, not modern only, but of to-day! How often in our experience has a proud man, quite apart from act or deed of his own, found himself under a treatment but too nicely calculated to humble him! How often has a rich man, building his house on the winnings of chance or of speculation, found to his discomfiture that he has built it upon the sand! How often has a selfish man, having but one tender spot or two in his whole moulding and making, staked his very life, we will say, upon two well-beloved sons, and then found, to use the Scripture similitude, that he has "laid the foundation of his prosperity in the first-born and set up the gates thereof in the younger." How often has a professional man on the eve of the last step to greatness developed some fatal symptoms of palsy, or consumption, which made him bid farewell to all his glory, and betake himself to his last gloomy home, in the vaults, perhaps, beneath this church! How often has a statesman, brought by the last turn of the wheel of politics to the very summit of his ambition, been laid low by the importunate strokes of a jealous and envious rivalry, and compelled to exchange earth for the melancholy Pantheon of posthumous fame! (*Dean Vaughan.*)

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. **Belshazzar the king made a great feast.**—*Belshazzar*:—This feast is, like how many other events, rescued from oblivion by the interposition of a Divine hand. The presence of God in history is its salt, and keeps it from perishing. When does credible history begin, but with the exodus of Israel from Egypt? What kind of interest attaches to European history, apart from the work of God in the church? Let English history be read, minus the Reformation and Puritan element, and it would be very meagre and watery. What rescues human life from insignificance? The presence of God. What gives to the work of every day a serious interest? The presence of God. Wherever we see the finger of God, we are arrested. We may see it in the page of history, in the life of a family, in the quiet prosperity of a church. This poor, luxurious, profane king, who comes up, drinks, trembles for an hour before us in the blaze of splendour, and then passes away swiftly into chaos and old night—this reveller would never have been heard of, but for "the fingers of a man's hand that wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of his palace." There is nothing interesting in this man. He does nothing, says nothing, is nothing; nothing but a dark ground on which fiery letters are written, the more luminous because the ground is black. We take a kind of interest in Nebuchadnezzar, with his proud, stormy greatness; with his gigantic plans and terrible visions. We read of his insanity with concern approaching to horror. If Belshazzar excites any feeling in our minds it is utter astonishment at his folly. Was this a time to give a great feast to the thousand of his lords? Cyrus, with his mighty army, lay outside his city—Cyrus, who had already defeated him in a pitched battle—Cyrus, the greatest soldier in the world. What had the gods of gold and silver done for Nebuchadnezzar? How had they avenged the slight put upon the golden image which he had set up? What had they done for the poor insane king? How had they helped Belshazzar lately, when Cyrus beat him and shut him up in Babylon, a prisoner in his own capital? They slighted the great and awful past, with its stern lessons; and they have always had a hard and dreadful future, who made easy work of the past.

If men will not take the trouble to read the warnings of yesterday, to-morrow's fingers will write a word on their walls which will scare their eyeballs, and make their knees shake! Oh, take kindly to the warnings of all history, but of your own in particular, for it is as grave and important to you as ever Belshazzar's ought to have been to him. But when they made light of the God of Israel over their cups, they made light of those "portions and parcels of the dreadful past," which they must have known and remembered. "Thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." "They lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven," though they had seen His marvellous works wrought before them. The fiery furnace, the four men in the fire, the dream, the madness, the recovery, the proclamation; they knew it all; they slighted it all; and at this time, too, with the foe at their gate, and such a foe! The Chaldeans are called in, as of old, and, as usual, are at fault. Then the queen mother, Nitocris, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, "came into the banquet-house." Profane history speaks well of this lady. She was a wise and prudent woman, and had the chief administration of affairs. Her memory was all alive. She recollected past perplexities. She remembered Daniel, and said, "Let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation." "Then Daniel was brought in before the king." Scarlet and a gold chain! and, in the meantime, the Mede and the Persian are entering by stealth, like thieves in the night, through the dried-up bed of the Euphrates! "Let thy gifts be to thyself." "Tekel." "Weighed in the balances and found wanting." A very significant word. It represents God as putting us into a just balance, and judging accordingly. This is not an unusual figure. "Thou dost weigh the path of the just." "By the Lord actions are weighed." "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits." We all remember how strongly the Bible speaks of "a just weight." Look at this great appearance of royal government, pride, pomp, and circumstance of state—Belshazzar's rule over the poor people of Babylon—how fine it all looks. But look at it; is it doing what it professes to do? Is it defending the city? Is it caring for the poor? Drunken on the night of the siege. A sham government. Light as a leaf before the whirlwind. God takes it up, weighs it, finds it worthless, and throws it to Cyrus. Then the officer of justice steps in and does his work. Pass for what you are; and be what you pass for; or Peres, the sentence will go against you. You pass for a Christian, you use the pass-words of the Christian religion; men take your word, just as without suspicion we take our pounds of meat and tea, and pay for them. Is it only seemingly good weight? Tekel: you will be found out. A light ruler! But stop! before we blame Belshazzar and other light kings, let us ask a question—Are you doing in the royal line what you profess to do? Are you ruling your households in the fear of God? Is there a just government there? Is there equity, love, purity, the law of truth, swaying the family? To the scrutiny of Heaven is there a kingdom of God there? And how is the inner kingdom ruled? You profess to have a conscience, a presiding judge—reason. Are you taking it easy, and making light of your responsibilities, of the charge which God has laid upon you, and thinking that God doth not see? "Let integrity and uprightness preserve us, O God of our salvation." (*B. Kent.*) *Belshazzar's Feast*:—Now let us look at the scene. What is this a picture of? Can you express the whole of that revel in one word? I think I can, and this is the word—godlessness. When, presently, the soothsayers have proved their ignorance, and the enchanters are unable to decipher the mystic writing upon the wall, and Daniel comes, what is the supreme charge that he makes against Belshazzar? He does not charge him with drunkenness, though he is drunk; he does not charge him with sacrilege, though he has sent for the golden vessels of the House of God in order that these drinking men may drink from them; he does not charge him with lasciviousness of life, although there are tokens of it on every hand in that banqueting hall. This is the charge that Daniel makes against the king. He passes from the superficial to the central, and in these words he makes his supreme charge against the king: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Every power of the king was a God-given power—his breath, all his ways, his throne, his opportunity, his kingdom, his capacity for laughter and for tears—everything God-given, and yet he sat on the throne without reference to the other throne; exercised his kingship without reference to the other kingship; laughed without reference to God; entered into all the avenues of his own life and enjoyed the very blessings of Heaven, and yet without reference to God, and this not because of ignorance. And now mark in the case of this king how that supreme sin works itself out. Foolhardiness! The enemies are at the gate; Darius is on his way; the very kingdom over which the man presides in self-satisfying security is being undermined and shaken to its foundations. Foolhardiness! A feast where there ought to have been preparations for a fight. Belshazzar has been living as though Nebuchadnezzar had never lived: Belshazzar has been living as though his father had never come under the

immediate government of God; he has been living as though the great lessons of the past had never been uttered or taught. And you tell me he has forgotten! No, he never forgot; these men do not forget—they act as though they had forgotten, but forgotten they have not. But you say to me: "How do you know he has not forgotten?" Because when the wine has worked into his brain and the wit is out therefore, the underlying memory asserts itself in idiotic insult: "Fetch the vessels of the House of God, and we will drink from them." That is how godlessness works out in its finality. If you let me turn aside for a moment, I can quite understand there is a young man who is living a godless life to-night, and he says: "I never meant to do it." Belshazzar never meant to do it. Do not allow the sin to blind you to the facts of life that are patent on every hand. Do you suppose that any murderer who has gone to his doom ever meant to commit murder? Never. But it was the last bitter fruitage of the root of godlessness. That is how godlessness works itself out. And I look at that great banqueting hall with its thousand lords, and I look at Belshazzar, the man who knew, who had lived as though he did not know, who remembered in the midst of the revelry, and then insulted God. Now, still watching that hall and that scene, I pray you mark the next fact: the Divine assertion in the midst of the revelry, the handwriting by which God asserted His own presence and His own Divine right amid all the revelry of foolhardy men. For let me say at once that all the mystery of the soothsayers and the enchanters was not due to the mystery of the writing, but to their attempt to explain away simple, evident truths. "Mene," everyone knew that it meant "remembered"; "Tekel," everyone knew that it meant "weighed"; "Upharsin," everyone knew that it meant "divided." And whereas I do not for a single moment want to take away from the fact that there dwelt in Daniel the spirit of insight into spiritual things; in Daniel as in many another man, the spirit that sees into the heart of spiritual things is the spirit of a little child. It was the cleverness of the soothsayers that prevented their understanding the writing on the wall, and all the heated feverishness of the king to get someone to explain it was not heated feverishness to get someone to explain it, but to explain it away; and what Daniel did was to come and speak the truth and enforce it and drive it home, the truth that was patent to the king. This was God asserting Himself in the life of this man. It was an assertion of Himself that interfered with all human arrangements, that disturbed the feast. Just look at the king. His knees smote together, his countenance was changed, he sees all the horror of his own foolhardiness and all the awful fruitage of his own sin. If he can he will escape it; if he can he will undo the past and blot out his own handwriting; but he cannot, and God has come into the midst of the revelry to disturb the life of this man. Now, mark the writing for a moment. Remembered, counted, finished—there is no more. The solemnity of this whole story lies in the fact that it is not a warning uttered, but a verdict pronounced. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." In looking at the narrative as we have been doing for the last few minutes, I cannot possibly put any single word of hope into the story. It is not a story of hope; it is a story of judgment; swift, sure, irrevocable—nothing left. A man had his opportunity, had his examples, had his warnings, best of all had God—failed. Now, why take you back to the old story? Only in order that I may now for a few moments endeavour to take out of the story the principles of importance and ask you to face them. And what is the first? That the supreme sin of every life, including all others within it, is the sin of godlessness. Godlessness is the root of sin. And if it should happen that to-night in the case of some person in this house the end should come, if your years are numbered and the last hour is upon you and you have failed, what is your sin? Exactly what this man's sin was. "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." You belong to God, everything you have is a Divine gift, and all these years of your life up to the present moment. What is the story of your life? You are God-created; His image is on your brow; the supreme glory of the Godhead in some sense is reproduced and re-expressed in you. "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways." What relation have you borne to Him? And I want to ask you now for a moment, since God created man and God preserved man, what relation have you borne in the days and years of your life to the God who created you, to the God who has preserved you? That is the supreme thing; there is no other question left; there is no other problem ought to vex the heart of man but that. Now, is it true of you that you have not glorified Him? You have thought of Him as a distant Deity; you have thought of Him, perhaps, as a supreme intelligent force behind Nature, to be spoken of reverently and nothing more; you have thought of Him as the God of judgment and the God of mercy, for you have lived in the gentle light which breaks from the cross of the Crucified. But these things are of no moment; the question is, How have you answered your knowledge and your conviction concerning God? And remember, godlessness is the life lived within the provision of

God that never recognises the One who provides. I would have you very solemnly put away from your mind the false idea that godlessness is the peculiar condition of the man who dwells in the slum, that godlessness is that which expresses itself in profanity and bestiality and lasciviousness—all those things are true, but there is a godlessness which is refined, cultured, pleasant, and yet is the most arrant and hardening godlessness of the age, issuing in indifference and presently manifesting itself, it may be, in the sceptical allusion and the pitying and patronising attitude which a man takes up to those who are godly people. Oh! the blight of it. That is the supreme sin. And out of this sin of godlessness spring all the other sins. Folly! A man has lost the balance of life who has lost his sense of and obedience to God. But what was the supreme sin of the man illustrated in the story of the prodigal? It was this, that he took his father's substance and wasted it in riotous living. And that is the sin of humanity the whole way along. It is your sin that every gift God has bestowed upon you, you have wasted upon yourself. And there is no man more blind, no man more utterly foolish, no man proving his insanity more than the man who lives through these days so swiftly passing without reference to God and without relation to God. Godlessness issues in folly; godlessness leaves a man a prey to all the lusts to play about the life to tempt. And what is the other lesson? It is that, sooner or later, God asserts Himself in every human life. The freedom of the will is a limited freedom. God in His great universe will never allow the will of man to be so free as wreck for evermore all who come into contact with him. Liberty and licence are two things, and there must be a moment when God arrests the life and deals with the man. This man knew about Nebuchadnezzar and yet did not humble himself; he never laid the glory of his own opportunity at the footstool of the Divine sovereignty, and made wreckage of his life in consequence. God, at some point, comes into every man's life, arresting it. "Ah!" you will say, "I have not glorified God, and the godlessness of principle has blossomed into the fruitage of evil habit." Do not play with the habit: do not try to cut off the habit; get down to the principle, and by way of the cross of Christ to-night find your way back into the Kingdom of God, yielding to Him your whole life, trusting in the Saviour who comes with matchless patience wooing you back to God, and then, when presently the story is told of your life, instead of the sentence being passed, "Found wanting," it will be written, "Ye are complete in Him." (*G. Campbell Morgan.*) *The Night Feast of Belshazzar*:—Belshazzar was the last of the Babylonian kings. The great feast which he made for a thousand of his lords was on the last night of his reign. He belonged to the proud and prodigate race of the Chaldeans, whom the Hebrew prophets describe as given to pleasures, dwelling carelessly, and trusting in wickedness. All this can be abundantly shown from the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; from the Greek historians, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Diodorus, and from inscriptions on monuments that remain to this day. And knowing all this concerning the young men of that great and mighty city of ancient time, we are not surprised that Babylon became a desolation. The day of doom is not far off from any great city when its young men have become "tender and delicate"; nerveless and spiritless about the nobler demands of effort and duty. There is no more effectual way to destroy a great and mighty nation than to give its young men all the money they want, provide them with plays and festivities and amusements and dances and wine, and then leave them to sweat the life and manhood out of body and soul in the hot-bed of pleasure and self-indulgence. That is the way Babylon was ruined. That is the way imperial Rome became an easy prey to northern barbarians. That is the way Christian Constantinople came under the debasing and abominable sway of Mohammedans. That is the way Venice ended a thousand years of independent and glorious history with shame and servitude. Belshazzar had everything to flatter his pride and indulge his passions. He was an absolute monarch, holding the life and property of his thousand lords and his countless people entirely at his disposal. His servants were princes. His concubines were the daughters of kings. His capital was enriched with the spoils of nations—his provinces were cultivated by captive people. He was hasty and violent in temper, yet effeminate and luxurious in his habits of living. He was gracious and indulgent toward his favourites; and yet when their best efforts to please him did not happen to suit his caprice of the moment, he would be cruel as the grave. The great hall of the palace, in which he feasted his thousand lords reclining upon couches, was large enough to accommodate four times as many guests arranged as we now seat ourselves at table. It was adorned with carvings and sculptures of colossal dimensions, and the lofty walls were emblazoned with the trophies of war and the symbols of idolatrous worship. The profane orgies of royal mirth were adorned with every artistic decoration that the genius of the age could supply. I believe that the fine arts are capable of ministering to the highest and purest civilisation; but thus far they have done little to enlighten the ignorant, to lift up the degraded, or to help the world forward in the career of moral improvement.

They have always flourished in the corrupt and reeking society of a dissolute and licentious age. Rome, the modern Babylon, was never more depraved and abominable than when it had Michael Angelo to build St. Peter's, and Raphael to fresco the Vatican. The capital of France was never more like Rome than when the Grand Monarque, Louis the Fourteenth, dazzled the world with his splendid court, and the great masters of every land were decorating the palaces of Fontainebleau, Versailles, and the Louvre, with the loftiest achievements of art. In three hundred years the highest art has done less to refine and improve the common people in Rome and Naples than would be done by the spelling-book and New Testament in one year. Belshazzar inherited the pride, the glory, the riches, the power, the palaces, the capital, the kingdom of his great father. He inherited enough to ruin any young man who was not fortified by great strength of character and a severe mastery of his own appetites and passions. At the time immediately preceding the great feast which Belshazzar made for his thousand lords, the province of Babylon had been overrun and the capital assailed by a great army from the north. But, for some strange and inexplicable reason, the besieging force had apparently withdrawn. No effort appears to have been made to discover what had become of the enemy, or what had occasioned their disappearance. It was enough that they could no longer be seen from the towers and walls. It was taken for granted that the siege was abandoned and the war was over. The whole city was immediately given up to rejoicing and every form of riotous excess. Belshazzar set the example, and people and princes were only too ready to imitate their king. "The music and the banquet and the wine; the garlands, the rose-odours, and the flowers; the sparkling eyes, the flashing ornaments, the jewelled arms, the raven hair, the braids, the bracelets, the thin robes floating like clouds; the fair forms, the delusion and the false enchantment of the dizzy scene," take away all reason and all reverence from the flushed and crowded revellers. There is now nothing too sacred for them to profane, and Belshazzar himself takes the lead in the riot and the blasphemy. Even the mighty and terrible Nebuchadnezzar, who desolated the sanctuary of Jehovah at Jerusalem, would not use his sacred trophies in the worship of his false gods. But this weak and wicked successor of the great conqueror, excited with wine and carried away with the delusion that no foe can ever capture his great city, is anxious to make some grand display of defiant and blasphemous desecration. At the very moment when their sacrilegious revelry was at its height, the bodiless hand came forth and wrote the words of doom upon the wall of the banquet-room; the armies of Cyrus had turned the Euphrates out of its channel, and marched into the unguarded city along the bed of the stream beneath the walls; they were already in possession of the palace-gates when Belshazzar and his princes were drinking wine from the vessels of Jehovah, and praising the gods of gold and silver and stone; and that great feast of boasting and of blasphemy was the last ceremonial of the Chaldean kings. The reckless and the profane not unfrequently display the greatest gaiety and thoughtlessness when they are on the very brink of destruction. The feeling and the appearance of safety are not always to be taken for reality. Death still enters the banquet-hall and the ball-room as well as the bed-chamber. The last opportunity for any good work is apt to look just like all that came and went before it. We seldom know that it is the last, until it is gone never to return. Our only safe way to improve the last opportunity is to use all that come as if any one might be the last. The apparent thoughtlessness of the gay and worldly does not prove that they are at peace with themselves. A smiling face and a reckless manner are sometimes put on to hide an anxious and an aching heart. To find joy in everything we do, we must do everything for God. To have the light of Heaven upon our faces in all the dark hours of trial and trouble, we must have Heaven's peace in our hearts. The message of the gospel is God's way of peace for man. Belshazzar and his thousand lords did not profane the golden vessels of Jehovah until they had drunk wine. Indulgence in the intoxicating cup prepares the way for every excess and profanation. No man can be sure that he will be saved from any degree of shame or crime when once he has "put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his reason." The eye of the Great Judge is upon every scene of profanity and dissipation. The handwriting appeared upon the wall of the banquet-room in Belshazzar's palace in the hour of their wildest mirth, to show that God was there. And God is in every scene of wickedness and dissipation not less really than in the Holy Place of His own sanctuary. The finger of God is ever writing the witness of His presence with us upon the living tablets of our hearts. That infinite and awful Witness is in every storehouse, workshop, and place of business, every day of the week and every hour of the day. In the deepest solitude we must all have one companion. To every act and word of our lives there must be one witness, and that witness is the holy and sin-hating God. We cannot escape our accountability to Him. Why, then, not live so that we can give Him our account with joy? Conscience is a mysterious and mighty power in us all. The great and terrible

king Belshazzar was completely mastered and unmanned by its secret whisper. He was afraid, because an accusing conscience always makes darkness and mystery terrible to the guilty. It is mightiest in the mighty. Milton's Satan, Byron's Manfred, Shakespeare's Macbeth and Richard the Third are truthful illustrations of the harrowing torture produced in the mightiest mind by the calm, solemn voice within, which only says, "You are wrong." The Supreme Creator has put us absolutely in the power of that mysterious judge which pronounces sentence in our own bosoms upon all our conduct and motives. And we cannot conceive anything worse for a man than to die and go into the eternal world with an unappeased and accusing conscience to keep him company and to torment him for ever. Belshazzar had riches, and pleasure, and glory. He was absolute master in the greatest palace and the greatest city the world had ever seen. But what is his life worth to the world now, except to warn men not to live as he did? With all his splendour and luxury he lived a wretched man, and he died as the fool dies. He lifted himself up against God, he trusted in wickedness, and so he became but as the chaff which the wind driveth away. And the same sovereign God counts out the days of life to us all. He weighs our character, our conduct, our motives, in the balances of infinite truth. And there is no deficit so damaging as that which is charged to one who is found wanting before God. It has been said that the thought of our responsibility to God is the greatest thought ever entertained by the greatest mind. Certainly the discoveries and demonstrations of science cannot carry our minds so far over the sweep of ages and over the expanse of the universe as the bare thought that our individual being is bound inseparably and for ever to the being of the infinite and eternal God. Whatever we do, wherever we are, we can never cease to be responsible to Him. For He has appointed us to do His work. He has given us the means, the faculties, and the opportunity; and He holds us answerable for using them well. What the world wants most is men in whose minds the great thought of responsibility to God is ever present—men who are made strong by the consciousness that they are doing God's work. (*D. Marsh, D.D.*) *Belshazzar's Feast*.—The character of Belshazzar appears to have been of the most contemptible description. He was addicted to the lowest vices of self indulgence, and felt no restraint whatever in the gratification of his desires. With all this there was combined an arrogance of the haughtiest kind, which would brook no interference with his designs, and would submit to no expostulation in the interests of morality. At length, however, the cup of his iniquities became full. 1. The intemperance by which this banquet was characterised. He cared for nothing but the revelry of the hour. We know too well the concomitants of an excess like this. 2. The profanity by which this banquet was characterised. There is an old fable which tells of a man who had the choice which of three sins he would commit—drunkenness, adultery, or murder. He chose drunkenness, as being apparently the least, but when he was intoxicated he committed both the others, and thus ended by being guilty of all three. Profanity is rampant even in our midst. Who among us has not often had his ears pained and his heart sickened by the unhallowed use of the name of God by those who have no reverence for him in their hearts? O that men would remember that holy law which says that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain"! 3. This night was one of supernatural visitation. What means the sudden lull in the noisy revel? The king is pointing, with a shudder of agony, where a mysterious hand is tracing letters on the wall. No ray of hope brightens the gloom of that awful sentence. 4. A night of terrible retribution. God threatens, but He means what He says, and He will bring it to pass. God is faithful who has threatened. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Excessive Social Enjoyment*.—Social enjoyment, when guided by reason, when hounded by temperance, when springing from mutual benevolence, is not forbidden by religion, and may tend, in so far, within these limits, to promote the welfare of the world. Considering, however, the shortness of man's life, the solemnity of his condition as a lost sinner, the infinite eternity into which he must soon enter, and the tribunal of Divine holiness before which he must soon stand, it appears evident that man has not much time to spend in feasting. Considering the destitution and misery that are in the world, it is also clear that he cannot devote much of his means to this end without being guilty of inhumanity to his fellow-creatures and disobedience to that God who commands us, according to our ability, to show kindness to the poor. Much immorality, much inhumanity, much ungodliness, are manifested by all classes in the large sums which they expend, and the time, more precious than gold, which they dissipate, in feasts and entertainments. It is one of the crimes of our land, and fast becoming one of its calamities, that our ancient simplicity, and our ancient sobriety and frugality, are fast departing from among us, and that, instead of them, there is coming in a flood of epicureanism, and affectation, and frivolity. Luxury, love of false refinement, refinement of manners and not of morals, refinement in appearance apart from dignity of character, is coming in upon us more and more, in every succeeding generation.

And unless there be a change in the morality of the land, effected by its religion, or some awful calamity be sent to us by a righteous Providence, this growing luxuriousness will, in a short time, be the ruin of our beloved country. It will dissolve the national character. It will be worse than hurting the trade or hurting the agriculture of the land. It will hurt the population. It will produce a degenerate race of men. Luxury, as all history shows, is one of the greatest among national evils. (*William White.*)

Belshazzar's Feast.—I. THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR. It was a great annual festival, commemorative of some great event. Some think it was Sacae, the Saturnalia of the Babylonians. Others say it was a feast in honour of the king's birthday, or of his coronation. Whatever feast it was, it seems to have been attended with the pomp, religious rites, and services of the empire. The Babylonians were famous above all other nations for intemperance, especially in drinking. A feast commemorative of a man's birthday or of his marriage is not necessarily sinful. A national festival is not in itself sinful; nor was it the eating and drinking in moderation, but the excess, and the spirit in which it was done, that made Belshazzar's feast so impious. Their excess was a great sin, but their defiance of Jehovah and impious mockery in using the sacred vessels brought from Jerusalem was a far greater sin. The king and his lords, by using the holy vessels of the Jewish temple for their licentious and idolatrous festival, hurled defiance at the God of Abraham, and showed their contempt for the power of Him who doeth according to His will in the armies of Heaven. The king, heated with wine, commanded them to bring in the vessels of the Jerusalem temple. There was needless insult to the captive Jews, as well as impious blasphemy against their God, in this desecration of their holy vessels. Any and every perversion of holy things is a desecration of them. When the sacrament is taken without faith to discern the Lord's body, or to cover some sinister design, or as a passport to some office, then the sacred vessels of the Lord's house are desecrated to an unholy end. In whatever way religion is dragged from its lofty and controlling sphere, and made to gild the claims of a party or of a sect, then and there we have a repetition of Belshazzar's profanation. When the Sabbath is made a day of pleasure, of visiting, feasting, and writing letters—when the house of God is used for anything but the purposes of religious worship—then we have an approach to the desecration of Belshazzar's feast. But let us leave this disquisition about the desecration of holy things and observe the feast. It was one of the greatest splendour. A mysterious writing appeared upon the plastering of the palace wall. As the king and his lords could not read the inscription, it is said, why were they thus afraid? They were afraid because their own consciences condemned them. All men who live in sin dread what is future and unknown. It has been asked why the wise men of Babylon could not read the inscription. The words are mainly Chaldean. Why could not the Chaldee scholar read them then as well as now? To this we answer, all the learned men of Spain could make an egg stand on the table after Columbus had shown them how. Several reasons are assigned by commentators for the inability of the king's astrologers to read the writing. One is, that the words were written in the ancient Hebrew character, the knowledge of which was even then lost to all except the Jewish priests and scribes, and not in the modern Hebrew character, which differs little or nothing from the Chaldee. The characters, the forms of the letters in which the Old Testament is commonly written, is not the ancient Hebrew characters. It is supposed that the square form of the letters now used is not the primitive form. English letters are alike, but the Greek characters are different. So, when, for convenience sake, the printer puts the Greek word *aiônios* in English letters, the mere Greek scholar does not know his old acquaintance, nor the mere English scholar divine whence it comes nor what it means. If the inscription on the wall at Belshazzar's feast was in ancient Hebrew characters, it is not strange that his wise men were unable to read it. Others think that the words were inscribed in hieroglyphics, of which the astrologers had no key, and that we have not the original in our Bible, but translations of the forms of the letters, as well as of the sense; others think that the writing was intelligible only to such as were aided in reading it by the Spirit of God; and others think they were so intoxicated or so frightened that they could not read. I only insist, however, on the fact that the king's astrologers could not read this inscription, and that Daniel could; and you will be pleased, no doubt, to observe how the interpretation was brought out. It was obtained, as is often the case with our greatest blessings, through the agency of woman, the aged grandmother of the king, the queen dowager, as our European cousins would call her. Blank terror and alarm reigned in the court. The king and his courtiers are at their wits' end. No one seems to be calm and self-possessed but Nitocris, the widow of old Nebuchadnezzar. She instantly steps up and suggests that Daniel should be sent for, and gives her reasons. It often happens that a woman, whose sex is usually so easily agitated by trifles, when overtaken by some great crisis, which calls forth all the latent energies of her soul, is

found to display a calmness, a magnanimity, a self-possession that puts to shame the powers of the other sex. These astrologers were not enchanters—they were not diviners—they professed no communion with evil spirits. They were men who studied the signs of the Heavenly bodies, and having no written revelations, they believed that God had written the past, the present, and also something of the future in the sky—that the stars were the letters of that revelation, and that by studying them they might interpret things to come. In allowing himself, therefore, to be placed at their head, Daniel does not violate the laws of Moses against soothsayers, witches, and the like Satan-possessed persons. These wise men of Babylon were not peeping and muttering spirit rappers, whose pretended revelations were filling the land with lunatics. They were magi, but not magicians. They were philosophers, but not sorcerers. They held communion with God's outward world, and not with the spirits of the dead or with devils. II. THAT ONE SIN OFTEN LEADS TO ANOTHER. Sensuality is usually connected with profaneness, and both lead to ruin. III. LEARN THAT THERE IS GREAT GUILT AND DESERVED PUNISHMENT IN NOT TAKING WARNING FROM THE JUDGMENT OF GOD UPON OTHERS, ESPECIALLY OUR OWN COUNTRYMEN AND ANCESTORS. (W. A. Scott, D.D.)

Ver. 5. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand.—*The Handwriting on the Wall*.—1. There are many Belshazzars in the world, even at this present moment. There is, in human nature, an evil rebelling principle against the God who made us; and men are to be found whose wills are in violent opposition to His laws and authority. They have idols of their own hearts whom they resolve to serve, let the consequences be what they may. Such are not singled out by miracle as warnings to the reprobates, but there is a handwriting against them, and that of terrible import, which they can neither see nor read. Their days are numbered, their career fixed, their punishment entered in the great book of life and death. 2. Men do not sufficiently consider the omniscience of God. They would persuade themselves that there are places where He cannot see them; that there are things which He does not know. How stubborn and perverse is the will of man! It effectually closes his eyes to the truth, and makes him believe what he wishes. It makes him fancy that God is absent whenever he dares to insult Him, and that God is blind to the sins which he could in his wickedness desire Him not to behold. Among the most perilous delusions of sin, must it be considered by the Christian, that his very heart can be so seared against the convictions of truth, that he can for a moment being himself, like some of the heathen, to imagine the all-seeing, ever-present, all-pervading Godhead, stripped of his very nature, and slumbering, absent, or unobservant in the recesses of wickedness. 3. How would it be with each of us if there were a handwriting against the wall to warn us of the end of our career and the arrival of our day of account? Sudden death, under any circumstances, is indeed sufficiently terrible. Even to the good, it is very awful; but what must be its horrors to the wilfully wicked? The Almighty now has recourse to the ordinary means of providence, for the most part, to check the sinner in his career. If a man die in his sins, let him not plead ignorance or incapacity. (A. B. Evans, D.D.) *The Awakening Hour of Conscience*.—This chapter develops two solemn facts. 1. That neither the revolutions of time nor the opposition of man can hinder the fulfilment of the Divine word. 2. That at the period when men fancy themselves most secure the peril is frequently the most imminent. I. THAT IT IS AN "HOUR" THAT MUST DAWN ON THE MOST OBDURATE NATURES. There are two classes of dormant consciences; those that have never been aroused—infants and savages; and those that have been partially quickened, but deadened again—seared. There is an hour for the awakening of each—even the most lethargic. It was so now with Belshazzar. Other consciences of the same class have had their awakening hour—Cain, Herod, Judas, Felix, &c. II. THAT IT IS AN "HOUR" INTRODUCED BY A DIVINE MANIFESTATION. There "came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." 1. It was very quiet; no lightning flashed, no thunder pealed, but the gentle movements of a mystic hand. 2. It was very unexpected; it was in the midst of the gladness, when the tide of festive joy ran high. 3. It was very palpable; there was no way of ignoring it. It moved against the light of the candlestick. It is in this quiet, unexpected, and palpable manner that God frequently brings that idea of Himself into the soul, which ever rouses the conscience. III. THAT IT IS AN "HOUR" ASSOCIATED WITH GREAT MENTAL DISTRESS. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Two things are observable here: 1. The influence of an awakened conscience upon "thoughts." Our thoughts are governed by different principles. Sometimes intellect controls them, and we are ever in the region of investigation; sometimes imagination has the command, and then we

sport in the realms of beauty; sometimes avarice, and then the market is our home, and good bargains the joy of our heart; sometimes "fleshy lusts," and then the whole nature is brutalised. But here the guilty conscience controls them, and this is Hell. A guilty conscience always throws the thoughts upon three subjects—the wrong of the past, the guilt of the present, and the retribution of the future. 2. The other thing observable is the influence of "troubled thoughts" upon the physical system. "The joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." David felt thus, for he said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." IV. IT IS AN "HOUR," WHICH IS SOMETIMES THE HARBINGER OF ETERNAL RETRIBUTION. Oftentimes the hour of moral awakening ushers in the bright and propitious morning of conversion. It was so in the case of Zaccheus, the sinners on the day of Pentecost, the Philippian gaoler, and others. Indeed, such an hour must always precede the dawn of true religion in the soul. But here, as with Judas, it was the harbinger of retribution. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." What a night! "That night" separated him for ever from his pleasures, his friends, and his empire; "that night" terminated for ever his opportunities of spiritual improvement, and quenched every ray of hope within his breast; "that night" every star in the firmament of his being went down to rise no more, and left the whole of the boundless expanse overhung with clouds surcharged with the elements of inconceivable storms. Sinner, the day of grace is waning fast; the hour of awakening steals on. That hour shall either issue in the dawn of a new and happy life, or the chaos of moral anguish and despair! (*Homilist*.)

Called to Account.—Observe how many and great offences Belshazzar crowded into a single festival, into a single day. In the midst of this scene of guilty riot, the Almighty alarmed them with the messenger of his displeasure. The remarkable prophecy of the handwriting was no less remarkably fulfilled. Thus was it shown to the Assyrian, as well as to the Jew, that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men." Thus was exhibited a most impressive instance of His power, His government, His justice. In these days the government of the Almighty has not ceased. The mode of its administration only is changed. Though the justice of God may appear to be delayed, it is not abolished. His laws, far from being repealed, are more fully explained and enforced by more powerful sanctions. The day of account must come; and to us it will come with augmented weight and solemnity. Our conduct in the present transitory state must determine our fate for ever. Seeming suspension and delay must not be depended on. The king of Babylon was suddenly called to judgment. We do not want the supernatural writing on the wall, nor the prophet to give us its interpretation. We possess the permanent writing of the Gospel, and that in characters which every man can read. The Gospel, however, contains no promise that we shall not be suddenly called to our account. It ought, indeed, to be one powerful caution against any criminal pursuit, that we may not live to enjoy the fruits of success, or even to complete the crime. Whatever may have been our place or station in society, we shall be finally punished or rewarded, not according to the extent of our endowments or possessions, but according to the zeal and diligence with which they have been employed and improved. (*W. Barrow, LL.D.*)

Retribution.—Belshazzar was the king of Babylon, one of the most splendid cities in the world. It was built in an immense plain; and its walls measured a circumference of sixty miles. A hundred gates of brass adorned it; and hanging gardens, terrace above terrace, clothed its regal palace with living verdure. Through the midst flowed the great river Euphrates, painting in its depths the surrounding magnificence, and shedding beauty on temple and tower, that looked boldly from its banks. Yet the crowned lord himself of this wondrous city was a worthless wretch. He spent his time in luxurious repose, pampering the baser appetites, and permitting all the glory of his great abode to be sustained by the debauchery of his people. Many years he went on, and did his pleasure. God permitted him to choose his own course, and work out his own destiny, in the station assigned. The scene of our text is laid at the return of a certain idolatrous festival. The king had prepared a rich feast to grace it. He called in a thousand of his lords to the sparkling tables. His wives with his concubines came to join the company. And they reclined at the costly viands, spread all around in grateful abundance. So they went on, hour by hour, intoxicating their senses, and burying their souls in unbounded revelry. At length, heated with wine, Belshazzar ordered the sacred vessels, taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the temple of God at Jerusalem, to be brought for service in this scene of rioting and drunkenness. And they all, king, princes, wives, and concubines, used these instruments of holiness as their own goblets. They polluted them with their voluptuous lips, and poured out libations to the idols, and sang impious songs in honour of false gods. Then, suddenly, they saw the fingers, as of a man's hand, writing over against the candlestick, upon the plastered wall. Dim grew the lamps before those letters of fire. Wherefore those letters written on the wall? Simply to

announce a punishment for the crime committed that very night! Thus are they generally understood. But the reference was, doubtless, larger and more solemn. It embraced the king's whole being, and was a final judgment on the long course of his guilty life. "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." Was the king utterly at a loss, even at the first, to know the meaning inscribed by that miraculous hand? So it is commonly supposed. And the idea seems to be justified by his offering a reward to anyone who should be able to read it. But, affrighted as he was at the terrible appearance, there is reason to believe that he was not altogether surprised. For, you will observe, it was not the wondrous miracle nor the blinding splendour that most moved the king. No; the text informs us it was his thoughts that troubled him. It was not stupid amazement and blind fear. No; his thoughts, rising clear and strong, and breaking at once through the fumes of intoxication, troubled him. And how was it that the king's thoughts troubled him? Oh, was it not by the interpretation they gave of the miraculous writing? Did not they translate that burning symbol, whose separate words he could not read, into one large commentary on his whole sinful life? Yes; guilty conscience woke from her slumber in his bosom, and compelled even the monarch to travel with her far away from the brilliant hall of feasting to scenes of cruel bloodshed and dungeons of unjust imprisonment. Far into years long gone and forgotten, she hurried him as ghosts are said to hurry their victims; and, once more to the king's awakened mind, they were filled with their own fresh scenes and real characters. Yet he called in the wise man of God to read the writing, and, as he had promised, rewarded him with a chain of gold about his neck, and by proclaiming him the third ruler in the kingdom. But not for a moment could he stay the righteous goings of the Divine law. Hard on the sentence pronounced pressed its dreadful execution. Terrible interruption came to that scene of joy, where "a thousand hearts beat happily, and music arose with its voluptuous swell." That very night the Persian general, having turned the river Euphrates from its course, marched his troops along the empty channel. The drunken Chaldeans had left open their brazen gates. I have but pictured the operation in a single instance of a law which is universal and eternal—the law of retribution. It is not Belshazzar alone, and Babylon, and two thousand years ago, of which I have spoken, but of every wilful offender against God's law who walks our own streets. It is to be feared most of us do not live with a practical regard to this law of retribution. And wherefore? Is it because we have not found conclusive evidence of its reality? It cannot be; for not only is it a law expounded in Scripture. It is suggested by all the analogies of nature which Scripture has used for its illustration. It is written everywhere in history. It is taught in all civil regulations. We see the same law governing domestic life. How many families, rising to riches and honour by the path of the virtues, have as surely fallen by that of the vices! Two or three generations measured their ascent, and two or three more have sunk them in poverty and shame; and then men talk of the wheel of fortune. Nay, it is the revolution of Providence; it is the justice of God! This moral law too, while exactly adjusting individual fortunes, as easily weighs kingdoms. The Roman empire was built from the feeblest beginnings, by the force of temperance, industry, and valour. She spread her arms over the nations, gave law to savage tribes, made the mention of her citizens a universal joy and terror, and became another name for the world. But luxury flowed in, stagnant sloth extended, corruption prevailed, ambition battled; and she that had ruled mankind by virtue, dissolved in vice, fell a prey to barbarians. All known religions, too, of merely human invention, have confessed the same principle. How deeply have they sunk caverns of torment in the world of spirits! In fine, the vilest sinner himself has fearful anticipations of his doom. Retribution, then, is not only a solemn doctrine of holy writ, but a great fact in human nature. Our disregard of it comes not from any want of proof. How, then, is it to be accounted for? Doubtless, we may say generally, by our own guilty negligence. Yet there are more special reasons. First, the very strength with which it has been believed by some, and the terrific manner in which it has been set forth, have produced unbelief in others. Morbidly excited religionists have averred that the slightest offence is worthy of eternal punishment. No wonder that our ideas of God, of justice, of mercy, yea, and our human hearts, should rebel against such representations. But, recoiling in horror from this over-statement and extravagance, many have gone into a perilous extreme of indifference and doubt. Men have lived as if there were to be no day of reckoning at all, and put their souls to imminent hazard. How many, too, view retribution simply as a doctrine of the understanding, to be uncertainly reasoned about, refuted, or proved, and a fit subject for sectarians to try their armour upon in theological warfare! We have received it too much as an opinion to be discussed, rather than a reality to be felt in a perpetual pressure on the heart. This account shows us, in the first place, that men are generally allowed to go on for a while as they please, really to enjoy the pleasures

of sin for a season. It is sometimes said, guilt always receives its full punishment immediately in this life. But this is plainly not true, as matter of fact; and, if it were, we can hardly conceive how sin or virtue should exist at all. Were the stripes inflicted at once, and for every even the smallest offence, transgression would be a thing to be avoided just as we avoid tasting poison, plunging into deep water, or handling coals of fire. Probation, a trial of men to see whether they will do right, would be entirely out of the question. There could be no free moral will but would at once break down. We should be machines, moving with regularity as the sun and moon do. But how was it with Belshazzar? Time was given him to degrade himself fully, and offer abundant sacrifices to the gods of flesh and sense. Nearly seventeen years had he reigned. He had gathered everything rich and beautiful around him. And yet the angel of judgment had not sensibly touched him. But, secondly, the account from Scripture, while it shows we have a season of clear and proper probation, makes retribution something equally positive and distinct. Though not now mingled in equal proportions with sin, it will at length break in upon it suddenly and sharply. Our own experience will furnish us with cases of commencing retribution similar to that of the Asiatic king. We have seen the young man despising wholesome restraints, neglecting regular duties, moving joyously through all the rounds of sinful pleasure. Was the sword of vengeance stretched at once over his head, and his soul summoned to its trial? No; year after year he went on, and spent his substance in riotous living, and robbed his brothers' patrimony. Noble were the powers of his mind, and, like jewels, they might have shone in his noble frame. But, alas! their strength was all melted down in the fires of appetite and the heats of passion. At length the too-sorely taxed system began to tremble from the height of its proud strength. Loathsome disease infected the nerves, and loosened every fibre. And death is not the end of retribution, but the signal of its more perfect reign. Death is often piously spoken of as a circumstance in life. But it is not a small circumstance. The time arrives for this temple of the human body to be taken down. Finally, the account from Scripture presents retribution, not only as a principle thus sure and dreadful in its operations, but as a law of rigorous justice. Even to the dissolute king it was said, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." Retribution shall be measured and meted out to thee in exact proportion to thy sin. Thou shalt suffer as much as thou deservest, and no more and no less. The unbounded and unqualified declarations which are so common are apt to make us forget this just and guarded style of the Scriptures. A man is to reap exactly what he sows, of the same kind and in the same degree. Turning aside, then, from all ingenious speculations, here is the solemn fact that should press upon our hearts and control our lives. We must eat the fruit of our own doings, and all of it. Oh! were we but once thoroughly persuaded of this simple truth, what revolutions would take place in our lives! How should we avoid every inordinate passion as a raging fire! How should we cast all envious and uncharitable thoughts, like vipers, from our bosoms! What immense interest would life gain in our eyes! Steadily and for ever the work goes on. Events sweep by us, ever taking some stamp from the moral temper of our minds, the transcript of which is entered in the book of judgment. As not the smallest particle of dust is ever annihilated, so not a thought we have cherished, not a feeling we have indulged, not the most trivial act done in the most sportive mood, shall be lost. Buried these things may be, and are, for a time, like seed in a field. The traveller walks over the smooth surface, and dreams not of the mighty process going on beneath. But, nevertheless, soon does the full harvest wave wide its golden treasure. Thus, too, the harvest-season of life shall come. Now is the spring-time of the moral year! (C. A. Bartol.)

Ver. 6. And his thoughts troubled him.—*The Problem of Life and its Solution*:—Poor king! He was not the first, nor is he the last man whose "thoughts" have troubled him. We only want to know that a man can think at all, to know that at some time the current of his thoughts has been disturbed. Some find the cause of disturbance and remove it, and are never seriously troubled more. Others do not, but are disturbed till death destroys the power of thought. Of course, some of one's thoughts are peculiar to the individual. Some he shares with his family, society or nation, only. But the most disturbing thoughts are those which are common to the race, a part of the very fibre of human nature, like patterns woven in a carpet. I. SOME OF THE THOUGHTS THAT TROUBLE A MAN TILL SOLVED. His thought of God or gods, afar off. His thought of duty, responsibility, conscious of the force of "ought," "should," "right," as though somehow, or somewhere, he should have to render account. Standards vary; men do not live up to their own standards of duty, right, etc.; may knowingly reject them all, but the thought remains. And his thought about life after death. II. THE TROUBLE THAT THESE THOUGHTS GIVE. It is not a sharp hurt, rather like a dull,

steady pain, just enough to keep us conscious that something is wrong. They keep us uneasy, not quite happy at best, discontented, always wanting something, hardly knowing what. We lay this sense of unrest at the door of the weather, the crops, business, our health, the way people treat us, or do not treat us—anything. What is the source of the trouble in man? Not that there is a God, spirits, judgment, life after death, Heaven, hell. But the uncertainty, the suspense, the inability to settle down confidently on the one side or the other. This was the trouble with the king; that handwriting on the wall: what does it mean? III. HERE IS THE PROBLEM of our life. What does it all mean? What is the truth of these things? Why should man think such thoughts at all? Is there any solution of the problem? IV. THE SOLUTION. So the matter stood when Jesus came. The old religions were losing their hold; could not solve the problem sufficiently to bring peace. Jesus comes. Matters not who He is, whence He came, how He got here. He suggests another answer, a full solution to this problem, and invites you to try that. The solution He offers for trial to each is this: There is one God, loving Father of men. His children gone astray, but children still, need a sacrifice to restore harmony. Take this, then, as an hypothesis, a guess at the truth, and try it. Work it back into the problem; live on the lines of thought, temper, word, deeds here suggested, and see effect on these questions. No harm in trying it. You are not asked to know these things, but believe them; accept them as unproven, and try them. If they are false you will know it. If true you will know it. (*N. P. Dame.*) *The Terror of a Guilty Conscience*.—Under whatever circumstances a man may be placed, if he has peace with his conscience and with his God he cares comparatively little about other matters; the pressure of many difficulties is much less felt—even the weight of heavy affliction is greatly reduced. We all know what it is to enjoy with thankfulness the cheerful fire-side, when in the wintry night the blast howls around the dwelling, and the rain descends in torrents on the roof; we feel the peaceful comfort of our home, and, while reflecting on the fearfulness of the tempest, we experience no little measure of satisfaction, arising from a sense of safety; all is quietness within, though the fierce wind prevails tremendously without. So with the child of grace, having peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; notwithstanding the waves of this troublesome world, the ceaseless temptations, the frequent trials, he reflects upon the abundant consolation inwardly supplied, and delights in the holy calm that attends it. On the other hand, let a man possess everything that will outwardly promote his ease; give him money, rank, and health, yet if he have not peace within he is miserable. A rebuking conscience will mar all the attempts of the worldly to still the inward uneasiness; they may change their pursuits and seek fresh gratifications, yet from time to time they will know the sad truth of the Divine declaration—"There is no peace to the wicked." O, what wretchedness is there in the world! where, according to man's frail judgment, appearances are favourable, what trouble prevails! The proper way to treat our subject will be first of all to notice what is related in the beginning of the chapter, then endeavour to make a profitable application of it to ourselves. Scripture gives no information respecting Belshazzar until the time when he had just about filled his cup of iniquity to the full, and the judgment of God was overtaking him. It is an awful thought that this character is only brought before us that we may mark his great wickedness, hear the Divine sentence pronounced, and read its speedy execution. But, ere God executed His predicted purpose, this haughty, wicked king was to receive another Divine intimation, the immediate forerunner of his destruction. But why, we may inquire, should Belshazzar be so terrified and alarmed! He could not read, and, therefore, knew not their meaning. As an idolator, why might he not suppose that some of those gods he had been so lately praising were communicating some favourable information? Why not think that, though the words were secret, still they might convey glad tidings? Such thoughts do not seem to have been entertained, but a horrible dread took hold of him; terror and trembling seized on his flesh. He is full of impatience to know the meaning of the writing: "he cries aloud" for some to explain it, though fearful forebodings possessed his mind. But why, we ask again, is Belshazzar thus perplexed and distressed? Why does not the bold and daring spirit of the prince still support him? How is it that his boasting has vanished and his courage failed? How are we to understand these circumstances—an individual not afraid to insult and dare the Almighty God, yet suddenly beyond measure terrified merely at the sight of a hand and a few unknown words? Why not despise the writing, and indulge the jeer and the scoff at their purport, whatever it might be? Ah, there is such a thing as conscience; and, though for a long season stifled and confined, yet it sometimes bursts through all hindrances, and makes the sinner a terror to himself. It was so at this hour with Belshazzar. It was the time of God's visitation; and he let loose the guilty thoughts upon the mind of this wicked prince; and these thoughts, so long smothered, are now the cause of trouble. Many a time, we may

suppose, had the king of Babylon banished dull and serious considerations by betaking himself to his drunken cups; but now neither the abundance of wine, nor his numerous company, can rid him of these unwelcome thoughts; they will not leave him, and he is troubled. Wonderful effect of conscience! A sense of guilt came over the mind of Belshazzar as suddenly and as unexpectedly as when Joseph's brethren "said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." And this sense of guilt was accompanied with the dread of consequences. Behold, then, in this instance, how soon the Lord can alarm the most secure, and startle the most hardened. The thoughts of the guilty are abundantly sufficient to trouble him; nothing more is required—even in the midst of his sensual gratifications. But what information do we gather from this history? What lessons are there in it useful to ourselves? Belshazzar is arrested in the midst of his mirth and jollity, compelled to listen to the rebukes of a guilty conscience, and bear the burden of troubled thoughts. Alas, that we have so much reason to suppose that many now-a-days are in like case with this idolatrous prince! for, though they do not outwardly worship wood and stone, still inwardly they serve their lusts, their pleasures, their means, or anything but their God. We may mark the torment of a reproaching conscience. It is often the cause of some perplexity that the wicked are not in trouble like other folk; the drunkard follows, time after time, his strong drink, and is apparently unrebuked in his vice; the worldly-minded likewise pursue their course, seeking only earthly things, and we possibly conclude that they are never plagued. But we see a very little way; we observe the outward man, and consider not enough what goes on within. Who can say what the thoughts of the ungodly are? Who can tell what passes in their minds? A man may brave for a while the eye of his fellow-creature; he may put on the manner of one determined to persist in his ways, but how is it with him when God turns His hand against him—when God makes conscience speak, and lets the thoughts of past guilt loose upon his mind? What is this but a foretaste of fiery indignation? Then the stoutest hearts fail; the mirth is dull, and the carnal indulgence unsatisfactory; even the excess of wine will not drive away the unwelcome reflections, for conscience is stirred, and its voice cannot be silenced. God has rebuked the sinner; and he is both amazed and terrified. O what a different picture would the world present if thoughts were as well known as words and deeds! The wish expressed would then be—As to the sufferings of disease and the difficulties of poverty, these I would willingly bear; only let me be free from the judicial rebukes of conscience, delivered from the dreadful harassings of troubling thoughts, and eased of the burden of a soul unreconciled to God. We may be resolved not to attend to those things which bring our sin to remembrance, and to turn away when our guilt is set before us; but our resolution is nothing if the Lord determines to vex us in His sore displeasure. He makes us then attend to His word. Nothing earthly can remove it, and nothing is derived from Heaven to allay the uneasiness it creates; no balm to heal the galled conscience, no physician known to apply the means of cure. O what a pitiable state is that man in whose thoughts are a trouble—whom God thus in judgment afflicts! His master, Satan, can find no remedy; his friend, the world, can supply no consolation. His conscience is at last aroused, and conveys the dreadful assurance of approaching condemnation. The unreconciled, under such circumstances, may look around for help, for something to cheer; but all his resources are of no avail. And what increases tenfold his misery is this—that mercy had been freely offered, the gospel message proclaimed, and the Saviour set forth crucified for his sins. Vain, under these sad circumstances, to look for help to the things of the earth and to worldly friends. Belshazzar lacked neither the one nor the other; but they were of no advantage to him. He called his wise men of Chaldea, made them large promises, and entreated them to relieve his mind by explaining the mysterious writing; but they could do nothing for him, though great was the reward offered. You may be satisfied with the world now; you may argue that you have enough to do in attending to the affairs of this life, and cannot spare time for the matters of the soul; you may try to justify your present unbecoming anxieties, or defend your sinful indulgences; but, believe me, your sin will one day find you out; and had you all the wealth with the thousand lords of the king of Babylon, in that same day when your thoughts will trouble you, these will be of no avail; you will want other riches and another Friend. Alas for you that the want had not been sooner discovered. What, however, did Belshazzar consent to do in his extremity? He was even willing that the forgotten and despised Daniel should be sent for. But what has the prophet to say? Can he give any encouragement? The writing indeed he recognises; he knows the word of his God, and the awful meaning is at once perceived. The terror-stricken king awaits his doom, but not long; for the Lord made short work; in that very night hopeless Belshazzar is slain, and perishes. And is there

not too much corresponding with this conduct in the bulk of mere nominal Christians? The minister of the gospel is lightly esteemed and rejected so long as sin and folly are not interrupted. But when the Lord turns the thoughts of the ungodly against themselves, and makes them "a trouble," then the steward of God's mysteries may come. And what is to be done? Can we, as ambassadors for Christ, tell those that have been all their days living in sin that they shall die in peace? Can we speak smooth things to them, and give a sleeping-draught to the soul, that it may pass stilly indeed, but without good hope, to eternity? Nay, this cannot be. We must clear our own consciences, and be faithful in the sight of God; like Daniel, we must declare the truth. To the last, indeed, we proclaim the blessed truth, that Christ is mighty to save, and that "him that cometh unto him shall in no wise be cast out." Further than this we cannot venture to go. Think not, then, that we can quickly calm all your fears, and remove your anxieties, when you have been through life living without God in the world. "Knowing then the terrors of the Lord," let us be persuaded to shake off more completely the chilling influence of the world, to lay aside "the sin that doth most easily beset us," and resist more resolutely the assaults of Satan. When sorrowing most heavily over our own sins and short-comings, yet we shall not altogether lack the consolations of Jesus; these will give ease and quiet; and the more we seek them, the more peace they will supply. One thing, however, if true believers, we may attain unto, and to which the ungodly and worldly-minded are always strangers; when any burden presses upon our souls we are taught by the Spirit how to cast it in prayer upon the Lord, and we know He will sustain. Then, though weighed in the balances, we shall not be found wanting. (*J. Downes, M.A.*) *Troublesome Thoughts*.—More trouble comes to men from their thoughts than from all other sources put together. Let us consider: I. THE REASON FOR THE KING'S TROUBLED THOUGHTS. 1. A visible cause. Mystery not necessarily fearful. The princes wondered, the king was in terror. 2. A cause in the king himself. (1) He had led a wicked life. (2) He had just been guilty of a pointed insult to God. Men interpret events in the light of their own thoughts. Events mean different things to different persons. Especially is this true in case of conscious guilt. A policeman enters a school-room—many wonder, one turns pale. Fear God and be brave. 3. The reality back of the appearance: "God hath numbered thy kingdom," etc. II. THE KING'S CONDUCT. 1. More anxiety to have the writing interpreted than to humble himself before God. 2. He seeks interpretation from all others before Daniel. Then he flatters him and offers reward. The world will flatter those who interpret the truth to suit them. Balak and Balaam. Daniel interpreted fearlessly. Facts not changed by false interpretation. Interpret for the honour of God. III. THE BIBLE IS STILL THE GREAT TROUBLER OF MEN'S THOUGHTS. There is a conscience in man which makes him feel that the Bible speaks to him. There is a reality back of this word, both of the promise and the warning. (*H. R. Parmelee.*)

Vers. 13—17. Then was Daniel brought in before the king.—*The Preacher's Opportunity*.—How the prophet always clears a space for himself; how on great occasions men distribute themselves into proper classes. When the occasion is little, one man is as good as another; there is a general hum of conversation, and it is difficult to tell the great man from the small, the obscure man from the famous; but when the crisis comes, by some law hardly to be expressed in words, men fall into their right relations, and there stands up the man who has the keys of the Kingdom of God. Preachers of the Word, you will be wanted some day by Belshazzar; you were not at the beginning of the feast, but you will be there before the banqueting-hall is closed; the king will not ask you to drink wine, but he will ask you to tell the secret of his pain and heal the malady of his heart. Abide your time. You are nobody now. Who cares for preachers, teachers, seers, and men of insight, while the wine goes round, and the feast is unfolding its tempting luxuries? Midway down the programme to mention pulpit, or preacher, or Bible, would be to violate the harmony of the occasion. But the preacher, as we have often had occasion to say, will have his opportunity. They will send for him when all other friends have failed; may he then come fearlessly, independently, asking only to be made a medium through which Divine communications can be addressed to the listening trouble of the world. Daniel will take the scarlet and the chain by-and-by, but not as a bribe; he will take the poor baubles of this dying Babylon and will use them to the advantage of the world through actions that shall become historical, but he will not first fill his hands with bribes, and then read the king's riddles. The prophet is self-sustained by being Divinely inspired. He needs no promise to enable him to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Indeed, he has nothing to say of himself. Every man, in proportion as he is a Daniel, has nothing to invent, nothing to conceive in his own intellect; he has no warrant or credential from the empty court of

his own genius; he bears letters from Heaven; he expresses the claims of God. O Daniel, preacher, speaker, teacher, thunder out God's word, if it be a case of judgment and doom; or whisper it, or rain in gracious tears, if it be a message of sympathy and love and welcome. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Daniel's Speech to Belshazzar*:—Never was there a finer example of fidelity than this address. There is nothing harsh, nothing violent, nothing designed merely to irritate. All is plain, direct, and pointed—like one speaking in God's name, and who felt himself standing in God's presence. Daniel reminds Belshazzar of what God had done to Nebuchadnezzar, both in the way of mercy and of judgment. The address proceeds on the assumption that Belshazzar ought to have considered, with devout attention, the dealings of God towards Nebuchadnezzar. From this we learn that it is our duty to regard the providential dealings of God, and that we cannot neglect this without sin. Daniel intimated that if Belshazzar had duly considered the Divine procedure towards Nebuchadnezzar, he might have arrived at the knowledge that Jehovah was the true God. Daniel condemned Belshazzar because he did not take warning from the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. All the punishments which God has inflicted because of sin are warnings to fear God and hate evil. Belshazzar's knowledge of those things which befel Nebuchadnezzar rendered him wholly inexcusable. (*William White.*)

Ver. 16. And dissolve doubts.—*The Dissolving of Doubts*:—Doubts and questions are not peculiar to Nebuchadnezzar, but they are the common lot and heritage of humanity. We live just now in a specially doubting age. Science puts everything in question, and literature distils the questions, making an atmosphere of them. The cultivated and mature have their doubts ingrown they know not how, and the younger minds encounter their public visitations when they do not seek them. Note the three principal sources and causes whence our doubts arise, and from which they get force to make their assault. 1. All the truths of religion are inherently dubitable. They are only what are called probable, never necessary truths like the truths of geometry or of numbers. This field of probable truth is the whole field of religion, and of course it is competent for doubt to cover it in every part and item. 2. We begin life as unknowing creatures that have everything to learn. We grope, the groping is doubt; we handle, we question, we guess, we experiment, beginning in darkness and stumbling on towards intelligence. 3. It is a fact, disguise it as we can, or deny it as we may, that our faculty is itself in disorder. A broken or bent telescope will not see anything rightly. A filthy window will not bring in even the day as it is. As long as these three sources, or originating causes of doubt continue, doubts will continue, and will, in one form or another, be multiplied. I do not propose, therefore, to show how they may be stopped, for that is impossible, but only how they may be dissolved, or cleared away. The first thing to be said is negative, viz., that the doubters never can dissolve or extirpate their doubts by inquiry, search, investigation, or any kind of speculative endeavour. They must never go after the truth to merely find it, but to practice it and live by it. To be simply curious is only a way to multiply doubts; for in doing it they are, in fact, postponing all the practical rights of truth. They imagine, it may be, that they are going first to settle their questions, and then at their leisure to act. As if they were going to get the perfect system and complete knowledge of truth before they move an inch in doing what they know! And they come out wondering at the discovery, that the more they investigate the less they believe! Their very endeavour mocks them—just as it really ought. For truth is something to be lived. How shall a mind get on finding more truth, save as it takes direction from what it gets? There is no fit search after truth which does not, first of all, begin to live the truth it knows. To come to positive matter. There is a way for dissolving any and all doubts—a way that opens at a very small gate, but widens wonderfully after you pass. Every human soul, at a certain first point of its religious outfit, has a key given to it which is to be the “open sesame” of all right discovery. Every man acknowledges the distinction of right and wrong, feels the reality of that distinction, knows it by immediate consciousness even as he knows himself. He would not be a man without that distinction. It is even this which distinguishes him from the mere animals. Here is the key that opens everything. The only reason why we fall into so many doubts, and get unsettled in our inquiries, instead of being settled by them, as we undertake to be, is that we do not begin at the beginning. A right mind has a right polarity, and discovers right things by feeling after them. The true way, then, of dissolving doubts, is to begin at the beginning, and do the first thing first. Say nothing of investigation till you have made sure of being grounded everlastingly, and with a completely whole intent in the principle of right doing as a principle. Unreligious men are right only so far as they can be, they may not be at all right in principle. Lessons: 1. Be never afraid of doubt. 2. Be afraid of all sophistries, and

tricks, and strifes. 3. Getting into a scornful way is fatal. 4. Never put force on the mind to make it believe. 5. Never be in a hurry to believe. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. And made known to him the interpretation.—*The True Interpreter of Life*.—I. THAT IN NO NATION IS THERE A TOTAL ABSENCE OF DIVINE RULERSHIP. The people of Israel assumed that their God was their own private property. They knew God by the name of Jehovah. He was superior to other national gods, but He had Israel specially in charge, and Israel had Jehovah specially in possession. The Israelites were the first to realise intelligently the great truth of one God for all men. The prophets of Israel were occupied in enlarging the views of the people, so as to get them to grasp the fact that this Jehovah was the one God, and ruled over all men. If you search the Book of Daniel you find this man's mind under the influence of truth far in advance of that of any of his own nation or of the nation of Babylon. Hence when there is panic in the banqueting-hall because out of the sleeve of darkness the fingers of a man's hand are put forth to write on the palace walls the words of doom, it is Daniel who is called out of the retirement of his old age to read and interpret. Babylonian wise men had universal fame for their philosophy and astrology, yet they could not read the writing. When he begins to speak the greatness of the man is felt as the eloquent words roll from his tongue. It is another kind of speech from that to which Belshazzar is accustomed to listen. Not for one single moment does he acknowledge one God for the Israelites and another for the Babylonians. "O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty." The source of all power is in the Most High God, and the source of all faculty. The past is associated with the present. To learn from the past is the wisdom of the present. Daniel, the seer, distinctly proclaims the fact of God in history. The history of Babylon reveals God's working as really as, if not as clearly, the history of Israel. There is not one law for Israel and another for Babylon. The same law works uniformly. Moral decline brings the same result to Israel and Babylon. Men were of opinion that the Most High God ruled in Israel, but not in Babylon. Not such an opinion did Daniel hold. And we ourselves are even behind Daniel in our culture if we do not hold that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of God. Everywhere God's laws are working. God gave Nebuchadnezzar his power. God deposed his son Belshazzar. God gave Babylon to Darius the Mede. In no nation is there a total absence of Divine rulership—that is the first basis idea of this narrative. II. THAT APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL, and that when men seem to be most prosperous they are often least so. The Babylonians relied on that which was external to themselves and their own character for safety—upon their magnificent commerce, upon their river Euphrates, the great river which, as it had been the pride of Babylon, now proved its destruction. Wealth, luxury, revelling had taken the heart and soul out of men, as they always do, and the men of Babylon became as women—they were hewn down like the flocks of lambs, of sheep, of goats at the shambles. If men would only read history, if they would only take to heart the lessons which God has writ on so many pages of the world's past life, instead of our being confident when we see everywhere signs of luxury and wealth, haughtiness of head and proud unsociableness, we should then begin to tremble for the character of the people, for the vigour of the young men and the purity of the maidens. The history of Babylon is not exceptional. It is the history of every city and nation that by its luxury and selfishness has become enfeebled and disgraced. "Pride cometh before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." III. THAT THE INTERPRETER OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH NATIONS MUST OF NECESSITY BE A SPIRITUAL MAN. Only Daniel could read that writing on the wall—only he, the faithful man, who from his youth to his old age had served his God in simple confidence could be the interpreter. There he stands before Belshazzar and his thousand nobles, nobly independent of all rewards. Too late was Daniel called. All he could do was to read the undecipherable and irreversible verdict. He belonged to a past age and a past dynasty. Yet he was the most scholarly man there, the wisest man, the most needed man. But he had been retired. The merchant and philosopher could not save the city. These two forces represented by the merchant and philosopher needed a third force. Commerce is good and necessary, learning is good and necessary; but they represent but two parts of that trinity which man's nature is. Daniel, the spiritual man, represents the third part. We need not set one of these over against the other. Bring them into co-operative unity, and the strength of each will come into the other. The history of Daniel is designed to teach us that the spiritual man is the only competent interpreter of the life of nations as of the life of individuals. That light which is more than the light of trained intelligence is needed always. The man who steadfastly serves God in simple, childlike faith gets into his soul a light, a seeing power, which can come in no other way. "He that is spiritual discerneth all

things, yet he himself is discerned of no man." The spiritual man can see farther into reasons and causes than other men can. The merchant of Babylon would say, "Providing Babylon be prosperous from the merchant's point of view, that is everything!" "Providing we have good percentages on our investments," says our modern merchant, "that is prosperity! What more do we want?" "Providing we have educational institutions, also," says the educator, "we shall be perfect; plenty of trade and education—then is a people prosperous." But what will you do with Daniel and that which he represents? There was plenty of trade in Babylon, plenty of learning, plenty of everything to which the words "costly" and "magnificent" can be applied—the only thing that was lacking was that which Daniel stood for. All that the people lacked was the unweighable and immeasurable virtues of purity, honesty, truthfulness, integrity, love to God and love to man—that was all. The merchants of Babylon did not trouble themselves very much about those things, and the educated classes thought that so long as the sciences of the day were taught it was all right with Babylon. Sooner or later every Babylonian type of life sees the writing of judgment on the wall. Sooner or later every family brought up in luxury and selfishness, with no spiritual instruction, sees the writing on the wall. The Babylonian type of life is everywhere. It is that type which seeks after the external—wealth and luxury and ease—regardless of spiritual character. It has no light in it by which to interpret itself. It needs a Daniel to interpret it, but never sends for him till it has tried all other sources of information, and only then at the suggestion of someone who knows Daniel, and pleads to have him sent for.

IV. THAT THE SPIRITUAL MAN IS THE INTERPRETER OF LIFE IN ALL ITS FORMS, AND NO OTHER MAN IS. Belshazzar cannot interpret his own life or the life about him; only Daniel can do it. The hour had come when Belshazzar had nothing to give to any mortal on earth. He knew not that that was his last night on earth. How could it be? Look at this magnificent banqueting-hall, these thousands of lords, these beauties of Babylon glittering like fire-flies in summer evenings. No signs of poverty, no signs of bankruptcy—glory, glory everywhere. But see, see—what is that? that hand? writing on the wall? The music stops. Astrologer, read! Wise man, read! None can read! None!—till Daniel is sought and found. Oh, the suspense till Daniel comes! And when he comes, he comes only to read the burial service over a dying king and a dying dynasty. The thought I would leave with you, then, is this: that the spiritual man is the seeing man—the man who has his eyes open—he is the interpreter of life. Enoch in his day; Abraham in his day; Noah in his day; Moses in his day; Elijah in his day; Daniel in his day—these men see most, know most, because they are spiritual men. Every man is eventually what he trains himself to be. Every man has eyes for that on which he has been looking long and intently. Most of us are blind in some direction. The blindest man of all is he who has no use for Daniel and his seeing power. But "it is one of the most melancholy things in the world that while usually the executive part of a man grows sharper and most effective as he advances in life, those things which make his manhood, his noble traits, average worse as he grows older." Without the Gospel received into the heart, and cherished there, persons ripen poorly, badly, and are seldom as generous, seldom as honourable, seldom as sensitive, seldom as fine in their perceptions as they were when they were boys and girls. There are men and women who become so occupied with the externals of life that if Daniel came near them he would be a calamity, an enigma, or, as men say flippantly, a crank. A man can take one or two interests in life, and so give himself up to them that all the greater truths of life are entirely unheeded by him. Of the spiritual influences permeating society, of what God is doing by His providence, of what God's Spirit is doing in the hearts of men—of the very greatest facts in this world of ours they have not even a suspicion. To a spiritual man the Bible is the most living of all living books; to those of whom I speak it is the dullest and deadest. The elaborate art with which even some fathers and mothers plan to try to grow their children on the earth level, instead of letting them aspire under the impulse of the inward life of God pushing within them, is one of the most painful things that a spiritualised mind has to witness in these times on which our lot is cast. I have seen how in gardens certain flowering plants are taken and pinned down to the ground—never allowed to climb one inch above it—made to grow on the ground level. Other flowering plants are allowed to climb and climb; only give them the faintest support, and climb they will sunward, ever away from the earth, ever towards the sun. I suppose that to pin down certain flowers—verbenas and others—to the earth is right enough; but it can never be right to train children that way. Let them climb sunward, lift themselves up above the ground, sweetly and naturally, like God's morning glories, as they are. There was Belshazzar, a most elaborately gilded and decorated sarcophagus, with a soul within in which the worms of envy, lust, pride were crawling over each other. Daniel saw it. The lords and ladies did not. They thought that Belshazzar was not only

a living man, but a king of men. But when he was weighed he was light. He had no soul in him. And there are hundreds of such men, whose whole time is spent in trying to get rid of the consciousness of a soul. To these our Lord's words are addressed, to these that unanswered question of His ever comes, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and, in the gaining, lose his own soul?" (*Reuben Thomas, D.D.*) *The Faithful Interpreter of the Word of God*:—The mightiest of the sons of men are not exempt from the terrors of guilt; neither can their power secure them from the avenging hand of justice. What did the majesty of a king now avail when his countenance was changed with fear? What comfort did he receive from his outward happiness when his thoughts troubled him? Those that are set apart for the work of the ministry should interpret and explain the will of God in its genuine sense, how disagreeable soever to the lusts of men; and should never betray their trust through a cowardly fear, or partial favour, by slackening the bonds of duty, or palliating the heinousness of sin, or concealing the danger that arises from it. I. IT IS OUR DUTY TO READ THE WRITING, AND MAKE KNOWN THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF. It is indeed every man's duty to acquaint himself with the will of God, and impart his knowledge to his servants, his children, his brother, and his friend. And he should never suffer them to continue in ignorance of sin, but impartially give them instructions, exhortations, or reproofs, as their condition requires. But it is most especially the duty of those that serve at the altar (*Mal. ii. 7*). The necessities of life engage too great a part of mankind in a servile employment, and they are withdrawn by so many avocations from the study of God's law, that it is necessary there should be an order of men who should make it their peculiar care to learn the original language of the Holy Scriptures and the uncorrupted sense of the earliest ages, to examine the tenure by which we hold our Christian charter, and to consider the various objections that have from time to time been made against it. And besides and beyond all this, they may justly expect the especial guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. But how much soever the enemies of our faith or the enemies of our holy order may vilify and depreciate the authority of the ministers of God, yet they themselves do more effectually injure it unless they discharge their commission in its utmost extent and resolutely declare the whole truth of God. They are bound by the strictest obligations to cleave to it. Great would be the presumption of any minister that should neglect the commands of his earthly prince, and act at his own discretion. Nor are they only unjust to God, but barbarous and unnatural to the souls of men; for the unlearned and ignorant put their entire confidence in them, and depend upon their direction in the way to life and happiness. It must, therefore, be an instance of the most inhuman cruelty to deceive their just hopes and abuse their earnest expectations. To poison the fountains where the flocks are to refresh themselves at noon; and direct the traveller at the approach of night to a fatal precipice, or a treacherous quicksand: these are such brutish practices as nature abhors. It is a strange abuse of Christian moderation, and a false and pernicious show of charity, to indulge the humours of vicious men; to soften religion into a compliance with them, and model it after their own frame. It is lawful, indeed, in indifferent matters to yield a little for the sake of peace, and to become all things to all men; but the articles of our faith and the principal duties of life are not indifferent matters; we may contend earnestly for these without losing our Christian temper. Did Ahab escape the arrow, that was shot at a venture, because the false prophets bid him go and prosper? If Daniel had pleased Belshazzar with an unfaithful account of the writing; if he had persuaded him to continue his impious feast, and eat, drink, and be merry, would the hand that wrote have forborne to punish him? Would not the writing have explained itself before the morning? How widely soever the articles of our religion may be made to differ from their original sense; how broad soever the path to Heaven may be represented; though the obligations to virtue may be described as unnecessary, as indifferent, or even as nothing; though the penalties of vice may seemingly be taken away, and eternal punishments be changed into temporal; to abate the fears, or gratify the desires of the wicked; yet the articles are still the same, and the way to Heaven as narrow; the obligations to virtue cannot be dissolved; the penalties of vice cannot be removed. II. IT IS THE NOBLEST ACT OF FRIENDSHIP AND CHARITY TO READ THE WRITING, AND MAKE KNOWN THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF. When Hilkiah the Priest had found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses, the good Josiah immediately sent to enquire after it, that he might distinctly know the breaches of the covenant, and the heavy curses that hung over Jerusalem; and as soon as the tender heart of the king was affected with a sense of the common guilt and danger, his compassion to his sinful wretched people would not suffer him to rest till he had read in the ears of all the men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the words of the book of the covenant. The affectionate Jesus has placed his ministers as watchmen to observe the dangers of His flock, and sound the alarm when the enemy

is stealing upon it. The children of men are liable to be misled, and swerve from the right way, amidst the various and uncertain paths of life; their imperfect understandings give but a feeble glimmering twilight to guide them, and are easily covered with darkness. False appearances deceive them. And those unhappy souls that are engaged in a course of sin do no longer judge for themselves, but receive the flattering reports of their enemies that compass them about. It is indeed a difficult office, but the more difficult, so much greater is the friendship, so much the nobler the charity. What a glorious office is it to turn a sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death! And this faithful discharge of their duty will: III. OBTAIN RESPECT, EVEN FROM THOSE UNHAPPY MEN THAT HATE THE INTERPRETATION. Ahab hated Elijah because he told him the truth, but he also stood in awe of him. And Herod feared St. John because he acquainted him with his guilt; and though his bold rebukes interfered with the sin of his bosom, yet he often heard his plain and disinterested preaching; and such was the influence of his unshaken honesty that he did many things, and heard him gladly. And though our open, ingenuous behaviour may provoke wicked men to injure us for a time, yet it: IV. WILL AT LENGTH MAKE THEM RELENT AND BE SORRY FOR IT. Constancy and fidelity have a mighty force in obtaining the love of mankind; and this may be illustrated by the case of Daniel. V. I proceed TO SHOW THAT THE CASE OF WICKED MEN IS, THEN, MOST DEPLORABLE WHEN THEY ARE DEPRIVED OF THOSE FAITHFUL MONITORS THAT DARE TELL THEM THE TRUTH. They are then left to themselves, and abandoned and consigned over to the most pernicious counsels. They see no tokens of goodness, there is not one prophet more to awaken them out of the sleep of sin. Let not the plausible show of tenderness and moderation incline us to conceal the heinousness and danger of sin, or draw a favourable representation of the case of wicked men. Let us not endeavour to gain their favour for a time by pretending to put off the evil day, and screening them from the thoughts of a miserable eternity. (T. Neulin, M.A.)

Vers. 22, 23. **Hast not humbled in the heart, though thou knewest all this.**—*The Prophet's Indictment*:—It included three counts. 1. The teaching of God had been disregarded. The sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar had been from God. That dependence had been forgotten, and so pride had been chastened by insanity. 2. God had been insulted. A poor worm had dared to exalt itself against him. In the midst of a scene of which many a heathen would have been ashamed, the consecrated vessels of His house had been used to drink to other gods, "which see not, nor hear, nor know." 3. The glory of God had not been sought. It was not in Belshazzar's power, indeed, to add anything to the essential glory of God, but it was for him to reflect that glory. He could add nothing to God's ineffable brightness, but he could catch light from Heaven, and diffuse it. He could be such a man, and live such a life, that others might have their ideas of God exalted, and be constrained to confess that "He whose name is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth." (H. T. Hobjohns, B.A.)

Ver. 23. **And the God in whose hand thy breath is.**—Providence, when it pleases, can soon humble the haughtiest, and alarm the boldest sinner. I. Let us consider THE ACCOUNT GIVEN OF OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD: "In his hand our breath is, and his are all our ways." We cannot imagine that this was particular to Belshazzar. It may as truly be affirmed of every other man as of him. Independence is not a quality that belongs, and can be applied, to a creature. It is the attribute of God alone, the Creator. We exist, for He gave us being. We continue to be, because He preserves us. If we escape any of those numberless evils and dangers to which the constitution of our nature and our condition in this world expose us every day and hour, it is not to be ascribed to our own care and caution alone as its cause; no, our safety is from the power and goodness of God exercised towards us. We are secure while Providence graciously vouchsafes its protection, but not a moment without it. Let us ask ourselves, who guards us by day and by night, in perils at home and perils abroad? "God is our shield" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Who furnishes the food with which our bodies are supported and refreshed? Who covers them with raiment for defence and ornament? These are gifts of God to men. Nothing is without the ordination or permission of His providence. Our breath, our life, our ways, all the events of life, and the right conduct of it, are His. The wide extended universe is His family, over which He exercises a constant government. He is the father and the friend of it. On the providence of God we all depend; a doctrine most acceptable and comfortable to His own children; to them who fear, and love, and obey Him. Sinners, if they believe at all, or think at all, must from hence discern in how foolish and how dangerous a course they are engaged. Can they bear the thought of having Him for their enemy who made and rules the world by His power?

It is the fool only that refuses to fear and glorify God. Irreligion is destruction. Were I speaking to princes and nobles of the earth, who are too apt to be unmindful of it, I would, from the text, sound this doctrine in their ears: You who are the highest amongst men, depend upon Divine providence no less than the meanest subject and servant you have. "Our breath," as the prophet expresses it, "is in the hand of God." The breath is the life. And whence did we draw this breath of life at the first? The great God inspired it into the human frame. In like manner the succession of generations is maintained. II. THE OBLIGATION WE ARE UNDER IN CONSEQUENCE OF OUR CONSTANT AND ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON GOD; we must glorify Him. Belshazzar did not. This was his sin. And it was both his shame and his ruin. It may be asked, perhaps, What can man do, by which God can be glorified? "Can man be profitable to his Maker? Can our goodness extend to Him," and add to His honour? "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that we are righteous, or is it gain to Him that we make our ways perfect?" 1. In answer to this, it is proper to remark that there is a sense in which we may, and therefore ought, to glorify God. This would not otherwise have been made the subject of a Divine command; and yet such it is. The neglect of this could not, upon any other supposition, have been reproached. 2. Let me observe that the expression of glorifying God is not to be taken in the strictest and literal sense of it, but in some such manner as I am now going to describe. When our minds are possessed with proper and suitable sentiments of God, as the greatest, the wisest, the best of all beings, "as righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" when, by converse with the word of God, the mind is enlightened with the knowledge of God, and of His will, and the heart is under an impression of the Divine attributes and excellencies; when we reverently bow to His majesty, are awed by the consideration of His justice and omnipotence; when we admire and adore His universal and infallible wisdom; when His mercy melts us into repentance; when we place our happiness, our greatest happiness, while we are in the world, in His favour; when, upon impartial examination of ourselves, we have reason to hope and believe that this is our case, then do we glorify God. In this temper, in this behaviour, we manifest a becoming reverence of those perfections which are the glory of the Divine nature. And who is there amongst us so insensible as to be doubtful one moment whether this be his duty or not? Let reason and conscience speak, and be heard, and conviction will follow. III. THE GUILT AND DANGER OF NOT GLORIFYING GOD. 1. Let our thoughts dwell upon the guilt contracted by such a behaviour. What! O man, art thou forgetful of Him who made thee, who has distinguished and adorned thy nature with those intellectual and moral powers that render thee capable of knowing, contemplating, worshipping, obeying, imitating, enjoying Him for ever? Ingratitude to a sincere and generous friend we condemn, and with the justest reason. 2. From hence we may easily perceive and estimate our danger, if we live, not to God, but to ourselves; not to His glory, but to the lusts of our own hearts, or the vanity of our own minds. Sometimes it is seen that persons of this sort are overtaken by the judgments of God in this world, "and they cannot escape"; but miseries beyond all imagination await them in another, which are not to be avoided in any other way than by a timely and hearty repentance. Belshazzar was confident, presumptuous, insolent in impiety. Lessons: 1. Learn from hence what should be the main view and end of all your actions; to wit, to honour God and please Him, that so you may enjoy Him. You were created to glorify God. The enjoyment of Him will follow. And in that consists the supreme and eternal happiness of mankind. 2. Let us examine ourselves that we may know ourselves, and the true state of our souls, upon a point of the clearest and utmost importance to us. "Has God been in all our thoughts"—or in great measure excluded from them? How have we lived?—to Him, or to ourselves? "Have we glorified Him with our bodies and our spirits, which are His?" Do not go on to provoke and defy the justice of an omnipotent God, jealous of His own honour, but humble yourselves before Him. 3. That we may maintain a just sense of our dependence upon God, and live to His glory, we must keep up the practice and the spirit of prayer. Glorify God in this world, and you shall be glorified with Him in the world that is to come. (*F. Sandercock.*) *Dependence on God for Life*:—Though Belshazzar was a heathen, yet he ought to have known and realised his absolute dependence upon God, in whom he lived, and moved, and had his being. I. I am to consider THAT GOD IS THE PRESERVER OF THE LIVES OF MEN. He is certainly the giver, and of consequence the preserver of life. We cannot conceive that God can give mankind independent life any more than independent existence. Life is sustained and preserved by secondary causes; and all the secondary causes of the preservation of life are under the entire control of God, who can make them the means of destroying as well as of preserving life. All the elements, the air, the earth, the water, and the fire, which serve to preserve life, may be and often are employed by God to destroy it. It appears from the whole course of

providence that God constantly carries the lives of all men in His hand. And this truth is plainly and abundantly taught in Scripture. God is called "the fountain of life." Job calls Him "the preserver of man." David says He is the preserver of man and beast. II. THAT MEN OUGHT TO MAINTAIN A REALISING SENSE OF THIS IMPORTANT TRUTH. 1. They are all capable of realising it. The horse and the mule, the crane and the swallow, and all the animal creation, are dependent upon God for life, and breath, and all things; but these mere animals are entirely destitute of capacity to know that God is their creator and preserver. This exempts them from all obligations to know and realise their entire and constant dependence upon their creator and preserver. But men are made wiser than the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, and the inspiration of the Almighty has given them understanding to trace their own existence and the existence of all created natures up to the first and supreme cause. The sailor, the soldier, the infidel, will instantaneously cry to God to preserve their lives, when death or imminent danger appears near. 2. God requires all men to live under an habitual sense of their constant dependence upon Him, as the preserver and disposer of life. He has informed them in His word that He has determined the number of their months and days, and fixed the bounds of life, over which they cannot pass. He has told them, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain it in the day of death." 3. Good men do realise their constant and absolute dependence upon God for the preservation of life. This is the language of some of the best men whose views and feelings are recorded in the Bible. Job speaks very freely and fully upon this subject. He says unto God, "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me into dust again? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and visitation hath preserved my spirit." David says, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me. Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render praise unto thee; for thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living? For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Ezra and Nehemiah frequently acknowledged the power and goodness of God in the preservation of their lives. Paul used to make his promises under a sense of his dependence upon the preserving power and goodness of God. Unreserved submission to God always flows from a sense of absolute dependence upon Him. 4. Men ought to maintain a realising sense of their constant dependence upon God for the preservation of life, in order to form all their temporal and spiritual designs with wisdom and propriety. If God be the preserver and disposer of life, then He is the disposer of all things which are connected with and dependent on life. If the lives of all men are in the sovereign hand of God, then the world and the things of the world are in the sovereign hand of God; and while men view their own lives and the lives of all other men, and the world in which they all live, as in the hands of God, the world and all things in it appear very different from what they do when God the preserver and disposer of all is out of sight and out of mind. Their views, opinions, and conduct are greatly altered. And the reason is obvious. When they realise their own dependence, and the dependence of all men and of all things upon God, it fills their minds with a realising sense of His universal presence and providence. This cuts off all dependence upon themselves, and upon others, which sinks them and the world into their proper vanity and insignificance. 5. If men would consider how much God does for them to preserve their lives, they could not help feeling their obligation of maintaining an habitual sense of His power and goodness in their constant preservation. God must do a great deal to preserve the lives of such weak, feeble, careless creatures as mankind are. He must continue the regular succession of the various seasons. He must preserve the animal creation, to nourish, feed and clothe the human species, and preserve them from the snares, the arrows and means of death. He must constantly govern the winds and waves, and all the elements. He must watch over every individual person every moment. He must strengthen every nerve, and guide every motion of the body, and all the motions, affections and volitions of the mind. He must guide every step we take, and determine every circumstance of life. 6. What peculiar methods God has taken to make mankind continually sensible of his supporting and preserving hand. He has not only preserved their lives, but preserved them in such a manner, and under such circumstances, as are best adapted to make deep and lasting impressions on their minds of their constant and absolute dependence upon Him for life and breath and all things. He has preserved them from running into innumerable dangers into which they would have run had it not been for His internal or external restraints. He has preserved them

from the same dangers which proved fatal to others. David was astonished at the preservation of his own long life, and exclaimed, "I am as a wonder unto many!" Jeremiah was deeply affected with the preserving goodness of God. He cried, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed!" Improvement: 1. If all men ought to realise that God is the preserver and disposer of their lives, we have reason to think that they generally live in the neglect of this important duty. They generally cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. They do not call upon God in the morning or in the evening, from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, and from year to year, unless something takes place to alarm their fears, and constrain them to realise their dependence upon Him in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways. They generally feel and act as though they were entirely independent of their creator and constant preserver. They feel sufficient to preserve their own lives and supply their own wants in time to come, as they imagine they have done in time past. Thus they boast of to-morrow, though they know not what a day may bring forth. Is this the folly, stupidity and presumption of only a few individuals of mankind? No. It is the folly, stupidity and presumption of the great majority in every heathen and Christian nation on earth. This world is full of rational and immortal creatures, who say in their hearts and by their conduct, there is no God for them to fear, or love, or glorify. 2. Since all men ought to realise that they are constantly and entirely dependent upon God for the preservation of life, they must be inexcusable for pursuing any modes of conduct which they know tend to banish such a realising sense of the Divine presence and preservation from their minds. According to this criterion, it is easy to see the criminality of loving and pursuing the things of the world supremely. Supreme love to the world must necessarily banish supreme love to God from the heart. Though all men ought to be industrious in their various useful and lawful callings, yet they ought to labour in such a manner, and from such motives, as shall not indispose or unfit them for any religious duties. What was it that banished from the mind of Belshazzar a realising sense of the preserving goodness of that God whom his father had known, and whom he had known, and in whose hand his breath was, and whose were all his ways? Was it not his vain company, his vain amusements, and abominable festivals? Similar causes will produce similar effects in every age and in every part of the world. Prodigality, profaneness, intemperance, vain amusements, and worldly-mindedness, will always lead men to forget God, their maker, preserver and benefactor. 3. If men ought to realise that God is their preserver, then they ought to use those means which He has appointed to keep in their minds a deep and abiding sense of His supremacy and of their dependence. Reading the Bible has a happy tendency to bring and keep God in view. Prayer has a direct and powerful tendency to raise the attention and hearts of men to God, and give them a realising sense of His supremacy, and their dependence upon Him for life, and breath, and all things. 4. If God be the preserver and disposer of the lives of men, how fast must the guilt of those arise and increase who never glorify Him, in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways! How many mercies have they received and abused! How many talents have they buried or perverted! How much have they injured God, their fellow-men, and themselves! 5. The patience of God towards this atheistical, guilty, and ungrateful world is astonishingly great. He is constantly displaying before their eyes His power, His wisdom, and His goodness, in preserving their lives, and loading them with the rich blessings of His providence and grace; and yet they overlook the hand and the heart of Him in whose hand is their breath, and whose are all their ways. 6. That all impenitent sinners are constantly and imminently exposed to temporal and eternal ruin. It is of the Lord's mercies that they have not before now been consumed. His patience is not boundless, but limited. (N. Emmons, D.D.) *The Man Who Failed of His Life's Purpose*.—Such, in one single sentence, brief, pregnant and inexorable, is the summing up of the case against a doomed man. There were a great many other things that might have been said; this in itself was enough. There is nothing said about his licentiousness; there is no mention of his cruelty; but the case against him is summed up in this single charge, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." This is an offence that is taken cognisance of by no human tribunal, or else which of us should escape the judge? It is a sin that society itself by no means condemns severely, or else society would have to pronounce sentence upon itself. It is the distinguishing sin of the man who may justly and truthfully be called a man of the world; for when a man becomes a man of the world, he puts something else in the place of God. Again, it is perhaps the most frequent sin that is ever committed, a sin committed by a larger number of persons than any other sin. There are comparatively few murderers in the world; there are a large number of those who have committed other acts of immorality. Other things may be charged against each one of us, but if this point can be proven,

it is enough. It is all that will be required in the court of Heaven to seal the doom of the most self-righteous and self-complacent Pharisee that ever walked on the face of this earth. Man exists for the glory of God. There is no professing Christian who would be disposed to deny that this is the final cause of man's existence; and yet while we are all ready to make the theological admission how few comparatively there are who have any adequate apprehension of the truth that is contained in these words. In what sense may it be affirmed that man exists for the glory of God? Now, it strikes us, on first contemplating the subject, that whatever else man can do or cannot do, surely there is one thing that must be beyond his power. It is impossible that any of us can add to the infinite glories of the Divine Being. I mean to say we can neither diminish the lustre of His eternal glory on the one hand, nor can we add to it on the other. The character of God is and must be beyond our reach. How can we glorify Him if He is so far beyond our reach? You cannot increase the light of the sun. Do as you may, get up an illumination, accumulate all the light that this world can possibly give forth; let all the gas lamps, and all the electric lights, and all the other appliances of modern science be employed for the purpose, yet the sun is just as bright as it was before, and no brighter. All your efforts cannot make it brighter; but at the same time it is possible for you, in a certain sense, to extend the power of the sun. On the Continent of America, and even in our own land, there are vast subterranean caverns which the rays of the sun's light have never reached. Now, if by some gigantic effort of engineering skill we can remove the superincumbent mass of earth and permit the rays of the sun to strike down into those vast recesses of the world, what should we thus be doing? Why, obviously, relatively to this world in which we live, we should be increasing the supremacy of the sun, so to speak; we should be extending its power to a portion of territory which had not hitherto been affected by it. Is it not even so with regard to God? We cannot increase God's own absolute glory. But it is possible for us to pass that glory on into regions where its presence has not yet, at any rate, been realised. There may be hearts in this very congregation which are like those subterranean caves. Light has long been streaming down upon the fallen world. Saints have seen it in their generation, and that glorious light has illumined their whole life, and again and again there has proceeded from their lips the invitation to their fellow sinners, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of God." Now, just in proportion as this invitation is complied with, and one heart after another is opened up to the saving influence of the Divine grace, we may say that God's glory is increased in this round world. Summing the thing up, we may say briefly that it is the blessed privilege of man, first of all, to glorify God by witnessing to the power of His grace to sustain, to defend and to exalt the soul that by faith commits itself to Him. What a marvellous thing it is that the power of the Everlasting God can lift the poor, frail Christian out of his weakness and place him above his temptation, make him a conqueror in the strife, even when he is striving against the fearful powers of hell! This is just what God's saints have been testifying to in every age, and by this testimony the glory of God is continually being advanced. It is possible for man to glorify God by the voluntary acceptance of the Divine law as the law of human will. The character of God has been aspersed, and the authority of God has been challenged by fallen intelligences of evil. The child of God that accepts the will of God as the law of his conduct is a standing testimony to the perfection of that will. It is his own voluntary choice, and he chooses it because he discovers in it all that his own human nature most requires, all that is most necessary for the full development of that which is truest and noblest and best within him, and further, for the full and sufficient gratification of his creature-like nature. This leads us on to a further point; God is to be glorified by man in the ultimate and final destiny which He is preparing for man. Triumphant man shall bear witness for all eternity to the perfection of that Divine will, in submission to which he has attained to his own highest well-being. And thus, in the fourth place, man shall witness to the glory of God by bearing an indirect, though a most eloquent testimony to the perfections of the Divine character. It has always been the work of Satan, ever since he began to perform the part of the tempter, to endeavour to present to the human mind false views of God. What a triumphant answer will be returned to those slanders of the great enemy of God and man, by the fact that in the voluntary acceptance of the will of God, as the law of human conduct, man pays the very highest tribute that can possibly be paid by an intelligent being to the perfections of the moral character of that God from whom he originated. How is it possible for us to dishonour God, or at any rate, how is it possible for us to rob God of His glory? Obviously, we cannot dishonour Him more than by ignoring Him altogether. If I wanted to dishonour any one of you, that is probably the very first course I should adopt. If anyone wants to insult another with whom he is acquainted, the common way of doing it is to pass the man, to "cut him dead," as we

call it, in the street. How many persons there are who, throughout the whole course of their past lives, have been dishonouring God by ignoring Him! I want to ask you a question, a very plain one, that you will all be able to answer one way or another. I want to ask you how far your lives would have been different if from your early infancy you had been persuaded that there was no God at all? I can fancy some of you making answer, "Well, of course, if I had not believed in God, I should never have attended a place of worship, I should never have said my prayers, I should never have attempted to study the Bible." Well, we are ready to make those admissions; but are they considerable? You attend church once a week; of course, that in itself is merely a mechanical performance that has exercised no considerable influence upon your life. I am not asking about the outward movements of your bodies, but of the effect produced upon your moral nature by your religious profession. Let us look at it again. Would you have been a very different person from what you are if you had actually believed that there was no God? You have lived so many years in the world; ask yourself, with a determination to get a truthful answer, "How many of those years have I consciously spent for God's glory? How many days in those years? How many hours in one single day? Have I ever recognised God's glory as the end of my being at all? Have I ever definitely put it before me as the thing for which I live?" Where has God been in your conversation? How many of you are there who would have to confess, if you told the truth—"Nowhere!" Have you ever talked about Him in your life? In your daily conduct, in your dealings with your fellow-men, how much of your labour has been consciously undertaken with a view to advancing the glory of God? Now the very first thing needed is that we should be convicted of our sin in dishonouring and ignoring God who now calls us back to Himself. Yet again, we dishonour God when, even if we do not ignore Him, we repudiate the means of salvation which He, at an infinite cost, has provided for us. In other words, we dishonour God when we act as though we could dispense with His assistance. Now, then, we come to enquire how many of us have accepted that which has been purchased for us at such a price? Are you saying in your heart, "My life has been one of such earnest religion, that I really do not require this provision of Divine love; I can get on tolerably well without it; though my life may not have been absolutely perfect, yet it has been such a good sort of life that I do not think that God can have anything considerable against it; therefore I am content to take my chance." Now, if any of you in your hearts are talking in that way, I just want to ask you what you are doing? Is there any way in which you can more effectually dishonour the wisdom, and love, and mercy of God than by turning your back on His "unspeakable gift?" Practically, you are pointing to the Cross of Calvary, and saying, "There is something altogether ridiculous in that display of Divine love; it was never needed; why should God have given His Son? Would it not be quite enough if God had sent His Son to preach righteousness to us? If He had been content with delivering the sermon on the mount, and a few other moral precepts, and there had left the matter, it would have been all right. It is quite possible for us to mend ourselves, to improve our own way, and gradually to become fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. Why should He have given His Son to die?" In other words, you are doing all that in you lies to stultify the wisdom and the love of the Most High God. Again, we dishonour God (and this point finds a special illustration from the narrative with which our text is connected) when we appropriate to some other use that which has been designed for Himself. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" This ought to be the case with every one of you. Our manhood has been given to us in order that we might render it back to God, and in order that it may be inhabited by God. Now, let us gauge ourselves by this. Are those bodies of yours temples of the Holy Ghost? Whether you will or whether you will not, you do belong to God. You may ignore His claim, you may sin against His right, you may defraud Him of His due, you may profane His sanctuary, you may take His sacred things and dedicate them to the service of His great rival, you may become a devout worshipper at the shrine of the god of this world—your whole life may be sacrilegious in the truest and deepest sense of the word—yet you cannot get away from the awful responsibility which rests upon you in virtue of the fact that whether you will, or will not, you do belong to God. Even at this moment, while I speak, that which was true of Belshazzar is true of you. God holds your breath in His hand; all your ways belong to Him; at any moment He may open His hand, and your breath is gone; at any moment He may lay claim to those ways of yours, and because they have been ways of perversity instead of ways of obedience, He may be and will be justified in calling you to account for them. Every moment of your time is His; every possibility of influence that you possess is His; every affection of your heart is His; every operation of your understanding is His; your position and rank is His. Wherever you look

you are surrounded by God's claim, and you cannot get away from it. Those golden vessels of the sanctuary are, as it were, within your hand, but instead of the consecrated wine, instead of the sacred offering, instead of the holy use, ah! what do we see? One life-long profanation. And now I come to the awful and overwhelming thought of what lies before you if you continue in your present career. Will God be baffled? Will His purposes be defeated? Having created you for His glory, shall you exist only for His shame? Not so. The everlasting God will have His need of glory out of every one of us. He desires to have it in your voluntary offering of yourself to Him. But if He may not have it so, He will have it otherwise. (W. Hay Aitken, M.A.) *Man's Absolute Dependence Upon God*.—I. THAT MAN'S EXISTENCE IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD. "In whose hand thy breath is." Reason teaches this. All existence is either conditioned or unconditioned—dependent or independent. The latter implies the former. Man and all creatures belong to the former. The Bible implies this. It is full of the doctrine that "in him we live, and move," &c. Religion realises this. A practical consciousness of our dependence upon God is the spirit of religion. There are at least two practical conclusions deducible from this the most obvious and the most solemn of truths. 1. That if our existence is thus absolutely dependent upon Him, we should be ruled in everything by His will. Since every breath we draw is in His hands, to do anything from our own mere choice, without consulting Him, is at once presumptuous—rebellious—hazardous. 2. That if our existence is thus absolutely dependent on Him, we should seek to love Him supremely as the chief good. Dependency upon a being whom we dislike is a state of misery. The greater the dependency and dislike, the greater the misery. The poor slave is miserable on this account. Still death relieves him. But nothing can relieve me from my dependency upon the Eternal. His eye will be on me through eternal ages; every pulse, every breath, of my being will come from Him. II. THAT MAN'S ACTIONS ARE UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. "Whose are all thy ways." Not only is our existence His, but our ways, actions, are, in a sense, His. Our thoughts, utterances, movements, are under His absolute control. There are only two classes of actions amongst all his intelligent creatures. 1. That class which originates in His will. Created goodness everywhere instinctively ascribes itself to God. 2. That class which originates against the Divine will. Such are all sinful actions. The instincts of conscience, the principles of the decalogue, the history of providence, the mediation of Christ, the tendency of the Gospel, the work of the Spirit, all show that sin is against the will of God. The question for a creature to determine is not, whether he shall serve his Maker or not, for serve Him he must; but whether he shall serve Him against his will or by his will, as an angel or as a demon. III. MAN'S GRAND OBJECT SHOULD BE TO GLORIFY GOD. What is it to glorify Him? It includes reception and reflection. There must be a right reception of Him. The glory of God is in giving, not in receiving; and man glorifies Him by receiving all that He offers with a spirit of reverence, gratitude, and love. There must be a right reflection of Him. What He gives should be manifested. The heavens, the ocean, the landscape, glorify God; they show forth to the reasoning universe what He has given them. God has given man intelligent, moral, immortal, mind; and there is more of Him to be seen in one such mind than in the whole material creation. But what God has given must not only be shown forth, but shown forth according to His will. Hobbes, Byron, Dryden, Napoleon, and thousands of others have shown forth in striking aspects the wonderful nature with which their Maker endowed them; but they did not do so according to His will, and, therefore, they did not "glorify" Him. To glorify God is rightly to receive from Him, and rightly to reflect what you receive. Souls should be to Him what planets are to the sun; catch his glowing beams, and then fling the radiance on the whole sphere in which they move. On every sinner's brow you may inscribe the words—The God, in whose hand thy breath is and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. Thou hast, perhaps, built up a fortune, mastered the sciences, distinguished thyself in every branch of polite learning, gained a high position in the social scale, and won a splendid name; but the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified; and everything else thou hast done goes for nothing. Shouldst thou pass through this brief life, and enter eternity with this sentence written against thee, better thou hadst never been. (*Homilist*.) *Man's Chief End*.—Misfortune makes some men wise and sober-minded, but others it only stirs up to folly and madness. Belshazzar's folly seems to have reached its height when already the enemy were knocking at the gates. Suddenly, however, in the midst of the revelry, the king is startled by a strange and ominous sight. Instantly the king is sobered, is almost paralysed with fear, and summons his wise men to read the writing and explain its meaning. But the wise men are baffled, and their perplexity only adds to the terror of the king. Now, it seems to me that the words of our text, in which the venerable seer sums up the life's wickedness of the Babylonian king, are words which

sum up the life-story of every unsaved man. They lay no stress upon the form of evil, which is largely accidental; they throw all the emphasis upon the essence of sin, which consists in man's failure to glorify God. I. MAN'S CHIEF END, OR THE GREAT BUSINESS OF LIFE. The prophet reminds the king that life and position are the gift of God. He setteth up one and putteth down another. In His hand is man's breath, and man's condition in life is fixed by His appointment. Man comes into the world without any volition of his own, and he goes out of it when God's time comes, whether he will or not. Now, every child born into the world is born for a purpose, and in the case of all who die in infancy one may safely say that purpose has been fulfilled. Are there not multitudes of men and women who have never realised that man has a chief end—who have never sought answers to such great questions as these: Whence came I? Why am I here? Whither am I going? The God in whose hand thy breath is has given thee life for a purpose; He has protected thee in infancy and childhood, and has preserved thee until now for a purpose. And not only is one's breath in God's hands; the prophet reminds the king that all his ways—that is, not the mode in which he has spent his life, but his worldly position and circumstances and destiny—have all been determined by the will of God. And that is true of every man. God assigns to each the home in which he shall be born and brought up; He has determined the social position and circumstance of every one of us, and on His will, too, does our final destiny depend. And this, too, He has done for a purpose, and has given to each of us opportunities of usefulness that are available to no others but ourselves. If, then, man depends on God, if life and position be His gift, if man's final destiny be in the hands of God, and if God has sent each man into the world for a definite purpose, surely it is the business of a wise man to find out what that purpose is, and to seek to realise it. The king has failed of his life's purpose, and is condemned because he has not glorified the God in whose hand his life and destiny are. Clearly, then, man's chief end is to glorify God. But we must not be content with merely saying that the great business of life is to glorify God. We must make sure that we understand what these words mean, and we must accept all the light that is thrown upon them by the teaching of the New Testament, and especially by the words and example of Jesus Christ. Belshazzar's life was summed up in the words, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." Christ's life was summed up in these other words, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Belshazzar had paid no heed to the voice of God. Christ had done the will of God perfectly in all things. The motto of the one life was, "Not Thv will but mine be done"; the motto of the other, "Not My will but Thine." To glorify God is to honour God, and God is honoured only by those who acknowledge His glory, and do His will in their daily life. For God is not glorified by those who set apart an hour on the Sabbath for His worship, and who forget Him and His will during the rest of the week. If Christ's life teaches anything it surely teaches this, that He glorified God just as worthily in the workshop at Nazareth as in teaching and preaching the things of the kingdom. It is not enough to know the will of God, for God is glorified only by those who do His will. To read the Bible is a good thing only if the knowledge there gained be wisely used. What is the good of knowing that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, unless that knowledge leads a man to faith in Christ? Surely there is no folly like the folly of the man who prides himself on his knowledge of the Bible, and is yet not restrained by that knowledge from acting contrary to the will of God. What would you think of the workman who was continually breaking some of the printed regulations if he met the foreman's rebuke by the statement that he read over the regulations every meal hour, and knew more about them than any other man in the shop? He glorifies God who in all simplicity and earnestness accepts the will of God as the rule of faith and conduct. II. BELSHAZZAR'S FAILURE TO FULFIL LIFE'S PURPOSE. "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." That is a startling summary of this man's wickedness—all the more startling because of its severe simplicity. If man had drawn up the indictment against the king who was already on the threshold of eternity the charge against him would have been a different one. It would have consisted of many counts, and would have condescended on many particulars. And, in sober truth, in the case of Belshazzar, there was room enough for many a charge. He was a man about whom history has nothing good to say. An Oriental despot who slew whom he would; a vain, tyrannical king, whose will was law; a licentious ruler, who used his power to gratify his own desires—such was the character of the man who had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. But the Lord's prophet does not condescend on particular crimes; for that there is no need. He fulminates against him this great solemn charge: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified."

In man's judgment that does not seem a very serious crime, and yet, in the judgment of God and of God's prophet, it is the very essence of sin. For sin consists not so much in definite acts of wickedness as in a wrong relation towards God. Judge thyself as in the light of eternity and the presence of God. Can you look back over your past life, blameless as it is in the judgment of men, without being forced to make this confession: "The God in whose hand my breath is I have not glorified"? You, too, have failed in the great purpose of life if you have not made it your business to glorify God. In the opinion of the world your life may have been a success; you may have risen from poverty to wealth, or have gained a succession of social victories, yet in the judgment of Heaven your life has been a dismal failure, if the God in whose hand thy breath is thou hast not glorified. Are you perplexed as to the first step in this new and nobler life? Then let me point you to the cross of Christ. He who rejects the salvation which God at infinite cost has provided thereby dishonours God. Let God this day have the glory of saving thee, and seek, through fellowship with Jesus Christ, strength henceforth to glorify God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways. (*A. Soutar, M.A.*)

Vers. 24—28. **And this writing was written.**—*Writing on the Wall at Belshazzar's Feast*.—I. THE SCENE IN WHICH IT OCCURRED. An eastern palace. 1. It was a scene of drunkenness and revelling. The narrative makes their drinking wine a very prominent feature in this feast. The king and all around him are gay and jovial. Deluded wretches! Little did they suspect the awful doom which awaited them. Is this a scene from which to rush into the presence of God? Are these practices in which you would choose that the Judge of Heaven and earth should find you when He comes to call you to His bar? 2. It was a scene of impiety and profanity. They insulted the God of Heaven and earth. They profaned the implements of His worship. They celebrated the gods of their own hands. Scenes of drunkenness are seldom complete till God and religion have come in for a share of contempt. Little did these wretched blasphemers think how soon the God whom they despised would humble them, and avenge Himself upon them. II. THE EFFECT IT PRODUCED. In the midst of the scene described above, there "came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." He cannot decipher one character in which it is written. Then why tremble and turn pale? It was something supernatural and therefore alarming. But why should he fear what was supernatural? If the prodigy was produced by the God of Israel, was not this the God whom he was openly defying as contemptible? And if by his own gods, was he not praising them? Then what has he to fear from either? Oh, vain attempt to resist the eternal God! What is the mightiest, the proudest boaster, when a single arrow from the Almighty smites him, when the guilt of his conscience is awakened? Guilt will speak when aroused from its slumbers by the voice of an offended God. It is too strong to be subdued, and produces effects too powerful to be concealed. It was a part of the punishment of Belshazzar to expose his own dismay to the very persons whom he had led on to sin. Thus shame was united with terror. He proclaims his own defeat at the moment when he had inspired others with the idea of victory. "His lords were astonished." And thus shall all the enemies of God and Christ be ashamed. Observe also the cowardice which Belshazzar manifests. He turns pale, he trembles, he cries aloud. It was not his accustomed tone of arbitrary authority, but the hurried cry of trembling timidity. The boldest in vice are often most destitute of courage when danger comes. Mark the scoffer in affliction. Where is his courage then? And who now can afford relief to the wretched king of Babylon? In vain does he look, in vain does he cry to those around him, and to those who are under his control. How forlorn is his condition! Alas, where is the man, whom an angry God has abandoned to his fate, to look for help? Who can deliver out of His hand? Oh, what can your companions in guilt do for you when your doom overtakes you? Most of them will unfeelingly abandon you to your fate. Others will flee from you as an object of dread. And if any can be found who will still cleave to you, wretched comforters will you find them. What smile of friendship or affection can cheer while God frowns? What words of human kindness can convey peace, while the thunder of Divine wrath assails the ear? III. THE TRUTHS IT CONVEYED. As yet the writing was neither read nor interpreted. In what character it was written does not appear. The Chaldeans understood it not. The most probable conjecture is that it was written in the form of a cypher or monogram, a mode common in eastern nations for conveying secrets. In this extremity the queen rushes into the banquet house and informs the king of Daniel. By her advice he is ordered in. He enters. And now what a scene presents itself! Alas, what unwelcome truths have good men to tell the wicked in times of trouble. How may will not be persuaded of their danger in health and prosperity, who cry to the righteous for comfort in time of trouble.

However disappointed the king, the queen, the lords may be at the language of Daniel, faithfulness to his God required him to use it. And so it is still. You, and those around you, may find the language of a man of God very different from what you expect and wish. You must be reminded of your sins and of their just desert. And now, having finished his address to the king, Daniel turns to the mysterious and terrific inscription. He first puts it into Chaldee words, and then interprets them. The event so immediately and exactly answering the prediction shows that both the reading and the interpretation were from God. "This is the interpretation of the thing." "Mene." The word literally means to number, or be numbered. But who has numbered? The interpretation says "God hath numbered." But what has He numbered? "thy kingdom," thy glory, thy life, "and finished it." Oh, sinner, this will soon be your case. Your days are numbered in the decrees of Heaven, and with them your pleasures and the sources of your gratification and pride. "Tekel." To weigh, or be weighed. The interpretation, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." The law of God is the test of human actions. "Peres." To divide, or be divided. "Pharsin" is the plural of Peres, and U, a conjunction prefixed, making "Upharsin." The interpretation, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Oh mortifying sentence! He is stripped of his honours, and to aggravate his loss they are bestowed on his enemies. Thus shall the wicked be bereft of all their worldly honours, of those things in which they most delight. Death will divide them from the world, and the world from them. Their possessions shall be given to whom God pleases. (*J. Carter.*) *The Handwriting on the Wall*.—More than forty years have passed since the erection of the golden image in the plain of Dura and the subjection of the three heroic confessors to the fiery furnace.

1. This invisible hand, tracing with its pen-fingers these characters upon the wall, is but the infinite Hand that follows us, tracing day by day, though upon a page unseen by us, the record of our lives. It had followed Belshazzar from the period of his first elevation to power until now. It had traced in indelible characters the history of his idolatries, his debaucheries, and his crimes. These characters were all the darker because of the light against which Belshazzar had sinned. As Daniel reminded him of the visitation of Heaven that had fallen upon Nebuchadnezzar when "his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened with pride," and when, by the Divine decree, "he was driven from the sons of men." "And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven." They told of a wanton disregard of God's authority and contempt of His former judgments. That jealous God, who will not give His glory to another, had not forgotten all this reckless defiance of His authority. And so with each one of us; an invisible eye marks and an invisible hand records all the sins and shortcomings of our life. In God's book of remembrance they are written with ink that shall never fade.
2. The day is coming when the hand that now writes in invisible characters shall trace in letters of fire over against the candlestick upon the wall of God's great judgment-hall the characters that shall settle our eternal doom. The pallor that overspread the countenances of the king and his nobles on that awful night in Babylon was as nothing compared with the abject terror of that still more awful day when the sun shall be turned into blackness and the moon into blood. The cry that rang from the festal hall that night for the astrologers and soothsayers shall find its terrible counterpart in the cry of that great day for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon men and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. And the silence of the soothsayers in the presence of the invisible hand is but a prefiguration of that awful silence when "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world shall become guilty before God."
3. In those three words, "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," as interpreted by Daniel, we have foreshadowed the three elements in the sinner's final doom. (1) The end of probation: Mene, numbered. Belshazzar's kingdom had been a stewardship. The years of his stewardship are now numbered. The day of his probation is now ended. The eternal hand comes out of its obscurity to announce the fact that the day of opportunity is over and the day of reckoning has come. And so to you and me, my dear reader, shall that day suddenly come. Death's bony fingers shall write over against us the word Mene, numbered. It may come as suddenly and as awfully in the midst of your worldliness and gaiety as it did to Belshazzar amidst the impious revelries of his midnight feast. (2) The sentence of condemnation: Tekel, weighed and found wanting. Little as Belshazzar dreamed of it, his life had been placed in the balances of eternal and unerring justice. It had been impartially weighed. Your best righteousnesses would be but as the "small dust of the balance." As over against the weighty demands of God's perfect law they would be lighter than vanity. (3) The doom of disinheritance: Perez (Upharsin—U, and, and Pharsin, the plural form of Perez), divided. Belshazzar's kingdom was taken from him and divided between the Medes and Persians. But what was the kingdom of Belshazzar

compared with that kingdom forfeited by the soul which at last shall be weighed and found wanting? Oh that kingdom in the skies, that kingdom that cannot be moved, that kingdom whose capital city is one that "lieth foursquare" like Babylon, but the side of whose square, instead of being, like Babylon's, fourteen miles, is, as measured by the angel of the Apocalypse, twelve thousand furlongs, and the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal! 4. The day of the sinner's undoing shall be the day of the saint's coronation. Amidst that scene of terror in Belshazzar's festal hall there was one figure that stood unappalled. No terror blanched the cheek of Daniel. No sudden weakness "loosed the joints of his loins." No dismay made his knees "smite one against another." It was his Father's hand that was writing; why should he fear? There was no guilty conscience in his breast responding with its Tekel to that upon the wall. What a grand character he appears, erect and self-possessed amidst the cowering throng, the light of a serene peace illuminating his face as he reads the writing that carries terror to all around! Even so shall it be in that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, when the books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of the things that are written in the books. The judgment-day shall have no terrors for those who have been the servants of Christ. Not only shall they be exempted and honoured of God, but they shall on that day receive at the hand of an ungodly world the just meed of honour and praise which has been so long withheld. So the servants of God in that final coronation-day shall receive, even from the most depraved, that tardy recognition denied them here upon the earth. 5. Repentance, long deferred, may come too late. Had Belshazzar sought the counsel of Daniel before the handwriting appeared on the wall, had he signalled his entrance upon the responsibilities of regal power by restoring the prophet to the post of influence and authority he had once so happily filled under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar—he might have escaped the impending ruin. Alas! it is now too late! Divine patience has been exhausted. Doom is sealed. And so must it be with those who wilfully postpone the great interests of the soul. (*T. D. Wither-spoon, D.D.*) *The Hour of Doom*:—The events recorded in this chapter occurred in the fifty-first year of the captivity of the Jews. Let me ask you to consider the extreme minuteness of the prophecies with regard to Babylon, made one hundred and fifty years before they were accomplished. It was predicted (Isa. xlv. 1) that Cyrus, the king of Persia, should be its conqueror; and this was fulfilled, for it was the Persian troops, commanded by Cyrus, who captured the city. It was predicted (Isa. xlv. 27) that the river Euphrates should be dried up before the city was taken; and this was fulfilled when the soldiers of Cyrus, with incredible labour, diverted it from its course, and thus "laid a snare for Babylon." It was predicted (Isa. xlv. 1) that, when the city was taken, its "gates should not be shut"; and this was fulfilled, for the historian records that had the gates leading from the river to the city been shut, the Persians would have been inclosed in a net, from which they could never have escaped. It was predicted (Jer. l. 24) that on the night of the capture the Babylonians would be given up to intemperance: "I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found and also caught" (Jer. li. 57)—"And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her captains and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake"; and this was fulfilled, for Cyrus selected the occasion of a great festival for entering the city; and Herodotus (as quoted by Dr. Keith) relates that the inhabitants were given up to revelling and dancing—that the guards were drinking before the palace when the Persians rushed upon and slew them, and that the monarch and the princes and the captains were slain at a feast. I. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE. "In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand," &c. 1. The cause of his alarm. It was the mysterious handwriting upon the wall. We read that he made a great feast; for what purpose we are not informed, but as it seems to have been anticipated by Cyrus, it was probably some national festival. Such is the love of the human heart for self-indulgence that it will not resign the pursuit of pleasure, however great the risk that is incurred. Now, I submit that unless he had been conscious of doing a wrong act, there was nothing in such a spectacle to have produced the terror which is here described. For anything he could tell, that handwriting, whether supernatural in its origin or not, might have boded good—not evil. What was there, apart from a guilty conscience, in a few letters written upon the wall, to terrify a monarch surrounded by his courtiers? Here, then, we have an illustration of the power of conscience—that mysterious monitor which God has placed within us. I ask for no stronger evidence of the universality of conscience than men's superstitious fears, and the remorse which follows the commission of crime. The most abject terror has been displayed by those who have indulged in sin, and derided religion as the device of priestcraft, proving beyond all dispute that whatever may be the hardness of vice, it cannot anticipate the future without alarm. And this alarm

is often excited by the most trifling circumstance. Belshazzar starts not at a phantom—not at some awful manifestation of Divine power—not at the clash of swords and shrieks of the wounded, which proclaim that the Persian army is at hand, but at some unintelligible characters traced on the wall. See how easily God can terrify the sinner. Happy they whose consciences are pacified by the blood of Christ, and who, having nothing to fear because reconciled to God, are anxious to avoid whatever is evil, and walk all day in the light of God's countenance. 2. The mental distress which Belshazzar suffered. His troubled thoughts are evident by his changed countenance and trembling limbs. And this is the more remarkable, because there was everything in the circumstances in which he was placed to dissipate his alarm. He was not alone. It was not in the silence and solitude of night, it was not in the near approach of death. He was seated at the head of a sumptuous board—the princes and nobles of his empire were around him, the wine sparkled—the jest and song dispelled all thought and care. So for a season men of the world may have no anxiety with regard to the future. There are many expedients to which they can resort to prevent reflection, but conscience awakes at an unexpected moment, and they are full of anguish. It is a solemn hour when conscience awakes from its lethargy; and the longer it has slept, and the more a man has sinned against light and knowledge, the more terrible is its awakening. Why, even the heathen could compare it to a vulture gnawing the heart, and speak of the furies who pursue the wicked with their burning torch and whip of scorpions. 3. The miserable expedients to which he resorted. "The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" (v. 7). And was this his only resort? Has he no better device than this? Had he forgotten their inability to explain to Nebuchadnezzar his dream? I do not think he had forgotten either. The probability is, that he was ashamed or afraid to send for Daniel when those golden vessels of the temple of his God were before him, and that he clung to the hope that the astrologers might, in this instance, afford him the information he desired. And you have here a type of the wretched expedients to which men often resort to appease their conscience. Some summon to their aid new forms of worldly pleasure; some resort to intemperance; others embrace infidelity. The astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers could do nothing for Belshazzar, and worldly pleasure or sceptical doubts can never extract the sting of an accusing conscience. If you once feel that you are estranged from God, and that instead of enjoying His favour you have reason to dread His anger, you will never be happy again until you have found refuge in Christ. You may try many other things. It is probable that you will do so. You may say, I am out of health, the subject of morbid fancies, and perhaps seek a physician; but there is no medicine that can cure a wounded conscience. II. AN ILLUSTRATION OF DANIEL'S FIDELITY. 1. He charges Belshazzar with neglecting providential warnings. He reminds him of the pride and punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. Now, the measure of our responsibility is always proportioned to the degree of our knowledge. Perhaps there are few families who have not received from God some solemn warnings; there are few to whom He has not spoken by His providential dispensations. But there are many who give no heed to this. There was a moment's impression, but it soon subsided. 2. He charges him with rebellion against God. "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." This verse contains a very affecting representation of our entire dependence on God. He is the God in whose hand our breath is. He it was who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and He it is in whom we live, and move, and have our being. There is nothing more mysterious than that principle which puts in motion all the beautiful complicated mechanism of the body. What is it? None can tell. It is not electricity, it is not galvanism, it is not the subtle ether. The pride of science is humbled before this great mystery, the mystery of life. "In God's hand is the soul of every living thing." But this is not all. It is added, "And whose are all thy ways." So complete is God's control over us, that we can do nothing apart from Him. He it is who watches over us by night and day—who keeps us in our going out and coming in—who saves us from pestilence and death. Nothing, then, can be more obvious than the duty of glorifying God. If His works praise Him, should not His creatures? Does it not become those whom He thus sustains and blesses to honour and serve Him? What is idolatry but giving to another the glory that belongs to God? And what is sacrilege but applying to an unholy purpose the gifts of God? Then how many are there against whom this charge may be brought? Of how many a man, engaged in the business of life, may it be said, as he goes to his daily occupation, and never gives one thought to God—"The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." What glory does He receive from those families who never call upon His name? III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SCRUTINY TO WHICH MEN'S CHARACTER AND ACTIONS ARE SUBJECTED BY THE OMNISCIENT EYE OF GOD. Belshazzar had forgotten and dis-

honoured God, but God had not forgotten him. He had been the subject of a strict and impartial scrutiny. "And this is the writing that was written—MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN!" Conjecture has been busy as to the language in which these words were written. But this is a question of little interest, and can never be decided. The words, as given by Daniel, are in the Chaldean language, and are so enigmatical that had the astrologers been able to read, they could not have interpreted them. But I have said that this narrative teaches us that we are under the inspection of God. We may succeed in baffling the search into our character and motives, of the most curious and observant of our fellow-men; but there is one glance whose scrutiny we cannot elude. Men may mistake—they often do mistake; they may fail to discover those secrets that are folded in the silence and secrecy of our hearts; but God's eye is ever upon us. Nor can others form a correct estimate of us. They can look only upon the outward appearance. What do they know of our hearts? But how comes it to pass that we, who are so sensitive as to what is said and thought of us by our fellow-men, are so indifferent to the scrutiny of God? He is never mistaken. The result of this scrutiny reveals much that is defective in every character. We can be at no loss to understand what it was that rendered Belshazzar's character so defective. It was his pride, he wanted humility; it was his ingratitude, he wanted a thankful spirit; it was his neglect of providential warnings, he wanted a more attentive consideration of God's dealings with him; it was his idolatry, he wanted reverence for the authority and commands of God. Now, the balances in which God weighs our characters can be nothing less than His requirements and our capabilities. It is by that pure and perfect law which He has given that He judges us. Let there be no misconception; you have to deal with God, and not with man; and it is in God's balances that your actions are weighed. Will you place in them the virtues of social life? He admits their excellence and worth, but He asks you what relation they sustain to Him? I ask you to be honest with yourselves. You can gain nothing, you will lose everything, by self-deception. The address of Daniel to Belshazzar was the last to which the monarch ever listened, and he seems to have disregarded the solemn warning. (H. J. Gamble.)

Ver. 27. *Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting.*—*Weighed and Found Wanting*:—I. BELSHAZZAR WEIGHED. 1. By his conscience. "His thoughts troubled him." 2. By his fellow-men. Confronted by Daniel. 3. By God (v. 24—28). II. BELSHAZZAR FOUND WANTING. 1. Because he humbled not his heart. 2. Because he lifted up himself against God. He desecrated the vessels of God's house. 3. Because of idolatry. He "praised the gods of gold." Idolatry of the worst kind. Conclusion: The first and last sins of Belshazzar may be considered the same—God he had "not glorified." (*Homiletic Review*.) *The Divine Balances*:—To each individual is assigned a particular post, a certain sphere of duty; and every human being of every class is under the accurate observation of a sleepless eye. It is, therefore, of infinite importance to be acquainted with God's judicial standard. On what will our destiny turn at the day of account? Tried by the laws of the land, and the laws of morality, many fall short. There remains a still higher code of duty, which is the law of religion. Who, tried in this balance, could hope to come forth triumphant? See at the judgment-day various characters approach. 1. One of excellent character as to worldly behaviour. 2. A formal religionist. 3. The man who brings the merits of Jesus Christ, cast in by a penitent faith, that abjures all self-dependence. The great Redeemer is possessed of abundance of merit to counter-weigh the perfect law of God, to answer its minutest demands. Therefore, what you have to do is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (J. N. Pearson, M.A.) *Scales in which Men are Weighed*:—I. BELSHAZZAR WAS WEIGHED IN THE SCALES OF HUMAN OPINION AND APPROVED. He was heir to a throne. He was a lineal descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, and so belonged to the royal line. He had inherited a great name. If Xenophon is to be believed, he had killed one of his courtiers because he struck down the game before giving the royal huntsman an opportunity. He had mutilated another, whose beauty made him a favourite at court. The monarchs of the time were commonly cruel and selfish, and such deeds did not greatly mar their reputations. Long live the king! He was probably eminent as a military leader. His father, Nabonidus, defeated by his enemies, had fled to Borsippa, leaving to his son the entire responsibility of the defence of Babylon. It is fair to infer that the young prince was chosen to care for the defences of the city on account of pre-eminent abilities. He was, indeed, given to excess of wine; upon occasions he was even guilty of drunkenness. But so was Ben-hadad; so also was Alexander the Great; so were many military heroes whom we have known. The world has been wont to praise its military drunkards. Men are not to be judged by the infatuation of an hour. He was, in his way, remarkably religious. The festival which he observed was of a pious sort. With his princes and

wives and concubines he praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. He praised the whole list of them, omitting none. The prayer of his devout father: "And of Bel-sar-uzer, my eldest son, the delight of my heart in the worship of thy great divinity, his heart do thou establish, and may he not consort with sinners," was, perhaps, heard and answered. In the popular mind, at any rate, his heart was "established," and upon this occasion he was not consorting with sinners. He was merely upholding the religion of the State. It did not burden him to become the high priest of a religion whose rites were so well suited to his taste. The religion which made him convivial would make him popular. How easy for the revellers about him to overlook his excesses! II. But while Belshazzar was thus weighed in the scales of human opinion, and approved amidst the acclamations of his lords, another judgment was going on! HE WAS WEIGHED IN THE SCALES OF CONSCIENCE. He was compelled to pass judgment upon himself. We are told that as he looked upon this new inscription, which was so mysteriously burned before his eyes, his "countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another." Why was he so terrified? The fingers of a man's hand are not an object of terror. The inscription, which he could not read, had no fateful meaning for him. This impious reveller was stricken by conscience. The soul is for ever truthful, and sometimes the "still small voice" makes itself heard amidst the loudest of earth's noises. No sounds of revelry can drown it. We are all acquainted with that tendency of our nature which leads us to turn away from the sober judgments of self and to see ourselves in the eyes of others. Naturally, we crave praise, and, because the soul persistently tells the truth, and will not applaud itself, we try to live in the judgments of others. They judge us by our acts, and not by the dispositions behind our acts, for these are often out of sight. They value us for our possessions and our gifts, more than for our graces. The revellers about Belshazzar were outspoken in his praise. They counted his great powers and possessions an evidence of moral worth. How delightful was it to lose himself in the midst of their acclamations! And yet there is in every man's soul something which puts a check upon the praises of men—something which recalls him to himself, and holds up the mirror before him. Conscience may sleep, but, disturbed by strange or portentous events, it suddenly awakes. Our ability to live in the judgments of others is conditional upon a very orderly and usual course of events; and so sensitive are we to portents and prodigies, that so slight a variation from the fixed course of nature as a "black" day, or a "yellow" day, will make us forget the praises of men, and lend to every man's conscience a trumpet tone. And yet, alarmed by conscience, Belshazzar disobeyed its voice. He tried to banish his fears, but not to remove the cause of them. He called to his aid the astrologers and soothsayers. He had no reason to trust them. Had they been able to read the strange inscription, no one of them would have dared interpret it to him. He sought their aid, not to know the truth, but to allay his fears. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." Belshazzar hated the light of conscience. It alarmed him. It destroyed all his pleasure. He craved the feeling of security, whether it rested upon the foundation of truth or hid behind a refuge of lies. No mental sin is greater than a dishonest dealing with the fear which conscience arouses. Men often commit this sin. They hide their anxieties and assume a smiling appearance, hoping by concealment to lessen the fear itself. They dispute the facts, ready to make themselves believe a falsehood—as one stricken by mortal disease refuses to face the painful truth, and looks upon his case as curable. Had Belshazzar been answered by the magicians—had they healed his hurt slightly, saying, "peace, peace," when there was no peace, their words would have brought him no permanent aid. III. BELSHAZZAR WAS WEIGHED IN THE SCALES OF DIVINE JUSTICE AND CONDEMNED. We may well believe that when the handwriting was interpreted by Daniel a deeper dread fell upon Belshazzar. The words had a fateful sound. They were not a warning. They came too late. Weighed in a balance! The belief of the Egyptians was familiar to him. He had heard of Osiris sitting upon his judgment seat. Before him were the scales of Justice. Amidst awful solemnities the soul approached the judge. In one scale of the balance he saw placed the emblem of truth; in the other was a vase wherein were the good deeds of his life. The turning of the scales fixed his destiny. Being thus weighed, he was welcomed to the eternal felicities or received condemnation. "Weighed in the balance, and found wanting." The words told him that his last day had come, and that already Divine justice, anticipating by a little the hour of his death, had given sentence against him. The judgment was irreversible. It has been the task of the historian to portray for us in dim outline the event in which this judgment was consummated. As the populace of Babylon, following the lead of Belshazzar, gave themselves up to feasting and revelry, there came to Cyrus the opportunity for which he had wished and waited. This strange event

which was the herald of Belshazzar's death, and of the downfall of his kingdom, is altogether without a parallel in human annals. The special way in which the Divine judgment was announced has never been repeated. And yet it was a typical event. Men of spiritual vision have seen this handwriting of God unmistakably inscribed upon institutions and customs of their time. It has been stamped upon the pampered and sensual body, made to be the Spirit's temple, but burning with the flames of the pit. And whenever it has been seen, it has reversed the judgments of men, and set in contrast with them the righteous displeasure of the Most High. There is no more sobering reflection for us than the thought that our own lives are weighed in the scales of God's righteousness. Every thought and word and act of life are put in the balance. And God's judgment is to be made manifest. I know that the natural course of our minds leads us to rid ourselves of any truth which gives us anxiety. And sometimes the devil skilfully appeals to our pride, by suggesting that we need no thought of coming judgment to help us to earnestness and sobriety of life. But the fact remains that the Bible everywhere assumes our need of such a great motive. It puts before us the vision of a judgment of the future, and makes use of it as an argument for keeping our lives apart from common sins. It bids us read the handwriting of God inscribed upon institutions and customs and personal lives, and to see in it a prophecy of the time when "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Moral Weight:—I. THE BALANCES IN WHICH MEN WEIGH THEMSELVES. 1. In their own opinions. 2. In comparison with others. 3. In the estimation of their fellows. II. THE BALANCES IN WHICH GOD WEIGHS MEN. 1. The Bible. 2. Conscience. 3. A perfect moral standard. 4. An impartial standard. III. THE APPLICATION OF THE BALANCES. 1. To the moralist. 2. To the formalist. 3. To the worldly Christian. 4. To the indolent. (*The Study.*)

Christian Weighed in the Balance:—If we had eyes adapted to the sight, we should see on looking into the smallest seed the future flower or tree enclosed in it. God will look into our feelings and motives as into seeds; by those embryos of action He will infallibly determine what we are, and will show what we should have been, had there been scope and stage for their development and maturity. Nothing will be made light of. The very dust of the balances shall be taken into account. It is in the moral world as in the natural, where every substance weighs something; though we speak of imponderable bodies, yet nature knows nothing of positive levity; and were men possessed of the necessary scales, the requisite instrument, we should find the same holds true in the moral world. Nothing is insignificant on which sin has breathed the breath of hell; everything is important on which holiness has impressed itself in the painted characters, and accordingly, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." (*J. Harris.*)

Short Weight:—Everyone knows what "short weight" is. We scarcely take up a paper without reading of convictions, in different parts of the country, on this account. Everywhere traders are obliged to look carefully to what they send out, and consumers regard with some degree of jealousy what they receive. In very many instances, no doubt, where short weight has been given, there has been fraudulent intention, the act has been a deliberately criminal one; but, in many cases, there has been only thoughtlessness and misconception. But, whatever may have been the cause of error, the law of the land has interposed its authority: it has stepped in between the buyer and seller, and has said very unmistakably to all who use weights, and scales, and measures, "You are bound by the law to give exact weight and exact measurement." Do they know that the Lord of Heaven and earth, of men and of angels—that great God "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance"—do they know that this same God condescends to regulate the traffic of earth? Do they know that out of Heaven, His dwelling place, God speaks to us of weights and measures, and scales and balances? Under this general idea of "short weight," how much is included which, in an endless variety of forms, we are constantly meeting with in every department of life. All false pretence in life I should regard as the social equivalent of false or short weight in business. It is that which falls below the profession made on the one side, and the claim which may be justly asserted on the other. How many persons are occupying a high social position, who are elevated in no other sense; who are distinguished by circumstances, rather than by intrinsic worth. How many are there, in all the different walks of life, who maintain a very reputable position in the esteem of their fellow-men, who, if they were to get their due, would be branded as "short weight." It is very terrible to think how much of empty, hollow profession and pretence we have in this world. How many there are who live in virtue of a reputation which has nothing to sustain it. It would be well for us to get impressed upon our minds the fact that we may be guilty of giving "short

weight" to our fellow-creatures, though we have nothing to do with material weights and balances from one year's end to another. If, in any of the manifold relationships of life, we fail of giving to another that which is justly his due, we are as truly guilty of giving "short weight" as though we sold over the counter twelve ounces instead of sixteen. Take the servant, who sells his skill, his time, his labour to another; having made the contract, he has no right to keep back part of the price. And yet how many are there in such positions, who would denounce the giving of "short weight" in trade as a sin, who, without much compunction of conscience, give "short weight" to their employers day after day. Take the case of the husband who habitually neglects the wife whom he has solemnly promised to love and to cherish. Is not this the giving of "short weight," after the most cruel and dastardly of all fashions? I have to bring under your notice a matter which is much more momentous. There are many who are scrupulous in their endeavour to render what is just and equal to their fellow-men, who would be loud in their denunciations of whatever might wear the appearance of dishonesty in the engagements of ordinary business, who would treat with bitter scorn and wrathful indignation all hollow pretences and profession in any of the manifold relationships of life, who seem at the same time to have no due sense of what they owe to God, and what they must render if they are to find acceptance with him. I wish to remind you that God has balances, in which men are weighed. There is an infallible standard of judgment, according to which our position is determined. And it behoves us, I think, to ascertain as carefully as possible what is our true position in relation to God and eternity. In the words of our text, Belshazzar is described as having been "weighed in the balances, and found wanting." A few words will suffice to set before you the remarkable circumstances under which these words were addressed to the Babylonish monarch. There is, in the case of each of us, an invisible and ever-present witness of all our proceedings, and an infallible record kept of all that occurs. Is not this a serious thought? Suppose that this night, on the wall of your chamber, there appeared a mysterious hand, inscribing upon the plaster unalterable words of doom. How would you be affected by the vision? Not, I think, less powerfully than Belshazzar of old. Your countenance would change—your knees would smite together—the joints of your loins would be unloosed—your thoughts would be troubled. There is cause of alarm for some of you, though you witness not a vision like that. It would matter little that the end of our life had come, that the number of our days had run out, that we were separated, divided from all that this world contains, if, when brought to the final, the absolute test, we were not found wanting. Knowing, then, how much depends on this, it is for all of us a most important question—What sentence would be pronounced upon us were we now put into the balances of God? And there is no need that this question should remain an unanswered one. God has revealed to us, in His Word, the great principles upon which judgment will finally proceed. We have enough placed within our reach to guide us in our determination. There are many, I fear, in this country, who are the unconscious subjects of a fatal deficiency; who, if placed in the balances, would be found unmistakably wanting; and who yet may be complacently regarding themselves all the while as though they needed nothing to satisfy every demand of justice, and secure the favourable regard of God. There are those who trust in the fact that they have been born in a Christian land, of professedly Christian parents. A great deal of the Christianity which prevails among us is simply a territorial Christianity. Men are Christians because they have been born in a certain locality, just as they would have been Pagans or Mohammedans if they had been born where Paganism or Mohammedanism prevailed. There are those who confide in the morality of their lives. I would not say a word in depreciation of morality. That religion is a mere delusion and snare which is not productive of, and evidently associated with, morality. But what a miserable mistake are they guilty of who confide in what they do, or abstain from doing, as a ground of acceptance before an infinitely holy God! There are those who trust in a religious profession. They are found in visible association with the Lord's people. They are accustomed to hear and to use a certain religious phraseology. It is wonderful how far people can go, and yet not go far enough. It is wonderful how far they can go in a wrong way, and vainly imagine they are right. God weighs men in his balances even here. How often do providential events operate as a test of character? There is a sudden change in the circumstances of life; some unwonted pressure is applied, and at once, to the surprise of all, a very serious defect is forced to the surface, and stands revealed in a painfully humiliating way. Passing over without remark palpable and undeniable deficiencies, let me suggest the importance of ascertaining, so far as it is at present possible, how the application of God's test to our characters would operate in the case of failings which are less obvious. Remember that the law of God bears upon and discovers the sins of our dispositions and feelings,

deals with the heart, out of which are the issues of life, and which is the very fountain of sin. How little do men think of, or concern themselves with this? Think of our words being weighed in a balance. It would be a good thing if we more carefully weighed our words before we uttered them. It is a very terrible thing to think we are to give account of all the idle and worse than idle words we have uttered. Our deeds are to be weighed. How much have we done, how much are we constantly doing which we cannot think of without shame, and which we know will not bear the inspection of Heaven! I wish to make you sensible of your moral and spiritual deficiency in order that you may have recourse to the Lord Jesus Christ, out of whose fulness, and by whose merits, every deficiency may be supplied. (T. M. Morris.) *The Sinner Weighed and Found Wanting*:—Amidst the darkness of heathenish ignorance and superstition, there have not been wanting plain and unequivocal evidences of a superintending and retributive Providence. Pharaoh was visited with memorable judgments for refusing to let the children of Israel go; and history informs us that not only Belshazzar, but Antiochus Epiphanes, Galerius Maximus, and many others, were signally punished for their daring impiety. I. THOSE WHO ARE HETERODOX IN SENTIMENT, OR THOSE WHO EMBRACE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR. 1. The atheist. When we look abroad upon the heavens, and mark the garniture of the sky; when we contemplate our own bodies, so fearfully and wonderfully made; or when we look around and observe the proofs of design on every hand, it really seems astonishing that any man in his senses should deny the existence of a God. But, as Spinoza, and Vanini, and several members of the French Convention, advocated atheistical sentiments, we are disposed to believe that some persons, in the plenitude of their pride, may, peradventure, persuade themselves that there is no God. Now, on the supposition that there is such a character, let the atheist be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. What says the Psalmist? "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1). The atheist, then, being weighed in the balances, is found wanting. But: 2. Let the deist next be placed in the balances. There have been deists, no doubt, in every age; but this name was assumed by certain persons in France and Italy, who, although inclined to atheistical sentiments, chose rather to be called deists. Deists differ in many things, but agree in one particular, viz.: in rejecting the sacred volume as a Divine inspiration. Now, to the law and to the testimony. In Rev. xxii. 19, it is thus written—"If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city." But the deist, or infidel, takes away not only a part—he takes away the whole of God's blessed word. Deluded mortal! How dost thou know that thy balances are correct? What angel whispered it in thine ear? To what high authority wilt thou appeal? Deluded mortal! Now, these balances of the sanctuary are Divinely stamped. They bear the stamp of prophecy; the stamp of miracles; the stamp of holiness—they bear many a clear stamp Divine. Ah! you have heard, it may be, of many an infidel recanting on a bed of death; did you ever hear of a Christian then recanting? 3. Let the legalist be weighed next; and by the legalist I mean the self-righteous man, he who, valuing himself on account of the supposed excellence of his own moral character, feels no need of a Saviour, and consequently, neglects the great salvation. Let the legalist, then, be placed in the balances. What has the legalist to weigh against the requirements of the law? Nothing, except it be a righteousness absolutely perfect; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And where is the man who has, strictly speaking, continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them? "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." And the apostle John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And again, in language yet more emphatic, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Alas! self-righteous man, thou art in an evil case! "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!" 4. Let the universalist be next weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. II. THIS EMBRACES THOSE WHO MAY BE VERY CORRECT IN SENTIMENT, BUT ARE NOT SO IN PRACTICE. 1. Let the unrighteous be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary; and by the unrighteous man I mean the fraudulent man, the dishonest man, the intemperate man, the gambler, the swindler, the man of cruelty and extortion; in short, all who openly and daringly trample upon the golden precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." O, what a long, long list of crimes has the unrighteous man to answer for! crimes various and multifarious—against God—against man—against his own. O, unrighteous man! openly wicked man! "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." 2. Let the worldling next be placed in the balances. Some are worldlings, who would not, and should not, be esteemed unrighteous men, in the common acceptance of that term. By the worldling

I simply mean the person who loves the world, who loves it supremely; who is ready to say, "Give me riches, honours, pleasures; give me, moreover, health, friends, and long life, and this world will do for me, I desire no better." And now, let us view the worldling in his threefold character—as a man of fashion, a man of pleasure, and a man of business. Is he a man of fashion? He loves the praise of men more than the praise of God, the very character condemned in the sacred volume (John xii. 43). Is he a man of pleasure? Then, according to the prophet, he has committed two evils: "He has forsaken his Maker, the Fountain of living waters, and has hewn out unto himself broken cisterns, which can hold no water." But is he a man of business? Mark this worldling! The morning dawns; he rises, refreshed and invigorated by the slumbers of the night; but he offers no thanksgivings to God for the repose and protection of the night. He leaves his chamber without prayer. And now he goes forth to the pursuits of the day. Still mark that worldling! His head, his heart, his soul, all are fastened upon the things of this world. But he thinks not of his Heavenly Benefactor; never once says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Alas! he suffers the mercies of Heaven to lie forgotten in unthankfulness, and without praises die! He lives as if there was no God in the heavens to inspect his conduct; as if there was no judgment bar at which he must one day appear! The fact is, although he may not think so, he is a practical atheist. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" 3. Let the profane swearer next be placed in the balances. 4. Let the hollow-hearted professor of religion next be placed in the balances. No matter what may be the profession or outward show, if the heart be not sincere and right in the sight of God, it is all as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Professor of religion, remember the parable of the ten virgins! It is quite possible to have the lamp of profession without the oil of grace; the form, without the power of godliness. Let all who are professors of religion dig deep and lay a good foundation, for, according to the Scriptures, the mere profession of religion, without the root of the matter, will not save the soul. The hollow-hearted professor of religion, then, having the name without the thing named, the form without the power of godliness, is weighed and found wanting. 5. The unrenewed, no matter who they are, or what they are, in other respects, they too are certainly wanting; for, mark! if unrenewed, they have never repented of their sins; and what says the Scripture? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (*D. Baker, D.D.*) *Tekel*:—I. Let us place in the balances the MERE MORALIST, and bring his pretensions to the test. It will be seen on examination that these matters which are considered as a whole, or at least as the principal part of duty, are regarded in but a secondary and subordinate light, by Him who holds in His hands the scales of divine justice, and truly estimates the weight and worth of whatever is placed in them. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," He asserts to be "the first and great commandment." To that of loving our neighbour as ourselves He assigns only a secondary place, calling it "the second commandment," and observing concerning it that it is "like unto the first." What, then, if weighed in the balances, is to become of the man who lays it down as a principle, and acts upon it as the maxim of his life, that there is no religion and no Divine requirement, beyond feeling and performing justice and mercy to our fellow-men? II. Another candidate for Heaven is the religious FORMALIST. He tells us that he is punctiliously religious. But Jehovah long ago weighed characters of this description and pronounced them wanting. Heartless forms, without heartfelt experience, will not answer. Thus too, boasted the Laodicean Church, in reference to her fair but superficial exterior. "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." And with similar fidelity the Searcher of hearts prostrated her pride by the allegation, "Thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked, and ignorant for thou knowest it not." Thus must all who have "a form of godliness," but "deny" or dislike "the power," expect, when "weighed in the balances" to be "found wanting." III. That large class, in the third place, who call themselves THE SINCERE, the candid, and the charitable. Give me but the fact, says the individual ranged under this classification, that my neighbour is sincere in his belief, and I ask no more. I enquire not what that belief is, I am satisfied he is on the road to Heaven. But if sincerity be all that is necessary to render a man's religion right, how ridiculous a part was acted by Saul of Tarsus, in exchanging his Judaism for Christianity. And now it may be that some are ready to ask, "Who, then, can be saved?" If all are to be weighed in the scales of Divine justice, and found wanting, where shall we all appear? There is one character—only one that will be able to meet the ordeal. That person is the evangelical believer, he who besides exercising "repentance towards God," also exhibits "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." How ample and various are the testimonies on this point. Among them the following constitute but a few. "He that believeth shall be

saved." "Whosoever believeth on Him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (*B. M. Palmer, D.D.*) *Men Tried and Found Defective*.—I. Let us place in this balance the pretensions and characters of those who hope for Heaven because they were born in a Christian country, are descended from pious parents, and were by them in their infancy given up to God in the ordinance of baptism, and have enjoyed the advantages of a religious education. Think not, says John the Baptist to the Jews, who trusted in their religious privileges—think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; that is, trust not in your descent from that pious patriarch, nor to your covenant relation to God; for I say unto you, that God is able, of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham. To the same purpose St. Paul writes to the Philippian Christians. If any man, says he, thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I have more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. But, he adds, what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. II. Let us bring to the test of the law and the testimony the characters and hopes of those who are trusting for salvation to a good natural disposition, and a harmless, inoffensive life. But if you can plead nothing more than this, you will most certainly be found wanting in the sight of that God by whom actions are weighed. He will not be satisfied with a bare negative goodness, if we may be allowed the expression. He will not think it sufficient that you have abstained from outward offences, or avoided overt acts of sin, while you have failed to perform what He has commanded. It was part of the heavy charge brought against the king of Babylon that he had not glorified the God in whose hands his life was, and whose were all his ways. You want the one thing needful; and were our blessed Saviour now on earth, He would say to each of you, as He did to the amiable young ruler, One thing thou lackest. Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, take up thy cross and follow me. III. Another class, perhaps, will boldly come forward and say, though these characters are justly considered as deficient, yet we do not fear that we shall be found wanting for we have something more than mere negative goodness to plead. Instead of misimproving, or abusing our time and talents, we have improved them with diligence and faithfulness. Instead of injuring our fellow creatures, we have endeavoured to promote their happiness by every means in our power. In short, we have been useful members of society, and have faithfully discharged the various duties which we owed to our parents, our children, our friends, and our country. We do not, indeed, pretend to be perfect, and confess that in the course of our lives we have sometimes been induced by strong and sudden temptations to say or do things which were perhaps improper and sinful. But we have always been sorry for these offences, and they are but few and trifling compared with our good actions. We, therefore, trust that a merciful God has forgiven them, and are ready to appear cheerfully at His tribunal whenever He shall think proper to summon us away. But we cannot allow the truth of these pleas. We cannot allow that any of you have perfectly discharged the duties which you owe your fellow creatures. You know, you must know, that you have not loved your neighbours as yourselves, and that, therefore, in this respect also, you will be found wanting. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men so, the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; that is, shall never enter it; for I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall, in no wise, enter into the kingdom of heaven. IV. Perhaps another class will come forward and say, we allow that those who trust to their own moral duties for salvation will be justly condemned; but we have carefully obeyed the commands of the first table; we do not trust to our moral duties, and, therefore, hope to escape. We have never worshipped false gods; we have made no graven images; we have never taken God's name in vain, nor do we profane His holy sabbath. But permit me to ask—are you equally careful to perform all the duties which you owe to your fellow creatures? Does not your whole religion consist in the observances of external forms, prayer, reading and hearing the word? Are you not among the number of forgetful hearers, rather than the doers of the word; and do you not hope, by your religious duties, to atone for your moral deficiencies? Are you not hard and unmerciful in your dealings; peevish, fretful and morose in your families, or indolent in performing the proper duties of the station in which you are placed? In vain do you pretend to obey the commands of the first table, while you neglect those of the second; for piety, without morality, is even worse than morality without piety. V. Perhaps some may be found who will say, notwithstanding these observations, still our hope remains unshaken; for we have both piety and morality. We not only deal justly and love mercy, as it respects our fellow creatures, but also walk humbly with our God. I answer, if you have nothing more than this, you want many things. You want that

new heart, without which no man can see the Kingdom of God. You want that faith, without which you must be condemned. You want that repentance, without which you must inevitably perish. You want that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. All these things are everywhere represented as indispensably necessary to salvation; and yet persons may do everything which you profess to have done, without either regeneration, faith, repentance, or holiness. (*E. Payson.*) *Responsibility*:—We reach the consideration of that feature of our human life which is at once the noblest and the most serious. It is that feature which distinguishes man from the brutes, which makes him a person and not a thing; that which lies behind circumstances; that with which the gift of a moral law and of free will is necessarily charged—in a word, responsibility. “Every one shall give account of himself to God.” “Thou art weighed in the balances.” And we must notice where this man’s moral responsibility lay. It is clearly set forth in Daniel’s calm, judicial words. Belshazzar, Gentile monarch though he was, had had exceptional opportunities of knowing the truth of God. For nearly seventy years the chosen people of Jehovah had dwelt in Babylon, and in the preceding reign God had revealed Himself in two most remarkable events. First, in the deliverance of the three young men from the fiery furnace, which called forth Nebuchadnezzar’s decree concerning the honour of the true God; and, secondly, in His personal judgment on Nebuchadnezzar’s pride. Belshazzar knew—there was his sin; it was against his knowledge. There were three features of it, I think. (1) He knew the reality of Jehovah’s being, and that He ruled in the kingdom of men, and yet he defied that Almighty power, and trusted in the strength and security of his city to save him from the besieging foe. (2) Again, he knew that sharp lesson taught to his father—of the peril of human pride. (3) It may be, indeed, that there was another aspect to his sin. Though he knew the truth himself, yet perhaps his lords and courtiers still held by their heathen deities. Was this act of his a bid for their support, an encouragement to their flagging courage in the hour of national peril? 3. Knowledge must be the first element in the balance of judgment, where an intelligent being renders his account to a Personal God. “Thou knewest all this!”—that is the indictment. Nor is that knowledge necessarily or primarily the consequence of revelation. St. Paul, at heathen Lystra and at scholastic Athens, appealed to an intuitive knowledge of a Personal God, witnessed to by the world of nature in the one case, and by the consciousness of the human mind in the other. And what, then, shall we say, when, to this glimmering light of nature, is added the meridian splendour of the Christian faith?—when the claims of the Creator are enhanced by those of the Redeemer; when the love of the Father, and the sacrifice of the Son, and the pleading of the adopting Spirit, make their claims upon the hearts and consciences of God’s regenerated sons and daughters. 4. And yet, in spite of this—this knowledge, this revelation, this claim of redeeming love—are there not, even in Christians’ lives, phases of sin of Belshazzar’s sort? (1) Independence of God. Secure in this great Babylon which I have builded by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty: this fortune which I have amassed, or am amassing, which is mine to do with as I will; this social status which I have attained; this luxurious home which I have gotten and enriched; this harmony and culture which I have acquired; this intellectual development which I have reached, and to the bar of which I insist on bringing all things, even the revelation of my God. *Alas!* It is the horrible egoism of our modern life which “sitteth in the place of all that is called God, showing itself that it is God”! (2) Nor are we Christians wholly free from Belshazzar’s second and more presumptuous sin: “Bring hither the vessels of the house of God!” We have many of these in our keeping, and we are responsible for their use. (a) There is that body, made after God’s likeness—is it mine to do with as I will? to indulge its passions and gratify its appetites and desires as my passing fancy may dictate? “Let every one of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour,” says the apostle; and again, “The body is for the Lord.” (b) Or that sacred vessel of the mind, made certainly to contain the pure streams of Divine knowledge, is it to be desecrated with evil thoughts, or fed with literature vicious in morals and unsound in faith? (c) Or, once more, that golden vessel of my heart, capable of loving the highest and the best—capable of loving God Himself!—it, too, may be filled with “the husks that the swine did eat”; it, too, may be used for unworthy and ignoble ends—may spend its rich and rare capacities on the world, or the creature, or upon that least worthy of all objects, upon self. And for the use of all these sacred capacities I am responsible. 5. Last of all, are you inclined to ask the oft-repeated question, “Then why did God make us free? Why did He lay upon His frail creatures a responsibility so crushing? Why did He not let me live my life without this power to do or not to do, which brings me, with such awful weight upon me, before the tribunal of my God?” Let us pause for one moment for the answer. Suppose, then, that we were indeed independent of the great good God—

that we were ~~not~~ responsible to Him—have you ever thought what such independence would involve? Should we not have to infer something like this—That as to our whole being we were beneath the notice or the care of God; that what we did, or did not do, was too insignificant for Him to heed; that He had left us alone to battle with life as best we may, and that (as one has said) He “set no more store by us than we do on an upturned weed cast on our shores by an angry sea—unless, indeed, men make use of its corruption and decay to manure their fields”? Wonderful dignity, forsooth, of such would-be independence! Too mean for infinite Love to love me; too puny for God’s majesty to heed whether it have, or have not, my service or my love! No! Surely it is true that “the dignity of our nature lies in that relation to God which involves the minutest responsibility,” for “the inconceivable greatness of man is to have been made by God for Himself.” Responsibility! Yes, it is the heavy weight with which all human life is charged—the price of the freedom of our will. But who would desire to escape its burden, if by that very pressure it throws us in upon the uncreated Love; if it leads us in the end to the truth, the liberty, the satisfaction to which those great words of St. Augustine point: “My God, Thou hast made me for Thyself; and my heart can find no rest, until it find rest in Thee”? (E. J. Gough, M.A.) *The Scales of Judgment*:—There is a weighing time for kings and emperors, and all the monarchs of earth, albeit some of them have exalted themselves to a position in which they appear to be irresponsible to man. Though they escape the scales on earth, they must surely be tried at the bar of God. For nations there is a weighing time. National sins demand national punishments. **I LET US JUDGE OURSELVES THAT WE MAY NOT BE JUDGED.** It is for us now to put ourselves through the various tests by which we may be able to discover whether we are, at this present time, short weight or not. 1. The first test I would suggest is that of human opinion. Now understand me. I do not believe that the opinion of man is utterly valueless when that opinion is based upon false premises, and, therefore, draws wrong conclusions. I would not trust the world to judge God’s servants, and ’tis a mercy to know that the world shall not have the judging of the church, but rather, the saints shall judge the world. There is a sense in which I would say with the apostle, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not myself.” Human opinion is not to be put in competition with Divine revelation. But I speak now of judging ourselves, and I do not think it safe, when weighing our own character, to prefer our own and exclude our neighbour’s judgment. The esteem or contempt of honest men, which is instinctively shown without reference to party or prejudice, is not by any means to be despised. Let me assure you that you have good reason to be afraid, for if you cannot stand the trial of an honest fellow creature—if the law of your country condemn you—if the very laws of society exclude you—if the imperfect judgments of earth pronounce you too vile for its association, how fearful must be your condemnation when you are put into the far more rigid scale of God’s justice, and terrible must be your fate when the perfect community of the first-born in Heaven shall rise as one man, and demand that you shall never behold their society? If your own conscience declare that opinion to be just, you have good need to tremble indeed, for you are put into the balances and are found wanting. I have thought it right to mention this balance. There may be some present to whom it may be pertinent, but at the same time, there are far better tests for men, tests which are not so easily to be misunderstood. And I would go through some of these. One of the scales into which I would have every man put himself, at least once in his life—I say at least once, because, if not, Heaven is to him! a place, the gates of which are shut for ever—I would have every man put himself into the scales of the Divine law. This law is a balance which will turn, even were there but a grain of sand in it. Oh, if we did but try ourselves by the very first commandment of the law, we must acknowledge that we are guilty. But when we drop in weight after weight, till the whole sacred ten are there, there is not a man under the cope of Heaven who has one grain of wit left, but must confess that he is short of the mark—that he falls below the standard which the law of God requires. Well, I propose now to take professors and put them into the scales and try them. Let each one of us put ourselves into the scale of conscience. Many make a profession of religion in this age. It is the time of shams. “Is my profession true? Do I feel that before God I am an heir of the promises? When I sit at my Saviour’s table, have I any right to be a guest? Can I truly say, that when I profess to be converted, I only profess what I have actually proved? When I talk experimentally about the things of the Kingdom of God, is that experience a borrowed tale, or have I felt what I say in my own breast?” Bring up everything that you can think of that might lead you to doubt. You need be under no difficulty here; for are there not enough sins committed by us every day to warrant our suspicions that we are not God’s children? Well, let all these black ac-

cusers for death, let them all have their say. Do not cloak your sins. Ah! how many people are really afraid to look their religion in the face! They know it to be so bad, they dare not examine it. They are like bankrupts that keep no books. I would have every man also weigh himself in the scales of God's Word—not merely in that part of it which we call legal, and which has respect to us in our fallen state; but let us weigh ourselves in the scale of the gospel. You will find it sometimes a holy exercise to read some psalm of David, when his soul was most full of grace; and if you were to put questions as you read each verse, saying to yourself, "Can I say this? Have I felt as David felt? Have my bones ever been broken with sin as his were when he penned his penitential psalms? Has my soul ever been full of true confidence, in the hour of difficulty, as his was when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam, or the holds of Engedi? Can I take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord? Can I pay my vows now unto the Lord, in the courts of His house, in the presence of all His people?" Yet again, God has been pleased to set another means of trial before us. When God puts us into the scales I am about to mention, namely, the scales of providence, it behoves us very carefully to watch ourselves and see whether or not we be found wanting. Some men are tried in the scales of adversity. Some of you may have come here very sorrowful. Your business fails, your earthly prospects are growing dark; it is midnight with you in this world; you have sickness in the house; the wife of your bosom languishes before your weeping eyes; your children, perhaps, by their ingratitude, have wounded your spirits. But you are a professor of religion, you know what God is doing with you now; He is testing and trying you. Do you still say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"? Oh, remember that if your religion will not stand the day of adversity, if it afford you no comfort in the time of storms, you would be better in that case without it than with it; for with it you are deceived, but without it you might discover your true condition, and seek the Lord as a penitent sinner. Another set of scales there is, too, of an opposite colour. Those I have described are painted black; these are of golden hue. They are the scales of prosperity. Many a man has endured the chills of poverty who could not endure sunny weather. Some men's religion is very much like the palace of the Queen of Russia, which had been built out of solid slabs of ice. It could stand the frost; the roughest breeze could not destroy it; the sharp touch of winter could not devour it; they but strengthened and made it more lasting. But summer melted it all away, and, where once were the halls of revelry, nothing remained but the black rolling river. How many have been destroyed by prosperity! There are again the scales of temptation. Many and many a man seemeth for a time to run well; but it is temptation that tries the Christian.

II. THE LAST GREAT BALANCE. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Balances*:—In that hall there is a balance lifted. God swings it. On one side of the balance are put Belshazzar's opportunities; on the other side of the balance are put Belshazzar's sins. The sins come down; his opportunities go up. Weighed in the balances and found wanting. But still, after all, there is no such thing as a perfect balance on earth. The chain may break, or some of the metal may be clipped, or in some way the equipoise may be a little disturbed. There is only one balance in the universe that is thoroughly accurate, and that is God's balance, and it is suspended from the throne of the Lord Almighty. You cannot always depend upon earthly balances. God has a perfect bushel, and a perfect peck, and a perfect gallon. When merchants weigh their goods in the wrong way, then the Lord weighs the goods again. We may cheat ourselves and we may cheat the world, but we cannot cheat God; and in the great day of judgment it will be found out that what we learned in boyhood, at school, is correct; that sixteen ounces make a pound, and twenty hundredweight make a ton, and one hundred and twenty solid feet make a cord of wood. No more, no less. And a religion which does not take hold of this life as well as the life to come is no religion at all. But that is not the style of balances I am to speak of. I am to speak of that kind of balances which can weigh principles, weigh churches, weigh men, weigh nations, and weigh worlds. "What?" you say, "is it possible that our world is to be weighed?" Yes. Why, you would think if God put on one side the balances suspended from the throne—if on that side the balances He put the Alps, and the Pyrenees, and the Himalayas, and Mount Washington, and all the cities of the earth—if He put them on one side of the balances, they would crush it. No. no. The time will come when God will sit down on the white throne to see the world weighed, and on one side will be the world's opportunities, and on the other side the world's sins. Down will go the sins and away will go the opportunities, and God will say to the messenger with the torch, "Burn that world! Weighed and found wanting!" So God will weigh churches. He takes a great church. That great church, according to the worldly estimate, must be weighed. He puts it on one side the balances, and the minister, and the choir, and the building that cost its hundreds of thousands of dollars. He puts them on one side the balances. On

the other side of the scales He puts what that church ought to be, what its consecration ought to be, what its sympathy for the poor ought to be, what its devotion to all good ought to be. That is on one side. That side comes down, and the church, not being able to stand the test, rises in the balance. So God estimates nations. How many times He has put the Spanish monarchy into the scales and found it insufficient and condemned it. The French Empire was placed on one side the scales, and God weighed the French Empire, and Napoleon said: "Have I not enlarged the boulevards? Did I not kindle the glories of the Champs Elysées? Have I not adorned the Tuileries? Have I not built the gilded Opera House?" Then God weighed that nation, and He put on one side the scales the Emperor, and the boulevards, and the Tuileries, and the Champs Elysées, and the gilded Opera House, and on the other side He put that man's abominations, that man's libertinism, that man's selfishness, that man's godless ambition. This last came down, and all the brilliancy of the scene vanished. Every day is a day of judgment, and you and I are being canvassed, inspected, weighed. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Souls Weighed in the Balance*:—History, faithfully considered, is but a record of the fulfilment of prophecy. What are these balances? Who weighs therewith? What is it to be found wanting? The balances are those of the sanctuary, God holds them in His hand. The balances are ever and anon made visible through the medium of Scripture. This figure strikingly describes the examination of human principles, and actions, and character, which is continually going on in Heaven. Belshazzar might have thought himself exempted; but Jehovah weighed him in His balances. He weighs all men, whether they own Him for their God or not. In one scale is, as it were, placed the Divine law, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart," etc. This is every man's duty towards God and his neighbour. Every man is tried thereby, and lo! every man is found wanting. Again, men are weighed of God according to their opportunities. These occasion responsibility; these, therefore, are taken into account; these become weights in the balances, by which characters are weighed. See Belshazzar's opportunities, especially in having Daniel at court. How does this narrative apply to ourselves? Every one of us must step into the scale, and submit to a weighing examination. In the one scale God still puts for us His holy law. Our opportunities are weights in the scale. While the weighing process may have convinced some, it may yet have left others altogether unconvinced that they can be at all "found wanting." As long as hypocrisy keeps in the one scale, it keeps on adding to the weight in the other. It adds to responsibility; it keeps on sinning; it "heaps up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (*John Hambleton, M.A.*) *Sinners Weighed*:—One principal cause why men are so ignorant of their real standing before God, and, therefore, so indifferent to its consequences, is, that they very seldom enquire, with any degree of seriousness, into their own spiritual condition. But this is not the only cause. Another, equally operative and fatal, may be found in the fact that they estimate themselves by false standards. There are many who try their characters only at the bar of human law. Another numerous class judge of their conduct solely by the maxims of society. Others, again, examine themselves by the code of gentility. They belong to a class which boasts of its refinement and social elevation, and with which meanness and want of fashion are the only crimes. Thus do the great mass of men, by the use of erroneous tests, acquire views of their moral condition and prospects that are utterly groundless. In the expressive language of an apostle, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise." It has seemed to me, therefore, that I cannot render you a more necessary service than to assist you to break away from these delusions, and to form a correct and scriptural estimate of yourselves as you appear in the view of that omniscient Being with whom you have to do. To attain this end, we must lay aside all those false methods of judgment which you have been accustomed to employ, and which can only deceive you to your undoing, and bring forward, in their place, "the balances of the sanctuary"—the true criterion of moral character—which God has made known in His Word, and by which He will determine our final destiny. These balances were made in Heaven; and they possess all the accuracy and truthfulness which belong to that perfect world. The results which they give are certain—their decisions infallible. Many people find a sort of fascination in being weighed. You may often see groups of persons, especially of the young, collected in places where the requisite apparatus is kept, stepping one after another upon the scales, and receiving the result, as it is announced, with laughter and merriment. I invite you to come and be weighed. Weighing the heart and the life may not be as amusing an operation as that of ascertaining the gravity of bones and muscles; but it is not on that account the less important and needful. Come hither, thou dead professor, and be weighed. Now, I take this religion of yours, and put it in one scale, and against it I put this weight from the testimony of God, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"; and then this other, "If any man be in Christ, he

is a new creature." And to both I add one more: "Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" If Christ were in you, how would it be possible for you so to hide him that not even the hem of his garment should ever appear? I next call up the man with a secret hope. Here let me say, however, that I do not wish the wrong person to come. There are two classes of individuals, broadly distinguished from each other, to which the designation I have used may properly be applied. We often meet with those who entertain a trembling persuasion that they have passed from death unto life; but who cannot feel sufficient confidence in the reality of the change to venture on its public avowal. They are penitent, sincere, humble. They place no reliance on any merits of their own. They see and believe that the only refuge of a sinner is in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; and they often feel their hearts drawn out toward Him as their only trust, and their highest joy. But they are so full of doubts and self-questionings as to their interest in Him—so diffident of their own steadfastness, and of their power to resist temptation—that they hesitate to pronounce His name before men. They shrink from taking up His Cross, not because they dread its burden, but because they fear to dishonour it. Instead of seeking to increase that self-distrust, which in their case is altogether too great, I would address to them words of assurance and consolation, and direct them to that compassionate Redeemer, who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, and who sees and will in His own time strengthen and bring out the grace, which the fearful heart trembles to acknowledge. But here is one of altogether another stamp. He too has an unproclaimed hope—a hope which he keeps concealed, not from any doubt of its genuineness, but from a want of interest in spiritual things, and a controlling preference for the world. Doubt as to the genuineness of his hope! He never doubts. Enough there is to make him doubt. No onlooker would ever suspect him of being pious; and in his own spirit and conduct he can find no warrant for thinking himself so. Yet he does think so. He does imagine himself to be a child of God. And this imagination it is that blunts the edge of conscience, and turns aside the arrows of truth. Speak to him about the welfare of his soul, the need of conversion, and the importance of seeking it without delay. He will draw himself up and complacently tell you that he has been converted; that at some misty, perhaps remote, period of the past, he believes that he experienced religion, and has retained that belief ever since. If you ask him why he has never owned the Saviour by uniting with His people, he answers, with a careless toss of the head, "Oh, a man can be as good a Christian out of the church as in it." Bring that hope here, and cast it into the scale, and you will soon see what it is worth. Ponder the weights which I place against it. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "He that is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will I be ashamed before My Father and His holy angels." "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven." Tried by such tests, what is your hope? It is a spider's web, a dream, a phantom, that will banish, and leave you succourless in the hour when you need it most. Stand forth, thou self-righteous man, and be weighed. Collect in one mass all the meritorious qualities and deeds in which thou confidest, and bring them to the proof of God's unerring balance. Oh, what a bundle! You carry a load of goodness longer than the load of sin that clung to the shoulders of Bunyan's pilgrim. But, before we proceed to weigh this bundle, let us open it, and see what it contains. Here is a whole web of honesty. With your permission, we will unroll it, and ascertain its character. At the first glance, it looks very fair. The threads are fine, the texture apparently firm and even. But stop! what is this? Here is a wide cut right in the middle of the cloth; and close beside it I read, in glaring capitals, "Sharp Bargains." Investigating further, we perceive that the entire fabric is frayed and torn, and defaced with stains and blemishes, which, as we survey them more narrowly, shape themselves into words like these: "Tricks in Trade"—"Scant measures"—"Light weights"—"Adulterated articles sold for pure"—"Government taxes charged to the customer." That is enough. Your honesty is not immaculate. Here is another piece, labelled "Upright Conduct." This, too, judging from the outside, seems to be all right. But let us unfold it, and examine it in a better light. As the world goes, it is not bad. There is no trace of flagrant crime—no soil from theft and robbery—no blood-stain of murder—no foul pollution left by drunkenness and debauchery. Ah! there is a dirt-spot. That is where you told a lie. There is a hole. That is where you broke the Sabbath. And there it is all snarled and twisted up. That is where you got in a passion, and put your whole household in a coil. But what have we here, right in the centre of the budget? A monstrous bladder, inflated to its utmost tension, and marked "Self-conceit!" We need not untie it. We know what is in it—air, nothing but air.

No wonder your bundle looked so large! Why, such goods would not impose even upon the dull optics of an army inspector. They are shoddy all through. And dare you subject them to the gaze of that Holy and Heart-searching Judge, whose glance pierces all disguises, and whose holiness will tolerate no imperfection? Yonder is one who expects to be saved because he has a good heart. Pass up that heart, and let us weigh its excellence. Well, it surely is a fine heart, round, large, full of grand impulses and activities—a noble heart—would there were more such in the world. It has, you perceive, an earthward and a heavenward side. Let us look at the earthward side. How warm and living is all here! And what a record may one read here of the admirable qualities yet remaining in our fallen nature! Deeply stamped on its surface, you may see the names of father, mother, brother, sister, wife, child; and, underneath, the quick blood of affection and kindness gushing and playing; while every nerve and artery is instinct with high aspirations, with generous sentiments, with scorn of meanness, with sympathy for the poor and the oppressed, with the throbbings of honour, manliness, and truth. Turn we now to the heavenward side. Alas, it is blank! There is no God, no Christ, no spiritual longings, no celestial tendencies. Such a heart was once brought to the great Master Weigher, when He sojourned in flesh. A young man, of amiable disposition and praiseworthy deportment, came to Him, inquiring what he should do that he might inherit eternal life. "And Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest—go, sell all that thou hast, and come, take up thy cross and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Here was the touchstone. Let us, finally, place in these Divine scales the pretensions of that vast multitude who build their hope of final safety on the fact that God is so merciful. It is a glorious truth—a truth made known in the Gospel under every form of expression, and proclaimed with the utmost emphasis, that the Most High is tender and pitiful to the children of men, and has no pleasure in their misery. He has appointed His Son to be our mediator and substitute; and it is an irreversible law of His administration that pardon and eternal life shall be dispensed to those alone who become partakers of Christ by repentance and faith. To such He is indeed merciful. To all others He is a God of justice, and a consuming fire. But the persons of whom I now speak rest on the mercy of God as an independent attribute of His nature, separate from the provisions of the atonement, and irrespective of all moral conditions. They expect to be saved, not because they are contrite for their sins, and have fled to Jesus for refuge, but simply because God is merciful. Now, let us bring this hypothesis to the proof. You say that a God, whose loving-kindness is infinite, can never suffer the souls which He has created to be lost. I lay that assertion in the balance of inspired truth; and I test its correctness by these declarations from the lips of God Himself. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they may be saved." How baseless does your confidence in the abstract mercy of God appear, when confronted with announcements like these! O man! whoever thou art that hopest for salvation out of Christ, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." (*J. Ide.*) *National Duties, Responsibilities, and Unfaithfulness, Stated, and Enforced:*—There is nothing which more clearly proves the truth of the prophet's words, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" than that spirit of boastful impunity with which it inspires the guilty sons of men. Although "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," yet they think they may live as they like, and that no harm will ensue notwithstanding. In Deut. xxix. 18—20, we see the nature of this sin. It is no ordinary spirit of impiety. It is the proud, daring, impious thought, nestled and cherished in the heart, that, notwithstanding all a man's wickedness, and in opposition to all that the Lord hath spoken, there is nothing to be feared, because there will be no judgment executed at last. Striking, as this sin does, at the very root of the holiness, justice, and faithfulness of God, we need not be surprised at its solemn denunciation. In the days of the prophet Isaiah (xxviii. 1—13), characters of this description abounded in a most fearful manner, and carried their impieties to a most awful extent. Observe the long catalogue of aggravated crimes with which Belshazzar was charged. Obstinate impenitence; a proud, arrogant self-exaltation. A profane impiety. A marked insult cast upon the Majesty of Heaven. A studied deprivation of the honour and glory due unto God. In speaking of the judgment of God, with regard to men and nations, there is a distinction to be noticed, that is of no small importance. God judgeth nations as such; and their judgment

generally takes place in this world. Individuals, too, are judged as such, but their judgment is reserved for its final execution to the last day. The judgment of nations as such is of a temporal nature; the judgment of individuals is everlasting. 1. It is utterly impossible for men or nations to stand before God in strict judgment. Belshazzar's doom extends much further than his own condemnation and Babylon's mighty fall. The words of the text, carried out to the full extent, embrace all nations and all people. There is not a man upon earth, be he who he may, upon the ground of what he is, or has done, that can ever stand before God in the strict process of trial. There is not a city or nation upon earth that can ever endure the just judgment of God. Brought to the test of His impartial decision, they would certainly be condemned; they would certainly fall. There is not any other judgment with God than that which is strictly just; nor any other method of procedure established by Him which is of a description otherwise than founded upon the surest integrity, and according to the most honourable requisitions of His truth and perfections. 2. What is the cause of their inevitable condemnation? It arises from the vast contrariety of character brought into this judicial contact, and from the unequal position in which the respective parties stand to each other. Man must be condemned in the judgment, must fall, must perish, because he is such a creature as he is, and because God is such a being as His word and perfections proclaim Him to be. Standing on the ground of his own works, whether in whole or in part, whether bad or good, the real point to be decided is, not what we may have comparatively done, but whether he has done all that the law requires. Weighed in these balances he is found wanting. It will not avail to say, but God is merciful. God's mercy is justice. Nor can any extenuating excuse, or mitigating plea, be found. 3. This alarming truth speaks to our own nation, and to our own people. What are the positive duties incumbent on us as a professedly Christian nation and people? (1) A strict adherence to God's word. (2) A cordial devotion to His service. (3) A firm resistance against all evil. (4) A deep repentance for all our national and personal guilt. (5) To set an inestimable value upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. (6) Gratefully to record, and diligently to improve, our past mercies and deliverances. (7) Firmly to maintain our peculiar character and institutions. (8) Zealously to propagate the faith of Christ, and endeavour to bring others to the participation of our invaluable blessings. (9) Steadily to uphold the worship and honour of God in all His ordinances and commandments. (10) Unhesitatingly to discountenance and resist the inroads of infidelity, licentiousness, profaneness, and every other pernicious principle, and evil word and work. 2. What are the binding responsibilities under which we stand, both as a nation and as individuals? Are we under no obligation (1) On the ground of our Christian character and protestant designation: (2) For our secure and safe retreat: (3) For our national greatness: (4) For our national influence: (5) For our widely-extending possessions: (6) For all the means and opportunities we have for doing good: (7) For all our internal advantages: (8) For the proper use of the great institutions erected in this land: (9) For the right use of the facilities afforded for the religious instruction of all classes in this land: (10) For the sacred use of our wealth and possessions: (11) For the invaluable blessing of pure worship: (12) For the high and holy elevation on which we stand as the most highly distinguished, and most highly blessed nation upon earth. 3. Have we been faithful or unfaithful in the circumstances in which we are placed, and in the discharge of the duties which we owe, and are bound to perform? (*R. Shittler.*)

Ver. 28. **Thy kingdom is divided.**—*The Last Warning:*—In the words of our text, we have a warning addressed to a guilty monarch, in a manner too open and public to be ascribed to delusion on his part, or to imposture on that of others—a warning which silenced in a moment the roar of impious mirth. I. SOME REMARKS EXPLANATORY OF THIS VISION. 1. It was an intimation to Belshazzar of the termination of his reign. It announced to him, not merely a calamity by which his throne might be shaken, or a banishment and captivity from which he might return, and resume his power, but its final close. The doubling of this word intimated the absolute certainty of the predicted ruin. In this warning, too, it was intimated that his kingdom should be given to the rivals whom he hated, whose siege of his capital he had hitherto resisted with success, and whose power and skill he had lately so presumptuously defied. This is a circumstance which has often embittered the last hours of falling greatness, that its honours should adorn the head of a rival, and that they should enjoy those scenes of delight which they had prepared for themselves. 2. In this warning of Belshazzar there is an intimation of Jehovah's estimate of the worthlessness of his character: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and thou art found wanting." 3. In this warning the connection betwixt his sins and his punishment is strongly marked. 4. It was a warning in which no hope of mercy was exhibited. There was not merely no intimation that it was possible, by

any particular course, to escape the impending destruction, but no direction was given how his soul might be saved from the wrath to come. But it may be said, Why was this warning given if his case was desperate? To this it may be answered, that it was an open testimony of the displeasure of Jehovah at the contempt which had been manifested to His name and worship, and was adapted to make the strongest impression in favour of the true religion on the successful besiegers. 5. It was the last warning which Belshazzar received. He had received many admonitions already. The Monitor, who had long struggled with him, had now written the last sentence, and uttered the last voice of admonition, and he was now abandoned of God to his fate. 6. It was quickly realised in Belshazzar's ruin. Twelve months elapsed betwixt the warning given to Nebuchadnezzar and his expulsion from human society to all the degradations of wild insanity; but in that very night after this warning was Belshazzar slain. When Jonah cried in Nineveh, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" word came to the king, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered himself in sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and called his people to fasting and prayer; and though no intimation of mercy was given in the warning of Jonah, they said, "Who can tell if God will turn, and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" But no such grief was felt, no such mandate was issued by Belshazzar.

II. SOME OF THE IMPORTANT LESSONS WHICH THIS WARNING SUGGESTS. 1. It shows us that it is the province of Jehovah to fix the continuance, and to bring to a close the power of empires. Beyond the period which he hath set for their continuance, no wealth, nor skill, nor valour, can prolong their existence. In speaking of the revolutions of kingdoms, the wise men of this world confine their attention to the oppressions which made the yoke of princes intolerable; to the artifices by which the hearts of subjects were alienated from their rulers; to those habits of luxury which enervated them, and rendered them an easy prey; but let us recollect that these and other causes are guided by His hand who hath wisdom and might for His; who changeth the times and the seasons; who removeth kings, and who setteth up kings. The history of the world presents us with other instances, besides this one in the text, of God's terminating kingdoms and dynasties. Empires, which seemed likely to stand while sun and moon endured, have crumbled down like a house of clay, and no trace remains that here their palaces stood, their ships rode, or their banners waved. How quickly did the empire of Alexander fall to pieces! His death was the signal for disunion among his generals; and the dominion which had been hastily acquired was as hastily lost. 2. This warning teaches us that Providence assigns the power of which it deprives guilty princes to those whom it pleases. 3. This warning suggests that God gives various indications of His intention of terminating the power of kings, and of transferring it to others. In this age we are not to expect, as in the case of Belshazzar, a sign from Heaven to indicate that the period for the fall of empires is come, but in many ways is this impression produced in the hearts of princes, and it is legible in the events of Providence. Princes, notwithstanding the flatteries of their courtiers, have been unable to shake off the gloomy apprehension of the decline of their glory. In other cases an approaching change is visible in the discontent of the people; in those cabals and murmurs which tell us that a storm is gathering; and in the persisting of rulers in measures which irritate where conciliation is required. Let us mark the signs of the times, not to cherish a croaking spirit of discontent, but to hear the sound of God's steps, when He comes out of His place to punish, and to flee from the wrath to come. 4. I remark that it teaches us that there are various methods by which God tries the characters, tempers, and conduct of men. There is the balance of the sanctuary, by which I understand those principles for guiding our opinions, and those rules for directing our conduct, which are laid down in Scripture. The world hath its maxims by which it tries the tempers and actions of men. There is the balance of conscience. To this faculty God hath assigned the office of judging of men's thoughts, words, and actions. In some cases it performs this duty in a careless manner. There is the balance of Providence, by the events of which astonishing discoveries are sometimes made of the real tempers and characters of men, and they are found quite different from what they were supposed to be both by themselves and others. How many a man has prosperity shown to be in heart haughty and cruel! And there is the balance of judgment. God hath appointed a day in which He will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. 5. There are various persons who, when thus tried, shall be found wanting. The scrutiny is universal. There is none on earth so mighty as to resist it, and none too insignificant to escape it. 6. There are various modes and seasons in which God intimates to the sinner, even in the present life, His estimate of his character. He does this in exposing his true character to the knowledge and the detestation of his fellow-creatures; and how horrible is public shame and infamy when it is considered as an expression of the secret abhorrence of the Judge of all!

He does this in the destruction which He brings on sinners around them in their sins, and in the exposure of their wickedness. In such sad events the sinner is made to read his own character, and to hear his own doom. He does this in the melancholy reflections of old age on a life spent without God, and closing without hope. And He often intimates this estimate of the sinner's character to him on his death-bed. 7. There is something very solemn and awful about such intimations. There are various considerations which evince this to be the case. Were it merely the expression of human opinion it might be despised, but it is His verdict in whose hand our final destiny rests. It is often unexpected. Little did Belshazzar imagine that such an intimation was approaching. In the eye of fancy he beheld his enemies retiring from the siege of Babylon, public applause placing new crowns on his head, and a long career of prosperity and glory opening before him. Little did the man who had gone to the feast without the wedding garment imagine that on that day he was to be exposed and punished. CONCLUSION. How much is it to be desired that the lessons of this scene should be pondered by the rulers and the judges of the earth! Let them bow before Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. How similar to that of Belshazzar was the character and sudden exit of Charles the Second in England!—a monarch whose debaucheries were copied in the licentiousness of his subjects, and whose cruel persecutions the flatterer attempts to excuse, and the bigot to vindicate in vain. "This suddenness in his fate," says Evelyn in his Diary, "might well create awful feelings in those who had witnessed the life he continued to lead, till the stroke of death arrested him. I saw this evening such a scene of profuse gaming, and luxurious dallying and profaneness in the palace, as I had never before witnessed." A week after he assisted at the proclamation of his successor, and thus records his feelings: "I can never forget the luxury and profaneness, gaming and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God, it being Sabbath evening which, this day se'ennight, I was witness to, the king dallying with his mistresses, a French boy singing wanton songs to amuse them, and a number of the courtiers in deep play round a gaming-table. Six days after all was in the dust." But all ranks of people should listen to the instructions which are taught them by this scene. Let not any say, I shall never be moved, I shall never be in adversity. Mark every intimation which God gives you of the solemn change. Let good men receive the consolation which is imparted to them by this subject, however gloomy it may appear. Whatever disasters may happen, the kindness of God shall not depart from you, and with your joy a stranger cannot intermeddle. Let ungodly men be afraid. Make not the terrors of judgment the subject of your mirth. (H. Belfrage, D.D.)

Ver. 30. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.—*The Last Night of Babylon*.—I. THE JUDGMENT OF THIS NIGHT HAD BEEN LONG THREATENED. Upwards of one hundred and sixty years before this, the taking of Babylon by Cyrus had been predicted. Ages before the deliverer was born, his very name is given and his work described (Is. xlv. 1—7). Up to the very hour the probability seemed against such an occurrence. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," sinners infer that it will never come. Come it must; the march of justice may be slow, but her steps are resistless, and her movements punctual to the moment. II. THE JUDGMENT OF THIS NIGHT WAS NOT AT ALL EXPECTED. This night began with a grand festival—a royal banquet. Perhaps, amidst the riot of the talk and jestings of that season, many a contemptuous joke was passed as to the futilities of all invading projects. They were the great nation, their city the great city, their armies the great armies—none like them; yet at this very hour, Cyrus, the officer of eternal justice, was at their door. Thus it was then, as it often has been, that, at the moment men cry peace and safety, that moment destruction arrives. III. THE JUDGMENT OF THIS NIGHT ROUSED THE CONSCIENCE OF THE MONARCH TO AGONY ON ITS FIRST TOKEN. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand," &c. (v. 5, 6). IV. THE JUDGMENT OF THIS NIGHT HAD TERRORS NO MORTAL COULD ALLAY. 1. He tried the wise men. 2. He tried Daniel. Daniel gave him the meaning of the writing, but the meaning could afford him no consolation. V. THE JUDGMENT OF THIS NIGHT SETTLED FOR EVER THE FATE OF ITS VICTIMS. 1. The fate of Belshazzar was settled. He was slain. 2. The fate of the nation was settled. The empire of Babylon received its death blow. The Medo-Persian dynasty rose on its ruins. (*Homilist*.) On Pride:—Human historians, in the narration of events, are generally disposed to rest their narratives upon second causes. The scheme of a politician, the success of a battle, or the external resources of a people, appear to them sufficient to account for all the great revolutions by which this globe has been affected. The sacred historians express themselves in a more decided manner. Scripture makes the important discovery that moral causes are the ultimate ones, into which all others may be finally resolved. It appears to be the capital

design of this singular book to convince mankind that there is a certain, though frequently an invisible connection between vice and misfortune. In recording the revolutions which happen in this world, they set down God for a principal part; and represent these revolutions as the necessary effects of His government. Placed at the head of the system, they uniformly represent Him as we would suppose a moral governor to be employed, distributing rewards, and inflicting punishments, according to their deserts, on men and nations. In discoursing, therefore, upon this subject, I shall begin with observing the causes, as they are related by the historian, which led this great king to his fall; I shall then make some observations upon the justice of his fate; and, lastly, shall consider at some length the nature of the vices themselves with which he is charged. The history of the royal house of Babylon is concise and affecting. It is a memorable instance of the danger of prosperity, and the instability of human greatness. The vices of Belshazzar were the vices of his family. The empire of the Chaldeans was brilliant, but of short duration. Like the plant of a kindly sun, it rose swiftly to its height, and as suddenly decayed. Had they but known how to use their greatness, it might have been prolonged. Power is like riches, and must be maintained by the same prudent management by which it was acquired. The Chaldean sovereign, at his entrance into public life, drew the attention of all mankind. Fired with the ambition of conquest, he passed from province to province, and extended his empire and his fame with a rapidity which had not been excelled. The Assyrian empire, ancient and extensive, first yielded to his force; and the Pharaohs of Egypt, as ancient and as powerful, who had marched, through numerous nations, to seek him on the banks of his own Euphrates, were repulsed and subdued. But he was then vigilant and active, and his people were laborious. There is something in the climates of the East which relaxes the mind, or renders it extravagant. Their air and situation produce the same effects on them as the power of an active imagination is supposed to do on other people. Hence it is that moderation is unknown in every situation, that adversity dejects their minds, and prosperity raises them far above their level. In proportion to these effects, more vigilance is requisite. Nebuchadnezzar had reached the summit of ambition, but what he gained in fame and power he seemed to lose in understanding. He forgot his first maxims of diligence and prudence, and became vain in his imagination. Such impiety and folly, though Heaven had not interposed, must have led him to destruction. The effect proceeded naturally from the cause, and has taken place without a miracle. But Heaven did interpose, in a manner so signal and terrible as might have left an impression upon remote posterity. This proud king was humbled, and reduced to moderation. He was driven raving to the forest, exposed to the rigours of Heaven, and mingled with the beasts whom he resembled. Where was now great Babylon, which he had builded, for the house of his kingdom, by the might of his power, and for the honour of his majesty? One would be ready to conclude that so signal an event must have left an impression, not on himself alone, but his successors. It did leave an impression, but not on Belshazzar. The reason frequently why one man is not warned by the misfortunes of another is that he considers these misfortunes as proceeding from natural causes, and not as the effects of the Divine displeasure. We consider not that there is a necessary connection, even in this world, between certain vices and sufferings. This connection is in harmony with God, and forms part of His government of the world. Yet did not his successor profit by the admonition. Elated with his rise into royal life, his heart was distended with the same pride, and he even exceeded his predecessor. In this chapter we have a memorable instance of his impiety and extravagance. While the enemy lay ready to break in at his gates, he was feasting his lords, and wasted that time, and detained those hands, which were precious to their country, in debauchery and disorder. As an insult to the God of Heaven, he commanded to bring the vessels of His temple, and employed them in his carousals. Infatuated man! thou seest not the dangers with which thou art this moment surrounded. Yes, Heaven itself, to convince thee, frantic king! that there is a power superior to thine, and to let thee know from what quarter thy destruction cometh, sends a dreadful forerunner. In the middle of the stately banquet, when all is mirth and song—dreadful apparition!—a hand appears, visible, writing on the wall the doom of Babylon and its unhappy monarch. Then their joy is damped, fear chills their blood, the king loses his courage at this dreadful sight, and his knees smote one against another. O vain terror! the decree is gone forth, and past recalling. The reverses of this world teach us a fatal truth, that repentance itself may arrive too late to save us. The minister of God, whom he had not thought of till the hour of danger, whom he had probably left to languish in obscurity and penury, is now sent for. But to what purpose? Unhappy monarch! not the minister of God, nor the winged ministers from Heaven themselves, can retard thy fate one moment. The prophet can but declare the will of Heaven, and retire in mourning. Yet like a drowning man, he collects his strength, and struggles

against the torrent. He orders purple to be brought, and ornaments of gold, and vainly thinks that he may appease God by heaping honours upon his servant. Ah, Belshazzar! how unhappy is the man who cannot be taught but by his own misfortunes? Thy unhappy house, which would never be admonished, must at last fall. Experience, the great teacher, proceeds to his last experiment: "In that night was Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, slain." After this history of the house of Babylon, and the fate of Belshazzar, the last of that line of princes, we proceed now to mark the wise lessons which these suggest; and we will do this by making some observations upon the justice of his fate, and then considering the nature of the vices he is charged with. I know not how it happens, but we feel it to be true, that the misfortunes of the great and happy affect and interest us more than the misfortunes of those who are placed in a humble station, and even sometimes than our own. Whether it be that the fall is greater, or that we imagine their feelings to be more exquisite, or whatever may be the cause, the effect is certain. I believe we entertain a mistaken notion of the happiness of the great. A crown is subject to many cares, and requires infinite circumspection. Kings have much to lose, and much to answer for. They are subject to great reverses, and their temptations to neglect, or desert their duty, are neither few nor easily resisted. Yet the happiness of thousands depends upon their conduct; and, when they fall, they involve nations in their ruin. But the fate of Belshazzar is not to be considered merely as the consequence of his own sincerity. It must be regarded chiefly as a punishment from Heaven. "In that night," the night which he had rendered signal by his riot and impiety, "was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." With respect to the justice of his fate, I believe there is no man, if he consider the life of this unhappy king, who will not allow his punishment to be necessary. His daring impiety, his unbounded riot, were inconsistent with the serious cares of government, and marked a spirit which was past correction. Some of the vices which disgraced this monarch are hardly consistent with the humility of our situation; but the source from which they proceeded is common to us all. It was pride which overthrew him; a vice which is inspired by prosperity, and is found chiefly in weak minds, who are incapable of much reflection. From this proceeded in a train, security, debauchery, tyranny, and impiety; the most ruinous and disgraceful habits of the human mind, and the most offensive to the Supreme Being. It is no new observation that any man may bear adversity; but it is not every man, nor, indeed, many men, who can bear prosperity. It tends strongly to make men forget themselves, and become vain in their imaginations. What is history but a continued narrative of the vices of the prosperous? I would content myself here with only inferring, in general, that prosperity corrupts weak minds. Unable to reason deeply, they ascribe their success to something in themselves; and, incapable of much foresight, they apprehend no reverse, and imagine it must last for ever. They are too vain to admit advice, and, at the same time, too weak to resist temptation. It shows, therefore, the wisdom and care of Providence, in the first place, that so few are necessarily in that situation; and, secondly, that, by a necessary train of events, these few are perpetually changed, and give place to others. Last of all, the afflictions of life themselves are an instance of the same care; because, however grievous they may be, they are well calculated to abase the pride of man, and recall him to a proper sense of himself, and of his own dependence. I proceed, then to consider the vice of pride, that vice which vitiates equally sovereigns and subjects. I shall begin by describing it, and obviating some apologies which have been made for it. All vice may, in general, be defined to be the excess or abuse of some passion, or of some natural sentiment. To animate us to well doing, various premiums are held out to us. One of those is the approbation of our own minds. When we act a proper part, we are satisfied with ourselves. It is for the same reason that we are pleased with praise from others. The applause of our own minds, whether it arises immediately from our own actions, or from the praise of others, is the result of virtue, and constitutes a very pleasing part of its reward. But this sentiment, like all the other sentiments and affections of our nature, may be vitiated. The pleasure we feel from well doing incites us to do well. The pleasure we receive from praise leads us to do things worthy of praise. Perhaps we may say that, in a state like this, even a small portion of conceit is necessary to keep us in good humour with ourselves. Hence it is that every man, generally speaking, even the meanest, values himself upon something or other. It is when our self-value, or self-complacence, becomes enormous or wrong directed, when it is either utterly disproportioned to its object, or founded upon improper objects, that it is vicious. It then becomes pride, and exhibits immediately the native characters of vice—folly and malignity. The transition from the virtue to the vice, in this case, as in all others, is easy. The complacence which we feel from our actions is first converted into a conceited opinion of ourselves. pleased as we are with what we have done, we begin to think there is some remarkable

merit in it. We conceive, consequently, highly of ourselves, and think there must be something extraordinary about us. From this point, the folly becomes apparent. The passion we have conceived for ourselves, like all other passions which depend on fancy, multiplies itself fast, and is fed by everything it meets with. Having departed from the original sentiment, it comes at last no longer to resemble it. We bring materials from all quarters to build our tower with. Accustomed to contemplate our own importance, we are at no loss for fancies to support it. Riches are one very common source of pride, and yet we may be vain of poverty. Titles are another, and yet we may despise titles. Praise is a third, and yet we may think ourselves above praise. We may even be vain of our humility. We may, in short, be vain of anything, or of nothing. When we once take a fancy to ourselves, there is no defining it. The vice of pride is founded on weakness of intellect. It arises obviously from the want of knowing ourselves and our own state. Ignorance produces it, and want of capacity renders it incurable. A proper degree of knowledge moderates our ideas of all things, and of ourselves among the rest. If we cannot receive this knowledge, our folly is incurable. The weakest people, therefore, and the least informed, are always the most subject to this vice. A good deal also may be ascribed to education. Foolish parents make foolish children. There is something in this vice very astonishing. That a person should conceive highly of something without him is natural. But that a creature should take a fancy to itself is very extraordinary. What is without us we may be forgiven for not knowing perfectly; but one would think, if we knew anything, that we might know ourselves, at least, so far as to see that we have no great reason to be vain of ourselves. A distinction has been attempted, by way of apology for it, between pride and vanity. It is alleged that vanity, as distinguished from pride, is marked by two characters. It consists in that self-importance which arises from the opinion or behaviour of others, and it is generally founded upon trifling circumstances. Pride is satisfied with itself. It is founded upon its own opinion of its own merit, and this merit arises, it is supposed, from great accomplishments. It has no relation to the opinions of others. Hence it is ready to treat them with contempt when they differ from its own, and with neglect when they agree to them. Vanity, on the other hand, is always elated with applause, and mortified when it is withheld. This distinction is merely plausible, and can give no protection to its votaries. First of all, it will not follow, though these vices were different, that they are not both vices; nor will it follow that they may not even be united in the same person. But, in the next place, it is a distinction without a difference, for there is really no difference. The sentiment itself is, in all cases, the same. It is the same opinion of our own consequence, whatever we derive it from, whether from the praises of others or from our own reflections. With respect to the one being founded upon great, and the other upon little accomplishments, that depends upon whom we make the judge. If we take his own word, every man of this character thinks his own accomplishments great, and that his pride is proper. Greatness of mind is that disposition which leads a man to great actions and sublime sentiments. Pride is that disposition which leads a man to contemplate his own actions and sentiments, whatever they are, with self-consequence. A great mind never reflects upon its own merit. A proud, or vain one, reflects upon nothing else. The former conceives noble sentiments, and expresses them in his actions, without thinking of the abilities which produced them. The latter can conceive no sentiments or actions without attending principally to this circumstance. When a great man performs a worthy action, he does not think that he has done anything extraordinary. A proud man is wholly engrossed with this. What a difference is there between these dispositions! How mean is the one when compared with the other! A great mind is superior to a proud one, as far as a generous temper is superior to a selfish one. What a pity it is that a man should sully an action, which may in itself be laudable, with this ridiculous ingredient? What occasion is there for pride in any case? Or where is the advantage of it? May not a man act in the best manner without having his mind perpetually engrossed with his own actions? Or is acting well such a stranger to his nature that he cannot do it, in any instance, without giving himself credit for it? Must he be perpetually thinking of himself and his own consequence? I will even go farther, and venture to affirm that pride, admitting the distinction which it assumes to itself, is both more dangerous and more contemptible than vanity. Vanity can, at any time, be checked. As it is founded upon the good opinion of others, the withdrawing of this is all that is necessary to humble it. Pride is founded upon itself, and cannot be humbled but by its own destruction. It is also more contemptible. The vain man has this to say for himself, that, if he thinks wrong, he thinks but what others think. The proud man is lifted up with his own opinion. The folly of the other is pure, and admits no apology. And if pride, in its best state, be so little a sentiment, how contemptible must it be when it is founded upon little objects—such as, we may observe,

the common possessions of this world may in general be said to be? This sentiment, absurd in itself, will appear to greater advantage still if we consider the effects of it. Here the vice begins to appear, and to manifest itself. We shall treat these effects under three heads; as they respect God; as they respect our fellow-creatures; and as they respect ourselves. Considered in itself, it appears rather a folly; but, observed in its operation, we immediately discern the virulence, working, as usual, with dreadful symptoms; vitiating the subject, and producing the most shocking scenes of misery among the species. I. **PRIDE IS AN ENEMY TO THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT.** It affects, in the most material manner, the most important of our connections, our connection with the Almighty. It leads us to forget, and finally to throw off our dependence upon Him. It has a manifest tendency to obstruct the intercourse, and destroy the relations, which subsist between God and created natures. It is opposite to those habits of submission and acknowledgment which result from our situation, and by which alone we can maintain an intercourse with the Great Parent of the world. Pride is the natural enemy of subordination. It destroys the habits of respect, and leads us to hate, or to avoid, the presence of superior beings. It is remarkable that this is the vice which is ascribed to the angels who kept not their first estate. If there be a God, we ought to reverence Him. This consequence follows forcibly and directly. It is a proposition which stands upon its own basis, and does not even depend upon revelation. There is an undoubted relation between God and His creation. If existence is bestowed by the one, duty becomes the other. If the one afford protection, the other is bound to gratitude. If Deity be a perfect being, He is the object of respect and homage. If men be imperfect creatures, humility is proper to them. If we live under a supreme, superintending government, we owe submission and attachment to it. These are the instincts of nature, as well as the first dictates of reason. How monstrous is the mind which wants these affections? I believe it would not be difficult to show that pride is connected with atheism. The mind which is self-sufficient must be uneasy at the thought of an obligation. To what impious conclusions will not this disposition lead a man, especially if he possess high passions, or any portion of ingenuity? It led Belshazzar to acts of the most frantic impiety. I make no doubt that this insolent monarch, when he ordered the sacred vessels to be produced, and applied to common purposes, meant an insult to the Deity. I believe there are few here who are in danger of proceeding to such excess as Belshazzar. But, in general, we may affirm that, of all the vices, pride is the most inconsistent with the religious temper. If it stops short of absolute impiety, it leads at least to forgetfulness of God, and of our dependence upon Him. The mind of the vain man is, first of all, engrossed with the objects of his vanity. He has neither room, therefore, nor inclination for religious objects. The weakness of mind also, out of which this vice arises, is inimical to religion. The mind which is conceited of little objects can have no capacity for large ones. The sentiments, in the next place, cannot consist together. The religious temper is founded in meekness, and in humility. In general, it will be sufficient to show us that this quality must, in its own nature, be inconsistent with the religious character, to reflect that the attention of a proud, or vain man, is wholly engrossed with second causes. This is, indeed, one natural and immediate issue of the vice. Whatever success may attend him, the man's vanity continually leads him to refer it entirely to the exertions or causes immediately producing it (that is to himself), and he looks no farther. We may conclude, then, upon certain principles, that pride leads us away from God, and from the regards we owe Him. It has the effect, in the very first instance, to turn our minds from Him, and to leave Him out of our calculations. For how, indeed, in common good sense, can it be otherwise? Will a man, whose thoughts are wholly engrossed with himself, ever think of his Maker? Will a man, who is intoxicated with his own sufficiency, be sensible, as he ought to be, of the need which he has of the Divine protection? A proud man possesses not the qualities which constitute the religious character. Of all the tempers of the mind, the religious is at the greatest distance from self-sufficiency. The great duty of the present state is to improve our nature. But to this pride is inimical. A man, who supposes himself perfect enough already, will not think of improving himself.

II. The vice of pride is not only inconsistent with the religious principle. It is **REPUGNANT TO THAT SYSTEM OF LIBERAL AND EQUAL POLICY WHICH IS THE GLORY OF OUR SPECIES, AND UNDER WHICH ALONE OUR NATURE CAN RECEIVE ITS PROPER CULTIVATION.** It is calculated for a state of slaves and masters, and is subversive of the liberal connections of an equal and free society. We may regard this vice under two views, as it affects the manners and as it affects the conduct. Throughout both these it preserves the same character, and exhibits the same offensive effects. It divests men equally of the manners and the qualities of their most improved state. A vain man considers himself as far exalted above others. He regards the rest of mankind as a species of inferior creatures. His attentions are centred in himself, and he considers others as either below

his notice or as born for his convenience. He is, therefore, obviously a selfish and a repulsive character. The natural expression of pride is insolence. A proud or vain man deserves not the regards of others. He does not interest himself in them. He has no real attachment but to himself. If a man of this description mixes with other men, he would have it regarded as a piece of prodigious goodness, and often labours to be agreeable for no other reason but that he may value himself, and hear others value him, upon his affability. What a monstrous perversion is this of the human character! It is this again which converts life into affectation, and fills the world with insincerity. But this vice appears in its full deformity when it is connected with power. This gives it the means of displaying itself; and, in this case, it usually displays itself in acts of mischief. We may observe that pride may exist in any state, but it is more usually the effect of prosperity. We may observe also, under this head, that a man of this character is incapable of gratitude. He possesses not the sentiments which are proper to his situation. He is not formed for a state where we all depend upon one another. You cannot oblige a proud man. He considers every benefit which can be conferred upon him as his due. The proud man is the natural enemy of society. Pride cannot consist with the virtues of the improved life. It breaks the natural connections of the species. In their manners, it makes men insolent, or, if not insolent, deceitful—in their conduct and deeds, oppressive. It is also opposite to the liberal policy of the species. In general, we may observe that pride is the natural quality of the barbarian, not of the cultivated citizen. Being the result of ignorance, the more enlightened the society is the less vanity will be found in it. It is the native plant of an unenlightened society, and of a violent government. The vice of pride goes to establish a system of oppression, and to place men universally in a state of hostility to one another. III. Pride not only destroys our connections with the Supreme Being, and with one another; it not only leads us to neglect God, and abuse men; BUT IT LEADS US TO NEGLECT, VITIATE, AND FINALLY RUIN OURSELVES. First of all, this vice, like all other vices, vitiates us. We have already observed that it destroys the two great classes of our affections, the affections which we ought to have for God and for our species. So far it vitiates. But it has a more extensive effect. It acts against the whole man, and vitiates him on all sides. Pride takes many directions, but I will speak of those which are most natural to it. Boastfulness is a property of the vice. The proud are, first, boastful. They have, consequently, a continual tendency to depart from truth. "They speak," as the apostle expresses it, great "swelling words of vanity." The evil here operates in two directions. The same disposition which leads them to magnify themselves, leads them to diminish others. They depart from truth in both cases; till, at last, by repeated deviations, they lose the sense, and cease to perceive the value of it. Malice is a property of this vice. The proud are malicious. They view those above them with envy, and those below them with satisfaction. Their equals they are never lucky enough to meet with. What a source of malignity here opens to us! For the same reason they are pleased with the disappointments of people, and bear nothing so ill as to see a man rise and prosper in the world. This is one certain mark of folly. They are for keeping every man down that they can possibly. The proud are revengeful. Important in their own minds, if you touch their folly, or offend their consequence, they are implacable. The proud are hard-hearted. The proud are hypocrites. It is not often convenient for them to discover all the bad passions which actuate them. The proud make God and men their enemies. They act, therefore, continually in the midst of a multitude who are interested to defeat them. Such is their situation that there are always numbers of people to whom their fall would be agreeable, and who watch the opportunities of procuring it. But, in this unstable state, where every situation totters, these opportunities are frequent; and hence it happens that the proud man, when he least expects it, generally receives an impulse, from some quarter or other, which oversets him. This is the more likely to happen from another cause, that pride has the effect generally to inspire a presumptuous security and contempt of danger, which at once relax our vigilance and our exertions, and expose us to misfortunes. But, besides the external shocks to which it is liable, pride contains a source of ruin within itself. We have already observed, as one of its natural properties, that it is boastful and ostentatious. The waste and show which the proud are first led into from vanity, they soon conceive a passion for on their own account; and this becomes finally so strong that it either renders them blind to what is before them or infatuates them to that degree that they are unable to relinquish it even when they see the consequences, and when ruin stares them in the face. The same process leads them to sensuality. Indulging at first from vanity, they soon come to indulge for the sake of indulging, and acquire gross, vile habits. Arrived at this point, the motion becomes rapid; and, as it draws near the end, is accelerated. We observed that pride is naturally presuming and self-sufficient. This leads to other effects. Confidence in our own abilities, or situation,

leads us naturally to security. Security, besides exposing to external shocks, gives habits of indolence; and these again have a double issue. They operate both against the virtue and the natural faculties. They act against the virtue. Idleness is the natural soil where all the rank vices gather. They act against the natural faculties. The mind becomes incapable of application from the want of applying, and it becomes weak from the want of being exercised. The vices which it collects hasten the effect. They relax the mind and body, and render both feeble. There never was a juster maxim than the maxim of Solomon, "before honour is humility, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Independent of the morality of the dispositions themselves, the one has a necessary tendency to relieve our affairs, and the other to distress them. Humility renders us watchful and active; while pride relaxes our exertions, and leads us back to ruin. I shall now conclude this subject with an improvement of it; and this I shall make by collecting, and stating shortly, some of the chief conclusions which arise from it. It is remarkable that the vice of pride is represented everywhere in the Scriptures as peculiarly offensive to God. He observes the humble with complacency. He marks those who set themselves above their kind. Let me, then, first of all, warn you against this vice, from the consideration of the displeasure of God—that displeasure which brings down the lofty looks of man, and lays the pride of empires low. To conclude, seeing that the histories of Scripture were recorded for our sakes, suffer them to produce their just effect. I have selected one memorable instance from these precious monuments for your information. The more dangerous any situation is, we ought to guard ourselves the more against it. Let the history of Belshazzar teach us not to presume upon prosperity, nor to let the season of youth and of exertion pass unimproved. Which of us can read his fate, and not tremble for his own? (*J. Mackenzie, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1-10. It pleased Darius to set over the Kingdom.—*Daniel and his enemies.*—Darius appointed an entirely new administration, but it does not appear that he made any material change in the financial system of the Empire. Daniel we may call the First Lord of the Treasury. Daniel's high reputation was confirmed by experience of his wisdom, integrity, and self-renouncing devotion to the public good. The King intended to set him over the whole realm, to give him all the power over the several departments of the State, that would have enabled him to enforce obedience, and to punish dereliction. This would have involved a grand official revolution, and the transpiring of such an intention of the King was enough to alarm the hundred and twenty chief publicans, and raise up the whole body of presidents and princes against their watchful chief. A plot was planned and executed. They came tumultuously to the King, on the strength of a conspiracy. This could hardly have taken place under the rule of a Sardanapalus or a Nabonadius. Daniel's enemies saw no remedy for their discontent, except in procuring his immediate ruin. Darius was a very weak-minded and vain-glorious prince. The conspirators knew how to play upon his weakness. They proposed to him an easy method of rising above every rival, at least for one happy month, during which time not even Cyrus shall be permitted to receive a prayer. No man, no god even, shall be approached in the language of petition. Their object, however, the King does not perceive. As to the kind of death denounced on recusants, it is apparent, from the testimony of Quintus Curtius, that lions were kept in dens at Babylon, and produced on festive occasions. With regard to the immutability of the laws of the Medes and Persians, that can only mean that, when a law was made, the King could not change it, but he might, nevertheless, find, or even make, another law to counteract its force. . . . Did Darius believe, or did he only struggle to persuade himself, that the God of Daniel would deliver him, as he once delivered three of his fellow-captives from the fiery furnace? Or did he only ejaculate a wish that God would deliver him? For the Chaldee may mean either. . . . One word in Daniel's answer to the King, from the den, conveys an intimation that his enemies, not content with charging him with disobedience to the King's monstrous decree, had also endeavoured to fix on him a suspicion, if not a direct accusation, of dishonesty, in spite of their previous confession to one another, that "they could find none occasion nor fault." Now there can be no suspicion, ³The loyalty of Daniel, even to so insignificant a king as Darius, shines no less clearly than his faithfulness to God, leaving to all generations a bright example of loyalty, a virtue commended by the supreme example of our blessed Saviour, and strictly inculcated by the spirit of

inspiration, through His servants the apostles. (*W. H. Rule, D.D.*) Of whom Daniel was first.—*The promotion of Daniel*:—Men have to pay for all exaltation; a sense of responsibility comes with it where it is honest and worthy, and men do not ascend to the primary positions instantly, but gradually, and as they ascend they become accustomed to the air, so that when they do reach the throne it seems as if they had but a step to take from the common earth to the great altitude. Thus we are trained, graduated, perfected, not by suddenness, abruptness, not by any vulgarity of government, but by that fine shading and graduation which is all but imperceptible, and which only makes itself known in all the fulness of its reality and value when we are prepared to accept the throne, the crown, the sceptre, humbly, modestly. How could Daniel bear all this exaltation? Because it was nothing to him. He had been in prayer. The man who prays three times a day, really prays, whose window opens upon heaven, cannot receive any honour; he cannot be flattered. If Darius had asked him to take the throne it would have been but a trifle to Daniel. A man who has been closeted with God cannot be befooled by earthly baubles and temporal vanities. It is with these things as with miracles. So with this greatness of such men as Daniel; it is not greatness to them: it is but a new responsibility, another opportunity for doing good, a larger opening for higher usefulness. The man should always be greater than his office; the author should always be greater than his book; the picture should be nothing compared with the picture the artist wanted to paint. The musician does well to set aside his thousand-voiced organ because it is useless when he wants to express the ineffable. If we prayed aright, if we loved God truly, then all honour would be accepted with an easy condescension, and every gift and recognition and promotion would be used with modesty, and every honour given by men would not be despised, but would be used to the promotion of the highest ends of being. It is thus the Daniels of the world sit upon their thrones; verily, they sit upon them; they use them, they are mere temporary conveniences and symbols to them; the real king is intellectual, spiritual, moral, sympathetic, invisible, divine. It is useless for us to wish to be what Daniel was; we shall be what Daniel was, and where he was, when we have the same qualifications. The universe is not being built by an unskilled carpenter; it is being constructed—I mean that inward and spiritual universe of which all other universes are but the scaffolding—by a divine Builder; and He will not put the top stone in the foundation, or the foundation stone in the pinnacle; He will put us just where we ought to be. Daniel and Paul, Peter and John, the seraph all aflame, the cherub all contemplation, each will have his place. O foolish soul, do not build thyself into God's wall; let the Builder handle thee, and be glad that thou hast any place in the spiritual masonry. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The Second Throne; or Character Honoured*.—Daniel shows us that the law of life is this—character shall be honoured with respect, confidence, high place, and success. If the law does not work out these results, in any particular case, it must be because of some special hindrance. Sooner or later every man finds his place, and gets what he is worth. Life is not a lottery. In speaking of Daniel's honour, it will at once appear that it was political. And we need more Godly men in high places. Daniel did not reach his position by any sudden spring. He had lesser offices first, in which his faithfulness was proved. Daniel won his position because "an excellent spirit was in him." Before dealing with the honours that wait on character, a word must be said on the relation between talent and character. These two things are often separated. Men of genius are not always men of character. Byron is an extreme instance of this. And men of character are not always men of talent. We have very often to say, "Yes, he is a very good man, but not very clever." No man of genius can afford to despise character; and no man of character should rest until he has added to it ability and skill. Daniel took every advantage of Persian culture, and in him we find talent and character blended. With what honour then will God, and the world, crown good character? I. THE WORLD HONOURS CHARACTER WITH ITS RESPECT. And that is a far better thing than position, riches, and fame. Have character rooted in God, and if men mock you to the face, you may be sure that in your deep heart they think of you as Balaam did of Sarah. The respect in which the good man is held comes out when he is dead. II. THE WORLD HONOURS CHARACTER WITH ITS MATERIAL BLESSINGS. This is not an invariable rule. Some cannot bear the risks of prosperity. Many of us do well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Yet it is generally true that character wins the places of trust, and character keeps the places it gains. Illustrated by Joseph and Obadiah. But how does God honour character? With His approval, and with the sense of that approval in a man's own soul. With His special acceptance in the world to come. By making it witness for him here on earth; as in this case of Daniel. God makes the men of character to be in His world as "salt," as "cities on

hills," and as the "light." Their highest honour lies in their influence, their witness, and their work. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The Power of Christian Principle*: It is the silent but continuous and irrepressible power of Christian principle which really tells upon the world around us. It is not a mere syllogism that will convert a sceptic. It is not a powerfully constructed argument that will alone convert a Roman Catholic; it is not such specimens of Christianity as Church and Chapel often furnish, which will make men feel that Christianity is the ambassadress of God, and the benefactress of mankind. It is when the world sees Christianity softening all, sweetening, subduing, sanctifying, inspiring, directing all—giving its tone, shape, colour, and freshness to all; it is when the world sees Christianity in self-sacrifice—in submitting our own temper and inclinations to those of others—in giving way and suffering, rather than appearing to dictate and presume—it is in the quiet by-paths of human life, that Christianity acts with the greatest force, and in which, if detected by the sceptic, he owns that there is there the finger of God, the evidence of a power greater and holier than human. So Darius saw Daniel's Christianity; he understood not his sublime creed, but he appreciated his honesty, his integrity, his truthfulness, his faithfulness. The world itself, if it do not practice, yet appreciates faithfulness and integrity. The merchant on the exchange understands character, when he neither studies nor subscribes a creed. Hence the pulpit is not the only place for preaching. (*John Cumming, D.D.*) *The Supremacy of Character*:—"This Daniel"—what surprise and scorn, what bitter jealousy and mortification, rankles beneath this apparently simple allusion. That this Hebrew stranger and captive should have won any place at court; that when admitted he should be allowed to defy its customs; that he so gained the favour of his royal master as to be called into his most intimate counsel, and to be placed above those who had preceded him in office—these circumstances constituted a grievance of no common magnitude, and for which there was no forgiveness. What led to the rapid promotion of one who had neither rank or friends to recommend him? On this point a clear and satisfactory explanation is afforded. "Because an excellent spirit was in 'this Daniel,' the king thought to set him over the whole realm." What have we here, but a signal testimony to the intrinsic sovereignty of character, a testimony which every succeeding age reveals with greater calmness and recognises with deeper veneration. It has been affirmed that the religion of the day is reverence for character. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in addressing a mass meeting of working men in connection with the Church Congress, and pleading for the establishment of more satisfactory relations between employers and employed, warned his hearers against seeking, from the enactments of Parliaments or the rules of trades unions, for the solution of problems which could only be effectually met by a "conversion of character" alike in masters and servants. What, then, do we understand by this word so constantly upon the lips of great leaders in Church and State? Strange to say, we search for it in vain in our translation of the Bible, and only find it once in the original text. But many of you are aware that it comes to us from a Greek word which signifies a *graving tool*. The first mention of such a thing occurs curiously enough in connection with the act of Aaron in making the golden calf. Though he would fain have us believe that the molten gold took that peculiar shape of its own accord, it appears in evidence that he "fashioned it with a graving tool"—a "cheret" as it was called in the Hebrew tongue—in which we distinctly trace the original derivation of our word "character." At first, then, this term stood for an instrument—a means to an end. But by a very natural transition it came to be applied to the result. From the tool attention is inevitably directed to the work of art, from the pencil to the painting, from the chisel to the finished sculpture. We preserve, however, the original use of the word when speaking of a man of parts. We say, "He is a character," thereby signifying that he impresses others, that he cannot be overlooked, that he is indeed a graving tool with the added element of life. It is, in fact, this power of impressing others by the force of our own personality that distinguishes man from the brute creation. Charles Dickens once remarked that "some very fine ladies and gentlemen might as well have been born caterpillars for any good they do, or any impression they make on the world." But, dear friends, God has not placed us here to be caterpillars lazily crawling over the smooth surface of things, and leaving no trace behind. He intends that we should be carving tools; that under His hand, and each in his own sphere, we should press heavily upon and cut deeply into this disordered world, seeking to shape it more after the mind and will of its Lord. This brings us at once to the practical question. We cannot stop at the tool. That is often a very rude and primitive affair. But the design or inscription written or graven therewith, what vast and varied possibilities are there? Even animals can make marks after a fashion—as some of us possibly know by experience—very ugly and painful ones. But they can usually be predicted. Every

youth secretly hopes to make his mark and to pass for something in the world. What sort of a mark will be yours. No one can predict that. We can only hope and pray. Much might be said as to the elements of character, for, as Bishop Butler reminds us, it is, of a complex nature, there being greater variety of parts in it than there are features in a face. "Giving all diligence add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." These being the elements which make a manly and Christian life a word may be said as to their cultivation. Human nature is the raw material out of which character has to be manufactured, and very tough stuff it is. It has to pass through the mill a good many times before it is good for anything. Not forgetting the requirements mentioned by the apostle in the passage just quoted, we may add one or two others that go to the making of a man. One important factor is Labour. Dr. Arnold insisted that the difference between one man and another was not usually ability but energy; and Lord Lytton tells us that he made it a rule never to trust to genius for what could be won by toil. Another and most unwelcome agent in this process is trouble. "Great sufferings," says a powerful writer, "swell the soul to gigantic proportions." This had probably much to do with the strength of Daniel. Simplicity of aim, sincerity of aim, and modesty of manners are also essential to a healthy nature. And so is a perfectly trained will. The importance of arriving at and adhering to an intelligent decision cannot be too strongly emphasized. We are all acquainted with the description of the irresolute man who wastes the first half of the day in hesitating which of two courses to take, and the other half in reproaching himself for not having taken the other. Only when all these qualities are present and active; only when those springs of action—our thoughts, desires, and affections—are cleansed by the Spirit of God and fed by communion with Him, do we attain our complete and destined development. We fall short of our own capabilities if we fall short of God. The result of this varied discipline and careful training is to exhibit what comes out so clearly in the life of Daniel. One of the most accomplished scoundrels of the last century declared that he would give ten thousand pounds for a character, because he could make above twenty thousand by it. Considered even from this sordid standpoint character represents capital, commands credit, and is a negotiable asset. The day has passed when in this land a man could rise to the highest place in the estimation of his fellows merely by the circumstance of noble birth. He must be and do something. Merchants and tradesmen often complain of the havoc and loss entailed by excessive competition. But there is a rising market for moral integrity and a brisk demand for it. To men of different callings I often put the question, "Is there a good prospect now for a young fellow in your business?" And the answer is almost invariably this, "Yes, he may do nicely if he is square, sober, and industrious; there are so many of the other sort, you know." So it is vice not virtue that is the drug on the market. Cleverness minus character—the world reeks with it. Most of the world's woes are in fact traceable to this pestilence, Satan himself being the chief example and promoter of it. In the hour when, after sufficient trial, it becomes known that you at least can be depended upon, you will become a person of importance. The world surely needs and is waiting for such as you. King Darius had that gift so essential to a ruler—the power to discern moral excellence. And finding it, he had a courage to utilise and reward it. He is worthy to be king who prizes virtue above rank. Hence "this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Only when men of sincere conviction, high principle, and indisputable integrity are at the helm of affairs is there any hope for the prosperity of any people. Not politics, not commerce, not creed, but character is the supreme test of prosperity and the harbinger of peace. When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice. Thus the welfare of nations comes at last to be simply a matter of the individual spirit and conduct. (*A. E. Hutchinson.*)

Ver. 3. **Because an excellent spirit was in him.**—*The man of an "excellent spirit," or of a good conscience:*—All men have what we call a conscience, something within that concerns itself with the right and wrong of actions. A good conscience is something more than a sincere conscience. Many sincere consciences are bad consciences. We learn here certain facts concerning the man of a good conscience, or excellent spirit. I. THAT HE IS INFLEXIBLY HONEST IN ALL HIS WORLDLY TRANSACTIONS. Where there is true loyalty to God, there will be honesty towards men. II. THAT HE OFTEN EVOKES THE ANTAGONISM OF UNJUST MEN. What led to the Crucifixion of Christ but this? III. THAT HE IS INVINCIBLE IN HIS LOYALTY TO HEAVEN. In

extreme danger he did nothing, but just went on with his ordinary life. IV. THAT HE IS A DISTURBING FORCE TO THE SOUL OF HIS PERSECUTORS. The king had a miserable night. V. THAT HE IS EVERMORE IN THE SAFE KEEPING OF HEAVEN. Daniel ascribed his deliverance to an angel. What better angel has God in his universe than a good conscience? VI. THAT HE IS SURE TO MEET WITH A RETRIBUTIVE VINDICATION. What became of the enemies of Daniel? VII. THAT HE IS THE BEST AGENT TO BRING THE WORLD TO TRUE WORSHIP. "Then King Darius wrote unto all people," etc. Learn (1) That the right thing is always the strongest thing. (2) That the right thing is always the expedient thing. (*Homilist*). *An excellent spirit*:—It was not mere talent that raised Daniel to his high position. No doubt he was a shrewd, able, and clever man. Intellect, like ice, is colourless. Let a young man have large mental capacity, it will not weigh for much, if that be all. His real strength or weakness is closely linked with his moral nature; the heart, even more than the brain, determines the man. In Daniel we see a man whose conscience holds a tight rein over his lower nature; we see that stern loyalty to principle is not inconsistent with the urbanity and courtesy of the perfect gentleman; we learn that the busiest man may be a man of prayer; that fervent piety may be sustained under circumstances most unfavourable to its growth; that a robust faith in God can carry one through the most trying outward conditions it is possible to experience. This "excellent spirit" was 1. A spirit of self-control. He kept his body under. He held the mastery of his animal nature. He laid an iron hand upon his appetites and passions. Here is a lesson on a temperate and physiological habit of life that young men would do well to attend to, who propose to invest any capital in their brains. 2. A spirit of genuine piety. He was, above all, a man of God. I believe that his convictions were the fruit of early training. To him, God was a reality, a living and reliable friend, to whom he could take every difficulty, and on whom he could trust in every danger. It was this that carried him through. It was his "excellent spirit" that led to his preferment. His piety actually led to his promotion. 3. A spirit of unshaken faith in God. All through his troubles, he never lost confidence in God, never failed to betake himself to him in prayer. Daniel's faith in God was too deep and strong to suffer any serious shock from spurious philosophy. (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*) *A Man of Excellent Spirit*:—The key to Daniel's splendid fidelity may be found in the statement of my text, repeated in other parts of the book, "an excellent spirit was in him." This statement literally means that in Daniel spirit predominated, was uppermost, was enthroned. We are accustomed to use the word "excellent" with other values and intentions, all of which may be right in certain connections. For instance, we say "excellent" means fine, noble, admirable. Yet the etymology of the word has another signification. Excellent is something that excels, goes beyond, predominates, and the word lying beyond this word excellent carries exactly that meaning. We may with perfect accuracy read our text thus—it would not be rhythmic or admirable as a translation, but it would at least be accurate—"A spirit that excelled was in him," a spirit that jutted out was in him. Not flesh, but spirit was the chief thing. This is evident at the very beginning of the book of Daniel. Not king's dainties, not wine from the king's table; these are not the principal things, but rectitude, which means life harmonising with the infinite and the true and the eternal. The principal thing in Daniel was not the physical, though he was fair, ruddy, and splendid; spirit was the dominant factor in the personality of this man. Daniel was not a man who thought of himself within the physical, as possessing a spirit; he thought of himself within the spiritual as possessing a body. "An excellent spirit was in him." He was a man who began his life in the spiritual, and from that centre governed the material. Daniel was a man proportioned after the pattern and ideal of Deity. He recognised in himself and in all his relationships the supreme quality, to be spirit. "A man of an excellent spirit." Let us examine the qualities of spirit manifested in the life-story of the man in whom spirit excelled and was the principal thing. I want to say four things about Daniel, as revealing that life where spirit excels, is dominant, is enthroned. The man of excellent spirit, in whom spirit excels was (1) a man of purpose; (2) a man of prayer; (3) a man of perception; (4) a man of power. Two things tell the cause, two things describe the effect. The cause is found in the fact that this man of excellent spirit was a man of purpose, and a man of prayer; and the effect is seen in that he was a man of perception and a man of power. Purpose and prayer, these are the words that indicate our own responsibility. Perception and prayer, these are the words that declare what will follow in some way in the life of every man in whom spirit is dominant, and who, therefore, is a man of purpose and a man of power. Daniel was a man of purpose. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat." (Ch. i. 8.) Notice

carefully what this means. Purpose is at the beginning of everything. Directly he found himself in a place of peril "he purposed in his heart." That is a matter of supreme importance. Thousands of men drift into evil courses for a lack of a definite and positive committal of themselves to some position, for lack of having purpose, something in their heart. To delay at the first consciousness of perilous surroundings is to compromise presently, and, unless we are very careful, it is finally to apostatise. Purpose in a man's life is all important. It affords him anchorage in the time of storm, creates for him a base in the day of battle. To have committed oneself to some definite thing is always of value whatever walk of life you are in. In every walk of life, when a man has formed his purpose, he is half-way to victory. This is so with a boy who is looking forward to his life work. When he knows what his purpose is, he is half-way to victory. Every man has, underlying his life somewhere, a purpose. But Daniel found it, named it, announced it, stood by it. It is quite impossible for a man to live without a purpose of some sort. Purpose lies at the back of will, and purpose operates through all activity. Some men have a score of purposes, but never one named, defined, announced, to which they are committed. Daniel's purpose was a very simple one, and yet sublime; simple in its expression, sublime in its great underlying reach. What was the simple purpose announced as he came down into the midst of the Chaldean Court and its corruption? "I will not touch the king's dainties, I will not drink the king's wine." That is the simplicity of the purpose, but not the sublimity of it. What underlay it? "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank." He purposed in his heart that his spirit was the supreme thing. He would not permit fleshly indulgence of any sort to rub the bloom from spiritual life, to weaken the nerve of spiritual endeavour, to dim the vision of spiritual outlook. Daniel's deepest purpose was that of loyalty to God, expressed in separation from the corrupting influences of his position; and because at the beginning he stood there, through all the coming days he was strong and victorious. To-day, amid the allurements and enticements of a godless age, let every man purpose in his heart that he will be loyal to Jesus Christ. That is the simple purpose for to-day. You and I live in a much easier age than Daniel did, with forces far more potent than had Daniel. This age may be more complex in its temptations, more subtle and insidious in the way it is likely to spoil men. But it is also an age when true life is become possible because of the simplicity of the purpose is just that I commit myself to Christ; I am His, avowedly; His, confessedly His. I will follow Him. That is the first and the simple purpose to which I invite every man. Remember that the purpose of loyalty to Christ, formed in the heart, confessed with the lip, is simply the centre from which a man is to correct everything else in his life. Purpose loyalty to Christ, affirm it, and then from that centre you are to begin to construct your circumference and set the externalities of your life right. I meet scores of men who say, "I try, but I fail. I want to be a Christian, but this or the other thing stands in my way." I reply, "You are not to do these things to be a Christian; you are to become a Christian to do these things." Do not attempt to construct your circumferences in order to be in right relationship with your centre. Find your centre in order to correct your circumference. We have not forgotten how impossible it is to form a circumference until we have found the centre. Daniel was a man of prayer. Nothing stands out more clearly than this fact. When the interpretation of the king's dream was asked, he called his friends together into a compact of prayer, asked them to pray with him, that he might have the necessary light for interpretation. As the story moves on it reveals the truth that he was a man who had regular habits of prayer, who three times a day turned his face towards old Jerusalem, thought on God, spoke to God. Here we touch the secret that underlies his fulfilment of purpose. Strong purpose is only powerful in execution as we are dependent upon God. The heart may be firmly determined to loyalty, but, unless we know how to lean hard upon God, the forces against us will prove too much for us. A man meaning to do right and depending on God is absolutely invincible. What lies behind the fact of a man's praying? First, his sense of personal limitation; secondly, his profound conviction of Divine sufficiency. What is prayer with these things lying in the background? It is the use of the means of communication between his weakness and God's power, his limitation and God's sufficiency. Now, if you desire to live this life in which spirit excels, the life of victory and of power, to have purpose is not enough. You and I must recognise our own limitation, frailty, weakness. In the days of our young manhood we feel so self-sufficient. We can do the high thing, the noble thing in our own strength. Oh, that God may reveal to you at once that this is not so, that the life godless is always sooner or later a failure and a wreck! Was there ever man of stronger personality or individuality, apart from Christ, than Saul of Tarsus? Yet he confessed, "When I

would do good, evil is present with me." Be that as it may, unless you learn the secret of dependence on God, sooner or later, on one side or other of your nature, you will be wrooked and ruined. I shall never tell you that all you have to do is to realise your own manhood and fight the battle and conquer. I am here to tell you evil is too strong for you, that the forces that lure are the forces that ruin. In your own strength you cannot overcome. But there is another truth, the truth that Daniel knew, the truth that God and Daniel were stronger in combination than all Chaldean corruption and idoltrous evil, the truth that you and God in London are invincible against all the forces that will sweep against you. Doubtless I speak to some who have fallen, who have sinned, and they know it. I take you back to the point of your fall, and tell you that your fall was due to your independence. Had you been a dependent soul, trusting in God, recognising His power, communicating with Him by prayer, always leaning hard upon Him, you would have won where you failed. Form habits of prayer. Daniel prayed with his face towards Jerusalem every day. I urge you to have special times, special seasons; I urge you to continue in prayer. Then follow the two results I have mentioned. A spirit of perception. There is no doubt that the gift of interpretation which Daniel received was specially bestowed by God for special purposes. The immediate application to us is, that to the man who has made his purpose and prays, there will be given a clarity of vision which will enable him to accomplish the divine work allotted to him. It may be, as in the case of Daniel, that of interpretation, or it may be in some other department. The thing is that the man will be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. Have you not felt that you need spiritual perception to discern between right and wrong, and that quickly? How often a man says, "I had done it before I knew it; I had fallen before I was conscious of the temptation." But to the man of purpose and prayer there comes a growing keenness of insight, sensitiveness of soul, quickness of perception in the commonplaces, and a keen vision in the crises of life, special illumination from God flashing upon the pathway, saving him in the moment of his peril. Finally, Daniel was a man of power; first, as we have seen, in small things, but also in great things. I am not suggesting that if you take this position of purpose and maintain it, take this life of prayer and follow it, that if you have this quick, keen perception of God by the Holy Spirit, you will come to a place of worldly power. It certainly is remarkable that this man held office in three kingdoms—in Babylon, in Media, and Persia. The man of purpose, the man of prayer, the man of perception, was recognised by the men of his age and trusted, and put into places of power, and, as the text says, "the king thought to set him over the whole realm." I am not saying that will necessarily follow, but I am saying that the man of purpose, of prayer, of perception, becomes the man of power—power that enables him to say No. The highest courage is not the courage of the battlefield; it is moral courage—the power to say No. The thing that nerves a man to say No in the presence of temptation is the fact that he has taken his stand and is a man of purpose, is perpetually a man of prayer, and, therefore, a man of perception, seeing the issues, understanding the virtues, and able to say No when the moment comes. Our age wants men who are superior to it, not men who are driven by it. (*G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*)

The Uncompromising Young Man :—The grandest object for human contemplation is a noble character. A lofty type of a true and regal man, great and good, is humanity's richest heritage. Such is the character which is the subject of our present study. We cannot contemplate it without feeling the fires of inspiration kindle in our hearts. Daniel is a model character for the study and imitation of all who would achieve anything worthy in life. The foundation of all Daniel's after-greatness and success is true personal merit. If God favours and honours him, it is because of a subjective ground for such favour in himself; and the same favour awaits every who would bear himself in similar manner. What awaits young Daniel in his new sphere of life? A test of character which thus early exhibits his uncompromising spirit, and unswerving fidelity to the truth he holds. Daniel, though firm of purpose and invincible in his integrity, is yet well-mannered and courteous. An incorruptible conscience does not imply a sour temper, or incivility of manners. Daniel's religion and temperance proved no hindrance to his advancement, but helped him up the way of promotion. This praying Daniel is a young man of highest honour and truest humility. The lofty courage, the sublime moral heroism of this Daniel deserves special notice, as seen in the later acts of his eventful life. Never did man occupy so high a position who was more deserving of it. But honour and merit are always targets for the malicious arrows of envy. Daniel's colleagues seek occasion for his overthrow, but seek in vain for any fault in his character or administration. They have to declare there is but one point at which he can be assailed, and that is, his fidelity to God! Thus true and faithful to the last was Daniel

What Daniel's God was to him, that He will be to you. Learn to honour and serve the God of Daniel; learn that true principle is true expedience; learn that the busiest man may be a praying man; learn to do right, though the heavens fall. (C. H. Payne, D.D., LL.D.) *Christian Character—Daniel*.—One of the most dangerous beliefs of the present day is that an earnest religious life is not compatible with success in business, or with promotion in public life. The success and promotion of Daniel, and of Joseph, Moses and Samuel, prove that an upright life, lived in fellowship with God, is not a hindrance, but a help to success in life. A life of piety and obedience to God cultivates in us the best possible business habits—delicacy, integrity, patience, control of temper, control of appetite, an interest in the welfare of others, and a trustful confidence in ourselves, as the result of firm reliance on God. See some of the principles illustrated in the life of Daniel. 1. It is always safe to do right. There are many who think otherwise. They will try to soothe the conscience by saying that they approve the right, and that, under more favourable circumstances, they would certainly do it. But swerving from duty makes it easier to do wrong again; and there lies the danger. When we are resolutely doing God's will, He will open up a way for us. A man of weak faith and weak will, yields to circumstances, and excuses himself by saying that he could not help it. We should rule circumstances, and not allow circumstances to rule us. Fortune follows in the footsteps of faith. 2. Daniel's love of private prayer. That man is always strong for duty, and strong against temptation, who has learned to prevail with God! Daniel not only maintained communion with God in spirit, but he had also stated times for prayer. His public life was upright and beautiful, because his inner life was devout and prayerful. He made it the habit of his life to take everything to God in prayer. Special times for private prayer may soon enable the Christian to live constantly in the atmosphere of heaven. 3. Daniel's decision of character. A man may be pious and prayerful, and yet, if he lacks decision of character, he is liable to be led into any form of evil. What the world and the Church want to-day are men who have some backbone in them; men who will do right, and do it at all hazards. 4. Daniel's Faithful Friendship. When he was promoted by the king he did not forget his three companions. 5. Daniel's Contentment and Resignation to his lot. We find no murmur or complaint that God dealt hardly with him in allowing him to be carried away captive. He was able to see the providence of God in his captivity. No man has ever risen in life by repining at his lot, and by spending his strength in lamenting over lack of opportunity. Daniel's success depended largely upon that contentment that always accompanies a loving confidence in God, and cheerful submission to His will. 6. Daniel was most courteous and amiable in his manner. This gave him great power over men. He was a true gentleman—that is, he was both gentle and manly. He was too manly to be weak and irresolute; and he was too courteous to be coarse and offensive. Courtesy and gentleness give a man great power over his fellow men. 7. Daniel's Business Fidelity. Some narrowly pious people would have said that he had far too secular duties on his hands. They would necessarily interfere with his spirituality of mind and his intercourse with God. Daniel did not think so. Because he gave himself to prayer he could busy himself with secular things and not suffer; and because he was so busy with secular affairs he needed his frequent seasons of prayer. It was because Daniel lived in the presence of God that he was able to leave such a noble record of the administration of the affairs of the kingdom. . . . We may make Daniel's life our own, if we have Daniel's faith, and trust as Daniel trusted. (S. Macnaughton, M.A.)

Ver. 4. Then the Presidents and Princes sought to find occasion against Daniel.—*The Hebrew Confessor*.—It is the nature of the carnal mind, even to hate God, and so it hates that which has God in it. His enemies hated Daniel on account of his faith: Amidst the rabble of deities, gods and goddesses, with all their splendour, and all their circumstantial authority, in Babylon, he was true to his worship of the one living God, true to Jehovah, and true to the covenant, true to the counsel of God, which was then working under all events, and flashing up from time to time, through all secretaries, giving hints of what was understood to be when Christ himself would come; and the mighty spirit of revelation rose in the soul of Daniel. There was nothing in Daniel's life that ought to have excited hatred. All through life he had maintained his steadfastness of holy life; and they hated that holy life. They hated him also, because he was a man of rare gifts. Notice the effect of the conspiracy. It brought out Daniel's confession. In consequence of his confession, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Would you be ready, if the call were to come forth to the lions for Christ's sake, could you be ready? (C. Stanford). *Daniel: His Trial and his Triumph*.—I. Let us look at the conduct of these Presidents and Princes as affording illustrations of THE LENGTHS OF WRONGDOING TO WHICH THE SPIRIT OF ENVY, WHEN IT IS ONCE

YIELDED TO, WILL CARRY MEN. II. Let us see, in their speech concerning Daniel, an instance of THE TRIBUTE WHICH, IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER, VICE IS ALWAYS COMPELLED TO PAY TO VIRTUE. III. Let us meditate upon the feeble and wicked compliance of the king with their blasphemous request, as revealing THE POWER OF FLATTERY TO LEAD MEN ASTRAY. IV. Let us study the behaviour of the man of God in the hour of trial, that we may ADMIRE HIS COURAGE, IMITATE HIS SPLENDID EXAMPLE, AND, BY GOD'S HELP, MAKE HIS GLORIOUS VICTORY OURS. (*Anon.*)

Plotting Presidents.—There are four things relating to the proposed statute which are worthy of being noted. I. One is the influential character of the deputation. It consisted of presidents and satraps, two presidents and perhaps a considerable number of the satraps. It is not likely that all the one hundred and twenty satraps were present in Babylon at one and the same time. The deputation therefore consisted of the highest and most influential officers of state. 2. Another is the turbulence of their zeal. They are said to have "assembled together," or rather, as in the margin, "came tumultuously." They approached the king in his palace, not with calm deliberation, but in stormy haste. And the excited eagerness of such influential men, especially as the kingdom had been only recently subjugated and received, could not fail to impress the king. 3. Another is that the proposed statute was recommended by the whole body of his rulers. This was certainly false, as Daniel, the wisest ruler of them all, had never been consulted; and possibly there were others, especially in the remote provinces. It seems, however, likely that all the rulers who were consulted were of one mind as to the desirableness of getting such a statute, and of thereby effecting the favoured Jewish statesman. Such a representation on the part of this influential and resolute body of men would naturally have much weight with the king. 4. And another is the high honour which the statute would confer on Darius. He was to be regarded not only as a god, but as *the* god for the period of a month. This certainly was a most extraordinary proposal; but it would not seem so extraordinary to Darius as it does to us. His grandfather, Deioces, the king of the Medes, sought to inspire his people with the idea that he was more than a man; and it was the belief of the Persians that their kings were an incarnation of the Deity. Their proposal was thus in the line both of the popular belief and of the king's natural desire for self-exaltation. (*Thomas Kirk*).

Religion behind righteousness.—These presidents should have said, A religion that keeps Daniel so right in his action and policy must be a good religion, although we cannot understand its metaphysics, and although it is opposed in deadly hostility to all our Babylonian and Chaldean conceptions and imaginings. Why not reason so in modern civilisation? Here the Christian has great opportunity for doing good; he may not be able to explain the metaphysics of his Christianity, but what a chance he has for verifying its morality! And to morality the whole thing must come at some point or other. A man can never be so transcendently pious as to take out a licence to be wicked. If you are not correct in your accounts you cannot be correct in your prayers. Your piety is a mistake and a farce if it be not upheld and elucidated with dazzling illustration by your behaviour. Men then in some instances will be constrained to say that a piety which expresses itself in such conduct must be good. Through your morality men may come into God's own sanctuary; through your noble behaviour men may begin to inquire about the Cross which accounts for it: that is your chance. The penetration which belongs to metaphysical reasoning you may not possess; the power which inheres in expository and hortatory eloquence may not be your gift; but the humblest, youngest, simplest man may show what his Christianity has done for him by his industry, his punctuality, his faithfulness, his obedience, his reliability in all circumstances, his ability to bear the test of every analysis and every pressure. So thus we may form ourselves, by the grace of God, into a great body of witnesses, each in his own way, explaining the divine kingdom, and accounting for the holiest conduct in human life. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

The Envious Presidents.—Lessons to be learnt. 1. That marked outward peculiarities of worship afford a ready subject of attack! Elaborate ceremonials oftentimes vex the minds of plain and practical men, and stir up all kinds of strife and controversy. Therefore it is well not to assign an undue importance, or an undue prominence, to outward ceremonials. 2. That we should not be ashamed frequently and openly to make confession of our faith. The days of religious persecution are past, it is hoped never to return. But the days when a religious profession excites ridicule and scorn are by no means vanished. Many a man who could not be tempted out of his faith has been laughed out of it. 3. That impiety ever is at war with piety, and injustice with justice. Good and evil can never agree together, they must ever be at war. 4. That all of us, like Daniel in the Scriptures, and like Christian, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," must pass through the lions to the palace beautiful. This world oftentimes in our hour of gloom seems to us but a den of darkness, a den filled

with the wild beasts to which our sins and errors may be fully compared. If we walk along the narrow road of life, we see on both sides dangers and roaring lions, temptations and snares of all kinds, ready to overwhelm us. If we but advance, we shall find that the dangers which appeared to threaten us disappear, the mouths of the lions are stopped, the lions, it may be, are chained. (*R. Young, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. Except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.—Fruit in Old Age.—This ancient story is as vital and beautiful as ever. Each deed of holy courage, each life of truth and purity, lives on in recorded or unrecorded influence. He works (immortal as He who inspired it), in one generation after another with the "power of an endless life." Beautiful the thick blossomed trees of spring, but not to be compared for the beauty of usefulness with the fruit-weighted trees of autumn. Beautiful the piety of youth with its sweet promises, but more beautiful the piety of aged men and women when, so many tempests outlived, they "still bring forth fruit in old age." What fruit do we find in Daniel's old age? I. **AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT.** In him, and seen to be in him. For be a man's spirit excellent or the reverse, it cannot be hidden. It comes out. The churl, the cruel, the malignant man, may mask the spirit, and hypocritically appear what he is not. But such are often surprised into conduct in which the real bad spirit is revealed; or they weary of playing a part. The spirit of Daniel was the secret of his elevation by Darius. How it showed itself is not told. He was a man of rare sagacity, and of incorruptible integrity. He had a kingly soul, with a spirit that thrilled his very silences, looks, tones, with excellence. We are more as forces in the world, than speakers and toilers. The Spirit we are of is an essential part, the largest part of our influence. It is the eloquence of tone and look and silence—it is ourself. Let the spirit be right and the life will be. II. **FAITHFULNESS TO DUTY.** Daniel had enemies. They plot against him. He was faithful to his earthly master, because in all faithful to his Master in heaven. The secret of his faithfulness was that very piety through which his foes sought to assail, and take his life from the earth. There still is the secret of well doing, and continuance in well-doing, whatever be the station. III. **PRAYERFULNESS.** Busy had been Daniel's life. But he was never too busy to pray thrice a day. From this habit, not even peril of death could daunt him. Daniel knew that the writing was signed, but it made no difference. For he knew also the helpful and sublime privilege of prayer. The baffled king sought by delay to save Daniel. It was in vain. The den probably was an underground cave. This method of punishment is attested by the discovery of statues and bas-reliefs among the ruins of Babylon. Daniel was willing to meet his fate. Prayer to God was the necessity of his life. Life might be surrendered rather than prayer. Life fruitful is ever life prayerful. IV. **TRUSTFULNESS.** What a moment when the aged prophet was cast into the den! Daniel was calm. He trusted in God. From early youth, through manifold perils, Daniel had trusted in his God. He had never been put to confusion, nor would he be now. The angel Jehovah was with him. (*G. T. Coster.*) **The authority of conscience.**—Fault-finding is not a difficult science. A practised critic will find blemishes in the most beautiful works of men. The judges of a century ago who passed capital sentence on cases that were more than doubtful consoled themselves by the reflection that there was enough in every man to justify a hanging. So strong has been the sense of human guilt that it has been satisfied with nothing less than theories of total depravity. Many countries have sought for stainless statesmen, many masters for spotless servants, many Churches for immaculate ministers, but the supply has not been equal to the demand. And every fresh failure has only served to intensify the depth of the conviction that the best men have in them the principle of evil. And I go further and say that this conviction has forced itself on those who have not set themselves to find out the faults in others. Our failings, as a rule, are so obvious that the most charitable must acknowledge them. It does not need a jealous or envious eye to detect our flaws. And if this is true of our experience of private life, it is doubly so of public life. The "fierce light that beats upon a throne," beats with no less fierceness upon the guiders of a throne. Their most private failings are magnified into public evils. It might also be said that a public man has no privacy. The more widely a man is known the larger is the circle of his critics. Daniel was a public man. He was one of the three presidents of Darius's kingdom, and we are told "the king thought to set him over the whole realm." It would not have been easy to play perfectly so exalted a part before the most friendly spectators. But they who watched Daniel were hostile in the worst degree. There was no manly, open hostility, that thought his actions wrong, and opposed them because they thought so. There was a mean, underhand, jealous and envious hostility, that could not bear to see virtue rewarded. And for them the sting was in

the virtue. Daniel was faithful. His conduct would bear the severe scrutiny of his enemies. We do not suppose this to mean that Daniel was no sinner, but there was no open departure from righteousness and justice which could be made the basis of an impeachment. There remained one chance of striking a blow at the man they hated. Daniel was a religious man. His religion was a part of his life. They knew him well enough to know that on no consideration would he forsake or neglect his religion. We have here, I think, a very striking illustration of a very great truth that conscience derives its power over men as it is recognised by them to be a law of their God. The gospel of Christ appeals to the most savage and slavish of people, as well as to the most civilised, because it appeals to those great principles of our nature that distinguish us as mankind. And of all our common qualities, conscience is one of the most undeniable. With more or less distinctness it defines for every class of men certain broad lines of right and wrong. But it is evident that its power over us will depend on how we regard it. It may be to some a mere uncomfortable sensation that may be removed in time; the result of a passing feeling of sorrow for harm done or wrong tolerated. In such a case it is not likely to speak with much force. But to others it is sacred with the monitions of God Himself. They have seen an inner law in all men, and have agreed that there was a great Lawgiver. They have heard an inner voice calling them to righteousness, and have felt there was somewhere a Source of righteousness. The history of the world is full of instances of the conduct that is the result of these two ways of regarding conscience. Its Pilates, even when to the reproaches of their consciences have been added superstitious fears, have washed their hands and declared themselves innocent of just blood it was in their power to save. But its Luthers, when they might have stood aloof and declared their innocence of doctrines and practices that had degraded the Church, felt compelled to suffer persecution with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. If the world has had its King Johns who could consent to make their kingdom tributary to the Pope, and hold their crown from his command, it has also had its William the Silents who for the sacred cause of liberty could endure all personal sacrifice that they might finally bequeath to their successors the inheritance of a free people, whose rights were assured, and whose consciences were respected. Again I say, obedience to conscience as to the law of God makes the hero. I plead that there is no way in which we can better serve our Master. Here, if in any way, is our best opportunity of serving our day and generation. We live at a time when, with shame be it said, in many trades custom has done its best to condone dishonesty: to patronise sham commodities has become general; many an honest living has been ruined by unfair competition; cheapness of material has been secured by lavish expenditure of human suffering. There is very serious danger that our national conscience may become dull as our national sins become common. There is very serious danger lest good Christian people should act the part of Pilate through mistrust of their powers to stay the wrong. There is very serious danger lest we should become so accustomed to hear the voice of pain as to shut our ears to its cry and be absolutely dumb. We pass on to notice how the law of God is superior in authority to the law of man, and how the law of man only derives its validity and authority as it reflects and realises the law of God. Daniel's enemies saw that it was possible to frame a law that Daniel's conscience would not permit him to obey; and they knew that no matter what penalties were attached, if obedience to the law of man meant disobedience to the law of God, Daniel would be a law-breaker rather than be false to his religion. Now, how would the opinion of a certain class of people regard Daniel? They say the law is sacred: obedience to the law is imperative. They who go to Rome must do as Rome does. They must at least bow down to the house of Rimmon, even if it was only an outward formality. It is possible to *act* like a heathen and *think* like a Christian. God regards the heart—and to Him lip-service is insignificant, the worship of the heart is everything. Outward formality is nothing, inwardly reality is all. To them, then, Daniel's action may have been brave and grand, but it was the action of a fanatic, not of a careful and prudent man. Christian manhood shrinks in horror from conformity even in appearance to the *faise*. It may be to the law of the country, but no country has a right to make the law. Nay, human law has its province: there are certain broad rules of morality that no one has a right to transgress. But human law has no right to interfere with man's religion: here he passes into a sacred realm; here his relationship is with God. Oh, that our characters may so bear the scrutiny of our enemies that our religion may be in their eyes our only fault? In a sense our lives are public ones. A godless world will eagerly pounce on any un-Christian conduct, and make it an occasion against us. (*C. S. Horne, M.A.*)

A Tribute from Enemies:—I. THE VERY UNFAVORABLE SOIL IN WHICH A CHARACTER OF SINGULAR BEAUTY AND DEVOUT CONSECRATION MAY BE ROOTED AND GROW. What

sort of a place was that court where Daniel was? Half shambles and half pigsty. Luxury, sensuality, lust, self-seeking, idolatry, ruthless cruelty were the environment of this man. In the middle of these there grew up this fair flower of a character, pure and stainless, by the acknowledgment of enemies, and in which not even accusers could find a speck or a spot. There are no circumstances in which a man must have his garments spotted by the world. There were "saints in Caesar's household." It may sound a paradox, but it is a deep truth that unfavorable circumstances are the most favorable for the development of the Christian character. For that development comes, not by what we draw from the things around, but by what we draw from the things in which we are rooted, even God himself, in whom the roots find both anchorage and nutriment. The more we are thrown back on him, and the less we find food for our best selves in the things about us, the more likely is our religion to be robust, and thorough-going, and conscious ever of his presence. He that has vitality enough within him to keep hold of Jesus Christ has thereby power enough within him to turn enemies into friends, and unfavorable circumstances into helps instead of hindrances. Purity, and holiness, and communion with God do not depend on environment, but upon the inmost will of the man. II. THE KEEN CRITICS THAT ALL GOOD MEN HAVE TO FACE. In this man's case their eyesight was misled by the microscope of envy and malice. However unobtrusive and quiet a Christian person's life may be, there will be some persons standing close by who, if not actually watching for his fall, are at least by no means indisposed to make the worst of a slip, and to rejoice over an inconsistency. We do not need to complain of that. There will always be a tendency to judge men who by any means profess that they are living by the highest law, with a judgment that has very little charity in it. And it is perfectly right that it should be so. Be content to be tried by a high standard. III. THE UNBLEMISHED RECORD. These men could find no fault. They were very poor judges of his religion, and they did not try to judge that; but they were very good judges of his conduct as Prime Minister, and they did judge that. The world is a very poor critic of my Christianity, but it is a very sufficient one of my conduct. If we call ourselves Christians, we are bound, by the very name, to live in such a fashion as that men shall have no doubt of the reality of our profession, and of the depth of our fellowship with Christ. And it is by our common conduct men will judge us. IV. OBEDIENT DISOBEDIENCE. The plot goes on the calculation that, whatever happens, this man may be trusted to do what his God tells him; no matter who tells him *not* to do it. Daniel brushes the preposterous law of the poor, shadowy Darius on one side, in order that he may keep the law of his God. If earthly authorities command what is clearly contrary to God's law, a Christian is absolved from obedience, and cannot be loyal unless he is a rebel. Obedience to God needs always to be sustained. In our little lives, the motto, "This did not I, because of the fear of the Lord," is absolutely essential to all noble Christian conduct. These people calculated upon Daniel, and they had a right to calculate upon him. Could the world calculate upon us? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Example of Daniel*:—Daniel is presented to us as a man, as well as a prophet of God. In the Bible men are seen as they really are, and the changes which grace made in their natural characters, are easily traced. Through a long life, Daniel's was a record of consistent, firm, unflinching fidelity. What was the clew? In four aspects we may view him. I. IN CHILDHOOD. There is intense personality of teaching in the example here presented. As he was a child of the captivity, so are we. We are heirs of another kingdom. That kingdom is to come; we are to be trained for it. Parents are to follow a higher standard than this world can give. As the Chaldean lore of Daniel was all sanctified by piety, you are to see that the wisdom which is from above is made prominent in the training of your child for God. II. IN HIS YOUNG MANHOOD. In Daniel's treatment of himself young people may learn a useful lesson. Self-indulgence emasculates moral as well as physical vigour. The purity of innocence retained is better than that which comes by repentance and pardon. III. AS A MAN, FULLY OCCUPIED. He was a statesman, and scientist as well. No man in this city is as busy to-day as was he. Yet he found time to pray thrice a day. He took time, and so may you. IV. IN THE DEN OF LIONS. It was his prayerful communion with God that now risked his spiritual life and fortified him against perils which otherwise would have destroyed him. The den of lions was, indeed, a historic reality. Yet it was no less a figure of the tribulations into which our Lord Jesus and all his followers are thrown. We are powerful if we are in communion with God, and powerless if we attempt to cope with Him alone. (*Bishop W. C. Doane.*) *Eminent Piety and Efficiency in Business not incompatible*:—Daniel is a man fitted to excite our admiration at whatever point in his remarkable career we regard him. Two things in the text invite our attention. I. THE HONORABLE TESTIMONY BORNE BY HIS

ENEMIES TO HIS EFFICIENCY IN OFFICE. By the death of Belshazzar, and the conquest of Babylon, Darius, the Mede, had added an extensive territory to his empire, teeming with a numerous population. Such an addition required a corresponding increase in the staff of officials requisite for its management. Darius, admiring the administrative talents of Daniel, and having unbounded confidence in his character, formed the purpose of making this Daniel prime minister over the whole empire. Hence arose a conspiracy among Daniel's associates in office. They have become jealous of Daniel, and seek his downfall. 1. The enemies of Daniel had powerful motives to seek his downfall. Motives impure indeed, but powerful. The spirit of envy had seized them. It cost them something to tolerate the Jewish statesman as an equal, but they could not brook his being their superior. Promotion to him was degradation to them. 2. They had ample scope. When men are bent on doing mischief, they can generally succeed, even where the sphere is limited, and the chances comparatively few. Shortcomings in accounts, and cases of maladministration on the part of Daniel could not have escaped the quick eye of his two rivals. Errors of this kind would have served their purpose. But they found "none occasion nor fault." II. **THE LAST RESORT OF HIS MALICIOUS ENEMIES.** They basely plot for his ruin concerning his religion. The cowardly conspiracy, together with its terrible recoil on the conspirators, is fully developed in the remainder of the chapter. The enemies of Daniel are "taken in their own trap, and are fallen into the pit their own hands have digged." 1. There was another chance, and that chance lay in the man's religion. Daniel was known to be eminently devout. Prayer was the element of his soul's existence. Thorough honesty and honour might sufficiently explain the accuracy of Daniel's accounts. But his religion was something beyond common honesty and honour. Without true religion, without a life of prayer, without a life of faith on the son of God, and obedience to his commands, without a life in which the moral nature shall have its share of attention, in which the soul shall get spiritual culture, and preparation for the future, your life, however satisfactory in other respects, is an incomplete thing, and if persisted in, will eventually prove a failure. 2. Daniel's religion was reliable. His enemies and rivals knew this, and matured their plans accordingly. They saw in Daniel an honest and fearless professor of religion; a man of decision, the tone of whose piety was elevated, whose religious habits and exercises were fixed and punctual. They could make his frequent prayers to God a sure basis of calculation, in forming their schemes for his overthrow. Nor did they over-rate his constancy. 3. Eminent piety and thorough efficiency in business are not incompatible. Some have a notion that personal religion and proficiency in any trade or profession cannot go together. And, indeed, we do not always find piety and skill united. It need not be that the two are separated. And religion supplies the highest motives for the efficient discharge of all duties. III. **RELIGION NOT ONLY PLACES US UNDER THE POWER OF MIGHTY MOTIVES, IT ALSO SUPPLIES IN ITS HOLY EXERCISES THE BEST PREPARATION FOR MEETING THE CLAIMS OF OUR EARTHLY CALLING.** There is a wear and tear of the system incessantly going on, in the pursuit of any trade or profession which demands occasional relief. The wheels of life want oiling. There is a fountain of strength free to all. Daniel knew its power. He found relief at the throne of grace, in his prayers and regular communings with God. Three times a day he retired and prayed. Here was the secret of his strength. Our religion, while it is spiritual, is practical. IV. **SUCH A COMBINATION REFLECTS HONOUR ON RELIGION, AND MATERIALLY AIDS ITS ADVANCE.** Manifest discord between the religious profession and the common life, dishonours the name of Christ, creates doubt in the minds of men as to the power of His truth, fills their minds with a false and unfavourable impression of its general influence, and thus tends to strengthen those prejudices, already too strong, which prevent their forming a just estimate of a true Christian life. In this respect we have all to confess manifold deficiencies. Let us, however, remember and imitate Daniel's conduct, and we may yet render the cause of Christ important service. Combine thorough efficiency in business with all the exercises of piety, and you will in your own person demonstrate that the two things can co-exist. (*David Jones, B.A.*) *The True Believer's Conflict with, and triumph over, the world.*—Human nature is the same in every age; the same alike in principle and in practice. It is no wonder that Daniel's exaltation should prove a source of enmity, and that those who were placed in a lower point of dignity should seek occasion against him, that so they might accuse him to their common Master. Still there are many who watch for the falling of the righteous man. I. **WHAT THE BELIEVERS MAY EXPECT FROM THE WORLD.** The world is very little altered since the days of Daniel. Occasion against the believer is sought with equal earnestness, though not perhaps, with equal opening. This enmity should not come out on the Christian as a strange and unexpected thing. It should enter into his reckoning. II. **WHAT THE WORLD WILL EXPECT FROM THEM.** It is

evident from the context what opinion had been formed concerning Daniel's moral character, by those who had leagued together to compass his overthrow. We should take heed that we knowingly afford no vulnerable point, no exposed and unguarded quarter, on which we may be assailed by the venomous arrows of the ungodly. Like Job, we should put on righteousness that it may clothe us. To this a great auxiliary is singleness of mind. The human mind is so constituted that man is always under the guidance and control of some one master-principle to which all others are subordinate or subservient. To realise consistency of conduct we should seek unity of motive.

III. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCES THAT MAY RESULT HERE, AND THAT WILL RESULT HEREAFTER. If actions be ours, consequences, even as to the present life, are in the hand of God alone. It is ours to purpose, but he fulfils. (*T. Dale, A.M.*) *The Incorruptible Courtier*.—There are two kinds of courage recognised among men. There is another kind of courage, often idolised, that seems a compound of rashness and foolhardiness, that delights in going anywhere and undertaking anything. There is another kind of courage which we call moral courage, which is of the highest and noblest character; a courage dependent wholly on the mental and not on the physical characteristics. Observe 1. The baseness of envy. Daniel's character was, long ere this, fully established in Babylon. Darius had promoted him. We can easily imagine how distasteful such a promotion must have been to the Persian nobles. How hard do we find it to bear quietly the promotion of others. Let us tremble lest anything in the advancement or welfare of others excites a malign sentiment in our minds, lest we come to envy them that which, by the appointment of providence, has become theirs, and which they have a right honestly to keep and to enjoy:—the moment such a disposition arises in our minds, that moment are we Daniel's persecutors, without the power. 2. Daniel's Crime. In what way his ruin was to be accomplished does not as yet seem clear to those who have resolved on that view. Possibly they were not as incorruptible as he. Possibly they had consciences that allowed them to do what Daniel's conscience forbade him to do. How very unpleasant it is to have an upright person near us when we want to do wrong! Very perplexing and annoying this Jew Daniel, a perpetual decalogue before them, telling them they have broken all its precepts. He must be removed. To get rid of him, however, will require considerable skill, nothing less than the invention of a new crime hitherto unheard of in the annals of idolatry. 3. The rash resolve of a weak king. On the side of his self-importance the poor king was caught. He forgot the impiety of the request, and established the statute framed by Daniel's enemies. 4. Daniel's unmoved perseverance. All through his life he has been a man of prayer. Prayer is with him a necessity of his nature. Learn a lesson here. Religion must be all, or it is nothing. Every day of your life it will say to you, what Daniel's said to him, "Without me ye can do nothing," and the religious life which in youth was your calm and deliberate choice, whose power and beauty you so imperfectly apprehended, will then become the necessity of your nature, the secret of your happiness, the source of your inspiration and the blessing of your house. 5. Darius the Mede had gone too far to retract. He is obliged to think now, after the act is done, instead of thinking beforehand, and he cannot sleep. 6. An interposition by miracle God had sent his angels and the mouths of the lions had been shut. How this was done we know not, nor can there be much profit, in our speculations on the matter. But it was done. If any of you ever resolve to serve God, never fear the lions' den that may come. God will interpose in some marvellous way at the right time; a friend will be raised up that will be as an angel of God; troubles will disappear as soon as you meet them. God says, "Them that honour me I will honour." (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The Character of Daniel*.—I. HIS CHARACTER. 1. His consistent integrity. For this we have the evidence of his enemies. 2. His habitual piety. (1) His habits of prayer. (2) His praying looking toward Jerusalem. 3. Daniel's special confidence in God. Not professed with his lips, but calmly and touchingly exhibited in his actions. II. GOD'S MYSTERIOUS DEALINGS WITH HIM. 1. They were deeply mysterious. God permits his enemies to succeed. So God often deals with the world; in his Church; with individual Christians; and with his own son he did so deal. 2. See Daniel delivered and God's dealings explained. Consider the effects of this deliverance on Daniel; on the King; on the enemies of God; on the people and cause of God. Apt representation of God's universal providence—all things shall terminate as He wills, and shall glorify Him—in the world at large; in the Church. Individuals continually perceive the blessed results of their afflictions, trials, darkness, and fears. How truly this was shown in the Son of God, need hardly be observed. Let the timid, the undecided, or the inconsistent, go and study the character of Daniel. Let them confess their faith as he did. (*F. Close, M.A.*) *Seeking Cause of Offence*.—It is the penalty of greatness that envy ever follows in its path. Nor is goodness any protection. In

Daniel there was very much to abate envy. It was probably upon its becoming manifest that the King intended to raise Daniel to still higher honour, and to "set him over the whole nation," that the anger of the satraps became too violent for restraint. They resented it, not because they were corrupt, and Daniel's honesty kept them from enriching themselves, but more probably because they were ambitious, and deemed that it was a slight to the conquerors to give the highest office in the realm to one of a race vanquished by those whom they had now defeated. Daniel was a slave in their eyes, and was he now to rule over those who had beaten his masters? National antipathies are ever things difficult to control. And they have a good side; for patriotism is closely allied with them. These envious men sought their opportunity, first of all, in matters respecting the Kingdom. Eagerly they watched Daniel's administration, and hoped to find something neglected, or some failure. There was no probability of their discovering corruption or partiality, but they did hope to find something that might have been managed more skillfully. And they sought in vain. They despaired of finding anything against him save "concerning the law of his God." The word used for law is not the old Hebrew name *Thorah*, but a late word, used only here, and in *Ezra* and *Ester*. Of the *Thorah* of Moses these men knew nothing, but they had heard of Daniel's religious practices, and they felt that dislike with which men commonly regard the rites and usages of other forms of worship. And one thing is very remarkable. They were convinced that Daniel so valued his prayers and devotions that he would endure any loss or punishment rather than discontinue them ever for a time. Doubtless they called him a fanatic, and despised him for being narrow-minded. But fanatic is a term often applied to men of strong convictions. The words "assembled together" would better be, "came tumultuously." As if they would take the King by storm; moved with a fervid zeal to honour their beloved Darius. They had consulted among themselves, and had been moved to make this urgent demand by an outburst of feeling which had hurried their whole body to this tumultuous proceeding. They so wrought on the vanity of Darius that their request was granted. The outward semblance of the request was permission throughout a lunar month to acknowledge Darius as the sole deity to be invoked by prayer. The Persian kings claimed to be representatives of Pennized, and as such had a sort of right to divine honours. To Darius this deification of his person seemed not unreasonable. 1. Daniel does not go out of his way to show his determination to honour his God before his king. He simply persists quietly in a practice which he felt to be his duty. Come what would, he must honour God at any risk and at every cost. 2. Daniel prayed thrice a day. We might have expected prayer only at the morning and evening sacrifices. It has been objected that three times was a Parsee, not a Jewish custom. But see Psalm lv. 17; and for mid-day prayer, see Acts x. 9. (*Dean Payne-Smith*).

Ver. 7. Consulted together to establish a royal statute.—*The Faith of Daniel Tested*.—It was common for the Chaldeans to administer capital punishment by burning. To the Persians, who were worshippers of fire, this was regarded as something of an abomination, and hence they destroyed their condemned criminals by casting them to savage beasts. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of this Darius, he had the shrewdness to find out the best and most competent man in Babylon to serve him as his prime minister. He made Daniel chief of the three presidents. Such a man, in such a position, administering affairs with rigid exactness and impartiality, strictly honest himself and tolerating no dishonesties or falsities in others, and ever growing in the esteem of his king and in favour with the people, could not, in the nature of things, escape the envy and malice of those who suffered by comparison, and who found him in the way of their selfish ambitions. It is part of the disease that is upon depraved humanity to be dissatisfied and unamiable toward the excellences and honours of others. It is loath to bear anything above itself. It is their delight to humiliate those who happen to be more favoured than themselves. But see what the true fear of God will do for a man! With all the determination of the malignants to ruin Daniel, they could find no fault in him. Piety was rooted in him, and it wrought for him a pureness, dignity and integrity of life and character on which the most envious tongues could obtain no hold. They could sustain no charges against him as a man, or against his administration. His devotion to his God made him true in all his life and faithful to all his trusts. Having satisfied themselves of the impeccable integrity of Daniel, both as a man and as a competent officer, the eyes of these plotters should have been opened to their unreasonableness in wishing to overthrow him. But when the devil of selfishness, envy and malice takes possession of the heart, no charms of virtue, no beauties of goodness, no adornments of innocence, no excellences of merit, are sufficient to cast him out or break his dominion. The more convinced these men were of Daniel's

unimpeachableness, the more desperate they became in their determination to destroy him. Look at the cunning baseness of their proceeding. The movement of these conspirators was to prove how much they were devoted to the sublimest honour of their sovereign, and to induce him to unite with them in establishing some royal decree which should memorialize his divine dignity, and bring to him the sacred reverence which belonged to his person. The holding of the laws of the Medes and Persians to be unalterable was founded on the assumption that the king is something of a deity, and can make no mistakes. And this divinity of their king these men professed to be most anxious to bring forward, and to have impressed upon all the subjects of the realm. Such was their scheme. It had a heathen lie for its basis; it was a huge hypocrisy in its suggestion; and it was nothing but a scheme of cold-blooded murder to destroy the greatest, best and purest man in the kingdom. Great was the king's sorrow when he found who was struck by his insane decree. But vainly did he now reproach himself for his wicked folly. He had played the fool. He had permitted himself to be flattered into a measure which was now about to put out of the world the most faithful friend he had on earth. Under the Medo-Persian laws Daniel could not be delivered. Sycophants and flatterers are always tyrants in their hearts. They will oppress when they get the power. But Jehovah can bring to naught the machination of princes, and shut the mouths of lions. And in this case he did both. Learn from this that there is a righteous and merciful God at the helm of things, however crooked or unevenly they may seem to go. This is a mixed world. Excellence and virtue do not exempt from earthly ills and adversities. Learn also, how we may best conduct ourselves with reference to all these things. From early youth Daniel gave himself to God; he was diligent in his devotions; and always dared to obey God rather than man. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. Therefore King Darius signed the Writing and the Decree.—*A Hero in Babylon*.—The Jews passed into the hands of the conqueror of Babylon, and became the subjects of the great Cyrus, whose viceroy at Babylon is called in the Bible by the common name of Darius. The Persians were not idolaters. They believed in two principles—the good and the evil, and they held that the former of these principles was visibly incarnate in the person of their kings. Hence arose the unalterableness of the royal edicts of the Medes and Persians. They could not be changed without reflecting on the sacred character of the king. This pretension enables us to understand the strange decree about prayer. It was promulgated in order that Darius might obtain from his new subjects in Babylon recognition of himself as the supreme personage, the representative of the supreme God. It was to wring from the conquered, idolatrous Babylonians an acknowledgment of the conqueror's Divinity. Observe that it was a negative, not a positive, decree. They were not commanded by it to worship any other god, they were not even required by it to pay any divine honour to the king. Persecution was not attempted; open apostasy was not required. Why, we may ask, should Daniel have fallen into a trap it was so easy to avoid? He need not drop one petition out of his daily prayers. He need not, by word or gesture, pay blasphemous honour to the new sovereign. Why should he obtrude his disobedience? There is something unspeakably sublime in the line taken by that Hebrew courtier, Daniel. No fanatic, no headlong zealot, but the wisest and most diplomatic of statesmen, and the farthest sighted of men, calmly continued his religious habits precisely as aforetime. Compare the Apostles before the Sanhedrin saying "We ought to obey God rather than men." There was no balancing of consequences, no thought of compromise. Most of us have some idea of what truth is, of the rights and claims of truth, and, above all, of the deepest truth given to us to know that which is the hope of our own spiritual life. We have an idea that we are ourselves in possession of some truth—that we know something which is important, sacred, sublime; something which others in the world do not know relating to this subject—but which of us will dare to say that he has a deep hold, and a passionate love of truth, such as inspired these men to resist for the sake of it, and to strive against falsehood and sin? These are days of loose beliefs and hazy views, days when it is fashionable to be an honorary member of all creeds. To one who is infected with the indifferentism of such a time, the stand made by the heroes of the Book of Daniel must seem little better than fanatical folly, and sheer waste of life. So must all martyrdom appear to the man who is a spectator and not a disciple, who has never understood the claims or felt the value of the truth he professes to hold. Babylon has fallen, but it has had its counterpart in every age, for it is the type of that world, with its still subtler pomps and vanities, in which you and I have to pass through our probation; go where we will we cannot escape from it. It sets up its idols and demands worship for them; it has issued its imperious edicts, and attaches formidable penalties to the defiance of them. This will ever be the secret of

moral victory—the victory which will overcome the world, even unto the end—our *faith*. The true self cannot be touched with the mightiest of persecutors or the cruellest of inquisitors,—the true self which comes from God, and belongs to God, and witnesses for God, cannot be delivered to the tormentors. It defies captivity; it is indestructible and immortal. (*Canon Duckworth.*) *The Edict of Darius*.—We find that Darius—who was probably one of the high military commanders engaged in the siege of Babylon—takes the kingdom, while Cyrus is off conquering other parts of the world. As soon as he attains the throne he makes his arrangements for governing the country. He divides the kingdom into one hundred and twenty provinces; and he appoints a prince or ruler over each province; and over the princes he puts three presidents to see that these rulers do no damage to the king, and do not swindle the government. And over these three he places Daniel, as president of the presidents. Very possibly Darius knew the man. He may have been in former days at the court of Nebuchadnezzar; and if so, he probably considered Daniel an able and conscientious statesman. We do not know how long he held that position. But sooner or late the other presidents and the princes grew jealous, and wanted Daniel out of the way. It was as if they had said, "Let us see if we cannot get this sanctimonious Hebrew removed: he has 'bossed' us long enough." You see he was so impracticable: they could do nothing with him. There were plenty of collectors and treasurers; but he kept such a close eye on them that they only made their salaries. There was no chance of plundering the government while he was at the head. "If we had matters in our own hands it would be different; for King Darius does not know half as much about the affairs of this empire as does this old Hebrew: and he watches our accounts so closely that we can get no advantage over the government. Down with this pious Jew!" Perhaps they worked matters so as to get an investigating committee, hoping to catch him in his accounts. But it was no use. Now I want to call your attention to the fact that one of the highest eulogies ever paid to a man on earth was pronounced upon Daniel at this time by his enemies. These men were connected with the various parts of the kingdom, and on laying their heads together they came to this conclusion—that they could "find no occasion against this Daniel, except they found it against him concerning the law of his God." What a testimony from his bitterest enemies! Would that it could be said of all of us! Young man, character is worth more than money. Character is worth more than anything else in the wide world. I would rather have such a testimony as that borne of Daniel than have all that this world can give. The men said, "We will get him out of the way. We will get the king to sign a decree; and we will propose a penalty. It shall not be the fiery furnace this time. We will have a lions' den—a den of angry lions; and they will soon make away with him." Probably these plotters met at night, for it generally happens that if men want to do any downright mean business they meet at night; darkness suits them best. The chief-president himself was not there: he had not been invited to meet them. Very likely some lawyer, who understood all about the laws of the Medes and Persians, stood up, and talked something after this fashion: "Gentlemen, I have got, I think, a plan that will work well, by which we may get rid of this old Hebrew. You know he will not serve any but the God of Abraham and of Isaac." We know that very well. And if a man had gone to Babylon in those days he would not have had to ask if Daniel loved the God of the Bible. I pity any man who lives so that people have to ask, "Is he a Christian?" Let us so live that no one need ask that question about us. And these plotters said one to another, "Now, let us get Darius to sign a decree that if any man make a request of any God or man—except of the King Darius—for thirty days, he shall be put into the lions' den. And let us all keep perfectly still about this matter so that it won't get out. We must not tell our wives, for fear the news may get about the city. The king would never sign the decree if he found out what the object was." Then they may have said, "We must draw it so tight that Darius will not be able to get out of it after he has once signed. We must make it so binding that if the king once signs we shall have that Daniel in the lions' den: and we will take good care that the lions shall be hungry." When the mine is all ready, the conspirators come to the king, and open their business with flattering speech: "King Darius, live for ever!" When people approach me with smooth and oily words, I know they have something else coming—I know they have some purpose in telling me I am a good man. These plotters, perhaps, go on to tell the king how prosperous the realm is, and how much the people think of him. And then, perhaps, in the most plausible way, they tell him that if he signs this decree he will be remembered by their children's children—that it would be a memorial for ever of his greatness and goodness. "What is this decree that you wish me to sign?" And running his eye over the document he says "I don't see any objection to that." "Will you put your signet to it,

and make it law?" He puts his signature to the decree, and seals it with his seal. There was probably a long preamble, telling him how popular he was; saying that he was liked better than Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. They most likely tickled his vanity, and told him that he was the most popular man that had ever reigned in Babylon: and then they may have gone on to tell him how attached they were to him and his rule, and that they had been consulting together what they could do to increase his popularity and make him more beloved; and now they had hit upon a plan that was almost sure to do it. If you touch a man's vanity he will do almost anything; and Darius was like most of the human race. They touched his vanity by intimating that this would make him great. It was not only Daniel they were thus going to get out of the way, but every conscientious Jew. There was not a true Jew in the whole of that wide empire who would bow down and worship Darius; and these men knew that: and so they were going to sweep away at a stroke all the Jews who were true to their faith. They hated them. And I want to tell you that the world does not love Christians nowadays. The world will persecute a man if he attempts to live the life of a true Christian. The world is no friend to true grace: mark that! A man may live for the world, and like the world, and escape persecution. But if the world has nothing to say against you, it is a pretty sure sign that God has not much to say for you; because if you do seek to live unto Christ Jesus you must go against the current of the world. And now they are ready to let the news go forth; and it is not long before it spreads through the highways of Babylon. The men of the city knew the man: knew that he would not vacillate. Daniel was none of your sickly Christians of the nineteenth century; he was none of your weak-backed, none of your weak-kneed Christians; he had moral stamina and courage. I can imagine that aged white-haired Secretary of State sitting at his table going over the accounts of some of these rulers of provinces. Some of the timid, frightened Hebrews come to him, and say: "Oh, Daniel, have you heard the latest news?" "No. What is it?" "What! have you not been to the king's palace this morning?" "No! I have not been to the palace to-day. What is the matter?" "Well, there is a conspiracy against you. A lot of those princes have induced King Darius to sign a decree that if any man shall call upon any God in his kingdom within thirty days he shall be thrown to the lions. Their object is to have you cast into the den. Well now, just you get out of Babylon. Or, if you stay in Babylon, do not let anyone catch you on your knees. And if you will pray, close that window, draw a curtain over it; shut the door, and stop up every crevice. People are sure to be about your house listening." And some of our nineteenth century Christians would have advised after the same fashion:—"Cannot you find out some important business to be done down in Egypt, and so take a journey to Memphis? or can you not think of something that needs being looked after in Syria, and so hurry off to Damascus? Or, surely you can make out there is a need for your going to Assyria, and you can make a stay at Nineveh. Or why not get as far as Jerusalem, and see what changes fifty or sixty years have wrought? Any way, just be out of Babylon for the next thirty days, so that your enemies may not catch you: for, depend upon it, they will all be on the watch. And, whatever you do, be sure they do not catch you on your knees." How many men there are who are ashamed to be caught upon their knees! Men have not the moral courage to be seen praying. Ah, the fact is—we are a pack of cowards: that is what we are. Shame on the Christianity of the nineteenth century! it is a weak and sickly thing. Would to God that we had a host of men like Daniel living to-day! I can picture that aged man, with his grey hairs upon him, listening to the words of these "miserable counsellors," who would tempt him to "trim," and "hedge," and shift—"to save his skin," as men say, at the cost of his conscience. And their counsel falls flat and dead. I can fancy how Daniel would receive a suggestion that he should even seemingly be ashamed of the God of his fathers. "They will be watching you; they will have their spies all around. But if you are determined to go on praying, shut up your window; close all your curtains; stop up the keyhole, so that no one can look through to see you on your knees, and so that no one can overhear a single word. Accommodate yourself just a little. Compromise just a little." That is just the cry of the world to-day! It is, "Accommodate yourself to the times. Compromise just a little here; and deviate just a little there, just to suit the opinions and views of a mocking world." True as steel, that old man goes to his room three times a day. Mark you, he had time to pray. There is many a business man to-day who will tell you he has no time to pray. "If you have so much business to attend to that you have no time to pray, depend upon it you have more business on hand than God ever intended you should have." But look at this man. He had the whole, or nearly the whole, of the King's business to attend to. Yes, he could take up the words of the fifty-fifth Psalm, and say:

"As for me, I will call upon God;
And the Lord shall save me.
Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud;
And he shall hear my voice."

So Daniel went to his room three times a day: he trod that path so often that the grass could not grow upon it. He goes to pray as aforetime; and he has his windows open. Like Paul, in later days, he "knew whom he had believed"; like Moses, he "saw Him who is invisible." He knew whom he worshipped. There was no need to trace back the church records for years to find out whether this man had ever made a profession of religion. See him as he falls upon his knees. He is not careful to inquire whether there are any outsiders, or whether they can hear. There are men listening there near the open window: the hundred and twenty princes have taken good care of that. (D. L. Moody.)

Ver. 10. **Now when Daniel knew that the Writing was signed.**—*Faithful Serving*.—The grandeur of the Book of Daniel is not only the sweep of those majestic visions which opened the mysteries of future time, but the vivid portrait it holds before us of a man who has all the springs of his actions in faithfulness to God:—A man so thoroughly forgetful of himself that the one only question which rises in him, when anything is to be done or suffered, is whether that thing is his Lord's will. If it is, no doubt remains; nothing is to be said or thought about costs and consequences. If it is not, no consequences will justify it. The probable consequences of our actions are one proper test, among others for deciding in doubtful cases, before we act, whether a given course is, or is not according to God's will; but when that last point is once settled, whether by Scripture, an enlightened conscience, or any rightful authority, the expected consequences can never furnish ground for hesitation. What is right is to be done. What will come of doing right—whether dens of lions or chairs of state—is not our concern. Still, the weakness of human virtue makes men more prompt and steadfast in well-doing, if they know beforehand how it will come out, and that no hurt will be found upon them. Recall Daniel's four great experiences. Each of these four sorts of hostility to Christian faithfulness has its ever-present examples. 1. The royal meat, dishes, and wine-vessels, in the low opportunities of the flesh, tempting the senses to excess. 2. The golden image set up on the plains of Dura, as the thousand-fold attractions of outward possession and prosperity, office and station sanction the lust of them. 3. The princely court and crown and ceremony of Babylon, over-riding common consciences, in the whole fascination and imposing influence of earthly power, invested with the highest advantages and brilliant paraphernalia of social distinction. 4. The decree of an idolatrous worship, in everything among us which goes to put man in place of God, man's opinions in place of Gospel truths, and human fancies for a revealed and justified faith. We need not use the hard names, which describe the extreme indulgences and servitudes of these four formidable passions; we need not say, gluttony, avarice, sycophancy, or infidelity. Let us choose moderate words, and try to put it home to ourselves fairly, just as it is. Look at the same four thus: sins of the appetites; sins of selfish accumulation; sins of inordinate desire for position; sins of religious laxity and negligence. These beset us all, with all the artful and boundless possibilities of growth, mastery, perdition of the soul. Over all these perilous tempters we are shown here one steadfast and victorious master—religious fidelity. It wears in this saintly prophet a peculiar charm. It is a fidelity intensified, yet without boasting or pretension, incorruptible without self-confidence, fixed without obstinacy, patient without pusillanimity, invincible in front of men and princes, but humble and docile as the pet of the Lord. For a fidelity like this there is an involuntary and almost universal admiration among men that fall farthest short of it. So far the best sentiments of human nature second the requirements of our religion. Place a Daniel, an Elijah, a Gideon, or a Joshua before them, and they see, they confess the stamp of greatness on his spirit. So far the Bible and the soul answer to each other. The same divine hand that has wrought this feeling into the common human heart has woven traces of it into human history. The four successive steps which mark the birth and growth of each great cause, institution, or reformation among men, are these: 1. The great truth awakened in the mind of some man or men, in the form of an idea, and a faith by the Spirit from whom all good gifts come. 2. The jealous and the selfish opposition of worldly interest—the Pharaohs and Caesars and Herods, the Nebuchadnezzars and Belshazzars, the scribes and Pharisees, of Society, of the state, and even of the church—carrying on a determined warfare with the light. 3. The triumph of fidelity, brave and patient. 4. The general recognition and confession of the glory and beauty of the faithful life. Only let in time enough after a man sacrifices himself for

a true principle, and the common testimony of men will honour him. More than that, it will not effectually and unanimously honour anything else on earth, but such fidelity. It is one of the most striking proofs that a righteous God really rules the earth, to see this constant reversal of human judgements going on—the humble exalted, and the rejected canonised. Recall the case of Bernard Palissy, a poor, but thinking and believing mechanic of France, thrown into the old Bastille, on St. Bartholomew's day, for his Protestantism. Charles the Ninth came to visit and threaten him in the prison, saying to him, "Palissy, I am forced to give you up to death, unless you renounce your religion." "Forced!" answered the triumphant prisoner; "they that force you, King Charles, cannot force me. I can die, and so I am free. But you and all your nation cannot compel me, simple potter as I am, to bend my knee to an idol, or a lie." Everybody knows whence the spirit in that man came, and everybody acknowledges its power. Men are heard to say, "There are terrible times coming." It may be so, we know nothing of the future. But prosperity is a harder test of fidelity to Christ than misfortune. But instead of looking out for dangers that shall imperil men's souls when worse days come, we should be wiser if we were looking for them just where we are. In business, in politics, in company, in families, in schools, the question will have to go forth once more like a dividing sword, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Many persons are now pleading for mild and liberal exhibitions of Christian conviction. The greater truth is, we are all servants answerable only for doing declared duties, for confessing Christ before men, and seeking not our own glory, and being found faithful unto death. Ours is not to order results, but to do duties. The prophet stands in just this trial-place of his holy independence. . . . The special peril of this sort of character, is that it becomes conscious of its strength, proud of its independence, and before it is aware, substitutes the human heroism of self-reliance for the holy fidelity of Christ's self-sacrifice. How many high examples of Christian courage have fallen by that cunning temptation—the humility of the cross vanished! See in Daniel the graceful freedom from that ostentation of conceited and opinionated firmness. Christian fidelity is as meekly dependent on God as it is fearless of his enemies. (*Bishop Huntington, D.D.*)

The Character of Daniel.—I. HIS PIETY. It was not mere profession. It was in the heart, real, deep, and vital. He had brought his religion into Babylon, and it grew and flourished in that most unfavourable climate. It was tried—and tried severely, and it is only by trials such as those which Daniel endured, that a man's religion is proved to be sincere. He was so devoted, and so holy and excellent a character, because he was a man of prayer. The remarkable thing about his piety is, that it made him a thoroughly consistent character. II. HIS PERSECUTION. Though he was a good man, he had many enemies. A man may be hated and persecuted, merely because he is religious. III. HIS UNCOMPROMISING DECISION. He had never yet swerved from the path of duty—that duty which he owed to God, all the time that he had been at Babylon. If he had yielded, or seemed to yield, by not praying, as he did before, what would his enemies have said of him? Doubtless, that his principles were not worth much, his religion was no better than that of others. What then does he do? Precisely what he did before. IV. THE BOLDNESS OF DANIEL ARISING FROM HIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD. He looked at the lion's den, and was not afraid of it. He knew that God could be with him there. O this cold, calculating prudence, this worldly forethought! It thinks only of the present. Let it not enter—never let it be once harboured in your breasts. Act with decision, act with uncompromising boldness: do your duty at all times, and under all circumstances, and leave results to God. V. HIS WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE. The king did all he could to save his servant; and was delighted when he found Daniel's God had proved able to protect him. Adhere then to your principles, at all times and under all circumstances; adhere to those principles that will answer conscience, and practise them at all times and under all circumstances, and then God will give you his blessing. (*William G. Ting.*)

Daniel,—or the Believer in Persecution.—Daniel's example is left as an encouragement in stripping off the incumbrances of worldlings and sin, so that we may witness steadfastly in our career till we receive the seed of faith, even the salvation of our souls. In Daniel we have a believer persecuted for righteousness' sake, and delivered from the hands of his persecutors, and blessed in his very tribulation. 1. The encouragement this narrative affords us to make a faithful and becoming stand for the truth, and, 2, against any encroachment upon its sacred boundaries. It will be necessary (1) to make a stand for the truth. (2) To make a stand for the sufficiency and supremacy of the Scriptures. (3) To make a stand for the sinner's justification by faith alone. (4) To make a stand for the fact of Christ's one true holy universal Church. (5) To make a stand for simplicity and spirituality in the outward circumstances, and inward essence of worship. (6) To make a stand against the introduction of worldly principles into the Church. (7) To make a stand against

all that would not minister to edification in the devotional exercises of the sanctuary. (C. Marshall, M.A.) *Character and Conduct of Daniel*:—In all ages the truth has had its champions, those who have stood for righteousness and for God. It seems quite right to say that God has never left himself without witnesses. This text comes from the lip of one who was a brilliant example. I. DANIEL'S CHARACTER. It may be almost doubted if any one in the Old Testament of whom we learn as much was so entirely free from faults and sins. No one can doubt for a moment that Daniel was subject to the infirmities which mark our poor human nature; but the blemishes are not recorded. The character of Daniel appears all the more beautiful if we consider where and when the owner is supposed to have lived. In an Eastern Court. Learn, 1. This man is a marvellous example to us all. His pure life is a proof that God can keep his people in all positions. 2. This man's good life in high office shows that faithfulness to God is quite consistent with the faithful discharge of proper duties in the highest office. Daniel did not neglect religious duties, yet he did not neglect his duty to his King. 3. This man's conduct teaches us that our first duty is to conscience and God. Here is a man who cares more for God than for his own ease, comfort, and safety. This was the spirit of the martyrs. II. DANIEL'S TRIALS. His were real. And yet he does not seem to have felt them much. Some of the holiest and best men have had crosses to bear. All the saints of God, ancient and modern, have had them. III. DANIEL'S CONDUCT UNDER TRIAL. He kept silence while the plot was being hatched. He did exactly what he was accustomed to do when the decree was signed. IV. DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE. It was as complete and glorious as were his obedience and faith. The deliverance is a remarkable illustration of the power of faith and prayer. More things are wrought by prayer than some men think. Do not lose your belief in a God who hears and answers prayer. (Charles Leach, D.D.) *Daniel a man of religious principle*:—I. THIS CASE TEACHES YOU THAT GOD SOMETIMES ALLOWS HIS PEOPLE TO BE PLACED IN SITUATIONS IN WHICH THEY ARE SHUT UP BY HIS PROVIDENCE EITHER TO SUFFER OR TO SIN. II. LEARN FROM DANIEL TO POSSESS YOUR SOUL IN PATIENCE AND PRUDENCE IN THE DAYS OF SEVERE TRIAL. Daniel adds nothing, by way of insult, to his persecutors, nor of defiance toward his sovereign, nor yet does he omit any thing from fear of danger. He worships God just as he had been accustomed to do. It is sometimes said Daniel did wrong in disobeying a law which had been passed by the highest legislative power in the country. First, I have no sympathy with the "higher law" faction of our times; but it is certainly clear that the foundation of all law is the will of God. Governments are ordained of God. The will of God is aback of and above all social compacts or civil enactments. Secondly, as all the authority which man possesses over man is derived from God, so that authority is limited by the Divine law, and therefore the laws of man only bind when they are not inconsistent with the law of God. The moment any decrees of man require what God has forbidden, or forbid what God has commanded, they cease to be binding upon the conscience, and in such cases it is our solemn duty to protest against them, and to disobey them. Resistance and passive obedience may be pressed to a point when they become sinful. The edict of Darius, thirdly, was tyrannical, and opposed to the plainest commands of God. It would have been, therefore, sinful in Daniel to obey it. III. Learn then, young men, THE DUTY OF SURRENDERING YOURSELVES AT ONCE CORDIALLY AND WITH A WHOLE-HEARTED MAGNANIMITY TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. Daniel kept back nothing. He did not waver or hesitate. But as soon as his hour of prayer comes, though he knows the decree is signed, he goes to his chamber, there to offer his protest against this impious decree, and to give his testimony for the supremacy of his God. Why do you peril your life, Daniel, for a mere form? why will you make yourself a martyr for the little matters of keeping your windows open, kneeling down, and speaking your prayers aloud? Surely, you are not going to sacrifice your splendid emoluments and high station by refusing to obey the king for the short space of thirty days? Consider too, O mighty man! chief of the presidents, how valuable your life is to others. Consider how much you owe to your countrymen, whose cause is in your hands, and to the Church of the Living God. Surely, you will not put in peril all these great matters by such obstinacy. How many, or which, or whether any of these pleas were suggested to Daniel, I know not. There are always plausible apologies at hand for treachery to the immortal soul, and treason to God; but no one can doubt how Daniel replied to such cowardly proposals, if indeed any one ventured to name them to him. I would rather refrain from praying altogether, than pretend to neglect it while I was secretly engaged in it. (W. A. Scott, D.D.) *Daniel, a Model*:—The character of Daniel is a very noble one. His princely spirit shone in his captivity. He was one of those noble natures that no circumstances can keep from rising to the proper level. 1. HIS UNIMPEACHABLE INTEGRITY. Not

even his most virulent enemies could find occasion against him or detect a flaw.

II. HIS UNFAILING FIDELITY. III. HIS UNFLINCHING COURAGE. He served his God without ostentation on the one hand or concealment on the other. IV. HIS HABITUAL PIETY. He was not hardened by his captivity nor exalted by his honour. V. HIS CHILDLIKE FAITH. He never distrusted his Lord's purposes, plans or power. (*Homilist.*) *Daniel: the Man and the Book*:—Daniel was a heroic believer. He was marked by—1. FAITH. This was the life of his life. 1. His faith was an early possession. As a youth he believed in right, and in the Invisible God of right. It was this principle that was the moulding force in his boyhood's character, conquering all that was adverse to him in the temptations of his masters, or the example of his companions, and compelling the admiration and trust of those who could not understand the secret spring of his conduct. 2. His faith was cherished in adverse circumstances. Not only was there the temptation to paganism, and materialism, and animalism which Babylonish life cast like so many meshes about the young captive, but there was the deprivation of all the ordinary outward aids to religious faith. No temple, no ceremonial, no sacrifice came to his aid. He had solely to depend on the personal but, thank God, inalienable "means of grace," of private prayer. 3. His faith discovered in him a glorious future. He had visions of the colossal dynasties of men falling under the blessed dominion of the Son of Man. 4. His faith realised the Invisible Present. True faith ever does that, even though it cannot always descry the future. His faith saw God, Duty, Conscience. And so, whilst it was, in its visions of the future, "the substance of things hoped for," it was, in its perception of the present, "the evidence of things not seen." He was marked by,—II. HUMILITY. He does not talk of his faith; he simply and, as in the act before us, with all the simplicity of naturalness, manifests it. Dr. Pusey strikingly calls attention to this reserve of Daniel: "Chief statesman of the first empire in the world, he has not recorded one single voluntary act of his own." Notice, 1. The signs of his humility. He says little of himself or his exploits; his book tells much more of what befell him than of what he did. 2. The producing cause of this humility. It was doubtless his faith, his vision of the unseen present and the unseen future, that hushed and awed and humbled him. Just as grandeur of scenery hushes all thoughtful men, making them feel nothing amid its immensities, so the scenery of the invisible world and the sight of the Invisible God abashes all pride, and quickens, in Daniel as in Isaiah, the spirit that cries, "Woe is me: I have seen the Lord of Hosts." Unbelief may be proud, half belief may be conceited, thorough belief is ever reverent and lowly. III. CONSTANCY. The very name of Daniel has come to be a synonym for resolution and endurance. And deservedly, for his faith enabled him to be firm, 1. In spite of subtle temptation. The great ordeal of his life was much more searching than that which came to the three Hebrew youths. They were challenged to open idolatry; and they nobly refused, choosing rather the "burning fiery furnace." Daniel was invited simply to neglect prayer to the true God. He was constant, 2. In spite of protracted trial. There were repeated efforts on the part of the envious and the malign. There was a long-continued captivity. He taught, and he worked, even as he prayed, at the end just "as he did aforetime." He was marked by—IV. COURAGE. This is involved in constancy, and yet is so conspicuous that it commands separate notice. Evidenced by 1. His openness. 2. His dignity. 3. His calmness. The spirit of the world towards the godly remains unchanged. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Lessons from the history of Daniel.* 1. In order to succeed in life a man must possess decision of character. Sir Fowell Buxton says, "The longer I live the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is energy, invincible determination, a purpose once fixed, and then death or victory." The reason why so many men fail in life is want of purpose. They start for a certain goal, and then allow themselves to be diverted from their purpose. 2. Success begets jealousy. Daniel's excellent spirit was a crime in the eyes of the other officials. Scripture says, "Jealousy is the rage of a man." "Substitute for jealousy an everlasting emulation. Seeing others good let us try to be better. Seeing others industrious, let us work more hours. Seeing others benevolent, let us resolve on giving a larger percentage of our means for charity." 3. Learn how to meet trouble. When trouble came, what did Daniel do? He went into his house and prayed. He placed the matter before the Most High. How differently men act when in trouble! The real man does what Daniel did. "There is only one explanation of the mystery of sorrow possible, and that is, that life is an education." Then learn from each trial. 4. Sin always brings punishment. "It is a terrible thing to have done evil. It comes up again from ten thousand points." Look at the brethren of Joseph after thirteen years. Life is uncertain, and the unexpected often happens. Do not lose everlasting

happiness for any earthly consideration. Look at the end—keep your eyes on the unfolding crown, and then sin will lose its attraction. (*Ernest R. Gill.*)

Daniel and the Den of Lions:—Such an exalted station as Daniel occupied would put to the test the spirit and character of this servant of God. There are great temptations in high places. Daniel's integrity and uprightness gave him supremacy above all others. The favour shown to him, a foreigner and a Jew, soon excited an envious spirit in the breasts of the other courtiers. They began to plot against Daniel. They could find no occasion in his official conduct; so they sought to make occasion in connection with his religion. Darius was an easy monarch, ambitious and fond of flattery, and his courtiers thought that by proposing to him a plan that should flatter his pride, show his power over the people, and be a test of their allegiance to him, while they entirely concealed from him their designs against Daniel, they should be able to prevail. They gave him no time to deliberate—no opportunity of consulting with Daniel. They had it all prepared to present before him; they entreat him at once to sign the writing and the decree. Without suspecting anything of the kind, he consented to sign what his envious courtiers intended to be the death-warrant of the favourite counsellor. How did the servant of God conduct himself under these peculiar circumstances? Daniel saw that there was but one course for him, he must simply and unostentatiously go forward; just do "as he had done aforetime." A striking admonition against subterfuges in duty and devotion; against contrivances at once to quiet conscience, and preserve an immediate self-interest. Here we see what is the real spirit of a genuine religion; it is a firm, decided, steadfast, regard to God and His will, whatever may arise. There is such a thing as a religion which bends to circumstances, which turns with the wind and tide. That which is inward and vital abides under all the varied circumstances in which its possessor may be placed. Real principle stands the test, and becomes the stronger and the brighter the more it is tried. Again notice that the spirit of a true religion is a spirit of devotion. Here was the secret of his consistency and excellency of character; he had much communion with his God, and he drew down wisdom and grace from the fountain above that supplied him for every emergency, guided him through every difficulty, strengthened him for every duty, and supported him in every scene of danger. Learn also, when found in the path of duty, to leave everything with God. Daniel appears not to have been anxious about the event; he was only concerned about pleasing God—all the rest he can leave. The great thing for us all is to know the will of God, and do it. (*Thomas Coleman.*)

His Windows being Open in his Chamber towards Jerusalem.—*The Open Windows*:—The open window assists our thoughts. As they take wing into the broad expanse, they gain freedom and enlargement; just as a bird imprisoned in a room flings itself with a thrill of song into the free air and sunshine. Sitting there, his mind could spurn the limitations of space and time. The favour or displeasure of the Persian king mattered but little to him. The chamber of life with some of us may seem poor and straitened enough, but God has given us windows in it with a distant outlook upon brighter and fairer scenes. And these windows we must keep open, and sit at them, or kneel at them, forgetting the loneliness and weariness of Babylon's exile in the prospect of some fair Jerusalem of joy, and love, and faith.

1. First and foremost of those windowed outlooks with which God has so graciously endowed us, is that of FAITH. The prophet said he "saw visions of God," and if he did, it must have been through this window of faith, because through it eternal realities become as though they were present. Other windows may become closed or dim; the more reason why we should keep steady and bright this blessed outlook of faith into things spiritual and eternal.

2. There is another window through which the soul may look out upon the ideal and the fair; and that is the window of HOPE. The natural attitude of the human soul is an expectant one. Hope is an important element in the Christian life. Life will go merrily on under the power of a sunbeam on a distant spot in the path. Through the window of hope we see the breaking of a golden dawn upon the distant prospect; the narrow chamber of earthly circumstances gives place to sweeter possibilities, which may become present realities under the transforming influence of Christian hope.

3. Then there is the window of MEMORY. It may be that Daniel was not unmindful of this outlook into past scenes and associations. To be often at the window of memory keeps the heart young amid the ageing and withering influences of the present. (*G. Onslow.*)

Daniel's Undaunted Courage:—Daniel had been exalted to very great worldly prosperity, but his soul had prospered too. Oftentimes outward advancement means inward decline. Tons of thousands have been intoxicated by success. Though they bade fair in starting in the race of life to win the prize, they were tempted to turn aside to gather the golden apples, and so they missed the crown. It was not so with Daniel—he was as perfect before God in his high estate as in his lowlier days; and this is to be accounted

for by the fact that he sustained the energy of his outward profession by constant secret communion with God. He was, we are told, a man of excellent spirit, and a man abundant in prayer; hence his head was not turned by his elevation, but the Lord fulfilled in him his promise to "make his servants' feet like hinds' feet, that they may stand upon their high places." Yet, although Daniel preserved his integrity, he did not find a position of greatness to be one of rest. As the birds peck at the ripest fruit, so his envious enemies assailed him; and as the most conspicuous warriors most attract the arrows of the foe, so the honours of Daniel brought upon him the enmities of many. Better to pine with Lazarus than feast with Dives, for the love of God more than compensates for temporary disadvantages. Better an ounce of divine grace than a ton of worldly goods. Though the good things come not as the left-handed blessings of outward prosperity, be thou more than content if thou win the right-handed benediction of spiritual joy.

I. First, let me invite your attention to DANIEL'S HABITUAL DEVOTION: it is worthy of our study. We might never have known of it if he had not been so sorely tried, but fire reveals the hidden gold. Daniel's habitual devotion. We are told that aforetime, before the trial, he had been in the constant habit of prayer. He prayed much. There are some forms of spiritual life which are not absolutely essential, but prayer is of the very essence of spirituality. He that hath no prayer lacks the very breath of the life of God in the soul. Daniel always had subjects for prayer and reasons for prayer. He prayed for himself that in his eminent position he might not be uplifted with pride, might not be taken in the snares of those who envied him, might not be permitted to fall into the usual oppressions and dishonesties of Eastern rulers. He prayed for his people. He saw many of the house of Judah who were not in such prosperous circumstances as himself. He remembered those who were in bonds, as being bound with them. He pleaded for the return from the captivity, which he knew was ordained of his God. He prayed for the glory of his God, that the days might come when the idols should be utterly abolished, and when the whole earth should know that Jehovah ruleth in heaven, and among the sons of men. We read next, that with all his prayers he mingled thanksgiving. Do observe it, for so many forget this, "He prayed and gave thanks to God." Surely, it is poor devotion which is always asking and never returning its gratitude! Am I to live upon the bounty of God, and never to thank him for what I receive? Good Daniel had learned to praise as well as to pray, and to offer to God that sweet incense which was made of divers spices, of earnest desires and longings mingled with thanksgivings and adorations. It is worthy of notice that the text says, Daniel prayed and gave thanks "before his God." This enters into the very soul of prayer—this getting before God. I shall not care if you do not use a single word, if you feel the majesty of God to be so overwhelming that words are out of place; and silence becomes far more expressive when you bow with sobs and tears, and groanings that cannot be uttered. That little word "his" I must not let slip, however. He prayed and gave thanks before his God. He spake not to God merely as God who might belong to any man and every man, but unto his God, whom he had espoused by a solemn determination. "His God." Why, it seems to me to bring up that word "covenant"—his "covenant God," as though he had entered into covenant with God according to the language of the Most High, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Yes, here lies power in prayer, when a man can talk with God as his covenant God. Some other particulars in the text are not quite so important, nevertheless, observe that he prayed three times a day. That does not tell you how often he prayed, but how often he was in the posture of prayer. Doubtless he prayed three hundred times a day if necessary—his heart was always having commerce with the skies; but thrice a day he prayed formally. It has been well said that we usually take three meals in the day, and that it is well to give the soul as many meals as the body. We want the morning's guidance, we need the eventide's forgiveness, do we not also require the noontide's refreshment? If you find from morn till eve too long an interval between prayer, put in another golden link at mid-day. Notice, also, the posture. That, also, is of little consequence, since we read in Scripture of men who prayed on the bed, with their face to the wall. We read of David sitting before the Lord. How very common and acceptable a posture was that of standing before God in prayer! Yet there is a peculiar appropriateness, especially in private prayer, in the posture of kneeling. It seems to say, "I cannot stand upright before Thy majesty; I am a beggar, and I put myself in the position of a beggar; I sue of Thee, great God, on bended knee, in the posture of one who owns that he deserves nothing, but humbles himself before Thy gracious majesty." One more observation. We are told that Daniel kneeled upon his knees with his windows open towards Jerusalem. This was not done with any view to publicity. It may be that nobody could see him, even when his window was open, except the servants in the court. I suppose the house

to have been erected as most Eastern houses were, with an open square in the centre; and though he would be looking towards Jerusalem, the windows would be looking into the court, where he could only be observed by those who were residents in the house or visitors on business. Probably his fellow counsellors knew the hour which he usually set apart for devotion, and therefore called in so as to find him in the act. The window being open towards Jerusalem may have been suggested by the prayer of Solomon, when he asked that if the Lord's people were banished at any time, when they sought the Lord with their faces towards that holy place, God would hear them. It may have helped him also to recollect that dear city towards which every Jew's heart turns with affection, even as the needle trembles towards its pole. The thought of its ruin assisted his earnestness, the recollection of its sin humbled him, and the promises concerning it comforted him. He turned towards Jerusalem. And what does this say to us? It tells us that we ought to take care when we pray, to have our window open towards Calvary. II. We must now turn to a second consideration, DANIEL'S ACTION UNDER TRIAL. There is nothing that kings and queens are much fonder of than meddling with religion. Though the Prussian king tried to make a number of watches all tick together, and could not do it, yet notwithstanding the experiment and its failure, there are always evil counsellors who would force men's consciences to keep stroke. Folly is in the throne when monarchs patronise or oppress religion. Caesar always muddles when he meddles with the things of God. When this act of uniformity was passed, several courses were open to Daniel. He might, for instance, have said, "This does not answer my purpose. I have a high position in society. I am chief president over all these dominions, and though I am willing to suffer something for my religion, yet gold may be bought too dear, and therefore I shall cease to pray." He might have found many precedents and many companions. What crowds, when it has come to a question between life and truth, between honour and Christ, have made the evil choice and perished infamously? Daniel does not seem to have raised that question. Yet he might have said, "Well, well, we must be prudent; God must be worshipped certainly, but there is no particular reason for my worshipping Him in my usual room, nor even in the city where I live; I can retire in the evening, or find some more secret spot in my own house, and especially there is no occasion to open the window. I can pray with the window shut, and I shall be just as acceptable before God. I think, therefore, I shall keep my conscience clear, but not obtrude my religion in these evil days." Daniel did not so reason; he was a lion-like man, and scorned to lower his standard in the presence of the foe. He would not seek the secrecy which prudence might have suggested. Still, it might have suggested to him that he could pray inwardly. Prayers without words are just as acceptable to God; could not he do this? He felt he could not, inasmuch as the decree was not inward, and the king's opposition to religion was not inward. He did not believe in opposing outward falsehood by an inward truth. Observe with care what Daniel did. He made up his mind to act as he had done aforetime. Note how quietly he acted. He did not say to any of his enemies, "I mean to carry out my convictions." Not at all; he knew that talk was lost upon them, so he resorted to actions instead of words. Note again, how he acted unhesitatingly—immediately! He did not pause; he did not ask for time to consider what he should do. In matters of perilous duty, our first thoughts are best. When there is anything to be lost by religion, follow out the first thought of conscience, namely, "Do the right." Who needs to question where duty points the way? Where God commands, there is no room for reason to raise cavils. It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good. You will observe also, that Daniel did not act under excitement, but with a full knowledge of the result. The record expressly hath it—"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed." Many people will do right in a hurry, and under strong excitement will go further than they would have done in cold blood; but Daniel, probably shut out from the council by some crafty device of the counsellors, no sooner heard that the statute stood good than, without parley, his resolution was formed, and his mind made up. I like that word, and most go back to it again "as he had done aforetime." Here he makes no alteration; he takes not the slightest possible notice of the king's decree. If you have worshipped God under the smile of your Christian friends, worship him under the frown of the ungodly. If you have, as a tradesman, pursued a course of honest action in more prosperous times, do not for God's sake, for Christ's sake, tamper with that honest course because the times have changed. III. Let us turn to the third point, with which we conclude, THE SECRET SUPPORT OF DANIEL. There was something in the man which gave him this backbone; there was a secret something which made him so magnanimous. What was it? It resulted from several things. It sprang from the fact that Daniel's religion was not the offspring of passion, but of deep-seated principle. You will notice that, after

this long drought which we have had the flowers in our gardens are drooping much, but the forest trees are as verdant as if showers had been falling every day in the week. Is not this because they strike their roots deeper in the soil, and suck nourishment from provision which is not exhausted by the heat of the sun? So there are some men whose religion is like the flower which lives upon the surface—they soon dry up when the sun of persecution burns; but there are others who, like the forest trees, send down their roots into the deep soil of principle, who know what they know, have learned thoroughly what they have learned, and hold fast what they have received, and these, in the time of trial, are sustained by springs of secret grace, and their leaf is not withered. Because the Holy Ghost has inwrought into Daniel's spirit the principles of faith, he was sustained in the time of trial; but I doubt not that Daniel was also supported by what he had read of the works of God in the olden times. Besides, the prophet's spirit was sustained by what he had himself seen. He had been brought in close contact with the three holy children who were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. His own experience helped to strengthen him. He had this conviction, that God could deliver him, and that if God did not deliver him, yet still such was his love to the God of Israel that he would be content to give himself to die. It is blessed to have such a confidence as this. You good people who are tried, and who may expect to be tried yet more, you will never stand unless you come to this: "God can deliver me; but if he does not deliver me, still I am well content to be a sacrifice for Jesus' sake." Daniel failed not, because his love to his God rested deep in his inmost heart: it had become part and parcel of himself, and, sustained by the two hands of love and faith, he was graciously upborne over the rough and thorny places. Remember that Daniel is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had enemies who sought to destroy him; they could find nothing against him except, "touching his God." They accused him of blasphemy, and then afterwards, as they did Daniel, they brought a charge of sedition. He was cast into the den, into the grave: his soul was among the lions. Now, if Daniel is a type of Christ, and the Lord Jesus is the great representative Man for all who are in him, you, believer, must expect, that there will be those who will attack you, who will assail you especially in your religion. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Windows towards Jerusalem:—That was Daniel's 'native land.' Daniel kept his window open toward Jerusalem, because it was the capital of sacred influences. But Daniel at the window is not standing and looking out, he is kneeling and looking out. Daniel found that a man can see farther on his knees than on tiptoe. There is another Jerusalem toward which you and I will do well to keep our windows open. It makes one heavenly-minded to think much of heaven. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Daniel facing the lions' den:—I. Our first point will be that DANIEL'S PRAYERFULNESS WAS THE SECRET OF HIS POWER. Daniel was always a man of prayer. If you saw him great before the people, the reason was because he was great before his God. He knew how to lay hold of divine strength, and he became strong. He knew how to study divine wisdom, and he became wise. We are told that he went to his house to pray. This showed that he made a business of prayer, and finding it neither convenient to his circumstances nor congenial to his mind to pray in the midst of idolaters, he had chosen to set apart a chamber in his own house for prayer. It is well to have, if we can have, a little room, no matter how humble, where we can shut to the door, and pray to our Father who is in heaven, who will hear and answer. He was in the habit of praying thus three times a day. Perhaps he thought that this was prudent economy, for, if he had so much to do, he must pray the more; as Martin Luther said, "I have got so much to do to-day that I cannot possibly get through it with less than three hours of prayer." So, perhaps, Daniel felt that the extraordinary pressure of his engagements demanded a proportionate measure of prayer to enable him to accomplish the weighty matter he had on hand. A singularity in his manner is noticeable here. He had been in the habit of praying with his windows open towards Jerusalem. Thus openly did he ignore the decree! With such a royal courage did he lift his heart above the fear of man, and raise the conscience above the ensnaring of compromise. He loved Jerusalem, and his prayers were for it. Hence he looked that way in his prayer. And I think also he had an eye on the altar. We worship with our eye to Christ. Oh, for Daniel's prayerful spirit! II. We pass on to DANIEL'S DIFFICULTIES, OR THE PRIVILEGES OF PRAYER. Daniel had always been a man of prayer; but now there is a law passed that he must not pray for thirty days, for a whole calendar month. I think I see Daniel as he reads the writing. Not proud and haughty in his demeanour, for, as a man used to govern, it was not likely that he would needlessly rebel; but as he read it, he must have felt a blush upon his cheek for the foolish king who had become the blind dupe of the wily courtiers who had framed a decree so monstrous. Only one course was open to him. He knew what he meant to do; he

should do what he always had done. Still let us face the difficulty with a touch of sympathy. He must not pray. Suppose we were under a like restriction. Why, some people will say, "I will give it up." Ah, and there are some who would boastfully say, "I will not give it up," whose bold resolve would soon falter, for a lions' den is not a comfortable place. Many thought they could burn in Queen Mary's days that did not dare to confront the fire. Now it is a great privilege that we enjoy civil and religious liberty in our favoured land; that we are not under such cruel laws, as in other times or in other countries laid restrictions upon conscience; and that we may pray, according to the conviction of our judgment and the desire of our heart.

III. Having thus dwelt upon Daniel's difficulty, I now want to draw your attention to DANIEL'S DECISION. The king says he must not pray. Daniel did not deliberate for a single minute. When we know our duty, first thoughts are the best. I greatly admire one feature in Daniel's decision. He did not alter his accustomed habit in any single particular. Without disguise and without parade he pursued the even tenor of his way. He does not appear to have taken council of his friends, or to have summoned his servants, and charged them not to let any intruder come in. Neither did he adopt any measure to escape his enemies. Not one jot of anxiety did he betray. His faith was steadfast, his composure unruffled, his conduct simple and artless. Doubtless Daniel felt that he was the greatest man in Persia, if he, a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, failed in any degree, he would set a bad example to others, and greatly discourage any poor Jew who might have grace enough to stand out, provided his example led the way. Persons who occupy high positions should know that God expects more of them than of other people. It might be asked, perhaps, "Should not Daniel obey the king?" Certainly kings' laws are to be respected; but any law of man that infringes the law of God is, *ipso facto*, null and void at once. It is the duty of every citizen to disregard every law of earth which is contrary to the law of heaven. So Daniel felt that the risk of being put into a den with lions was nothing to the risk of being put into hell, and he chose the smaller risk, and in the name of God he went straight on. Look at John Bunyan when they bring him up before the magistrates and tell him he must not preach! "But I will preach," said he, "I will preach to-morrow by the help of God." "But you will be put in prison again." "Never mind, I will preach as soon as I get out." "But you will be hanged, or kept in prison all your life." "If I lie in prison," said he, "till the moss grows upon my eyelids, I can say nothing more than this, that with God's help, I will preach whenever I get a chance." Do not tell me that these are non-essentials. To men who will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even the opening or the shutting of a window, if need be, is essential. Be jealous over what are called "trifles." They may be mere straws, but they show which way the wind blows.

IV. Our last point is DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE. With that we will conclude. The evil that threatened Daniel did come. He was to be put into a lions' den, and into a lions' den he was put. So, young man, you say, "I will not do wrong." You hope to escape unscathed. Yet it may be that you will be discarded by your friends, and discountenanced by your associates. Expect it, go through it. If you are a tradesman, and by saying you will not submit to an evil custom of the trade you will become a loser, be willing to be a loser; expect that the lions' den will be there, and that you will be put into it. Daniel came there, but there was not a scratch upon him when he came out of it. What a splendid night he must have spent with those lions! I do not wonder that in after days he saw visions of lions and wild beasts; it seems most natural that it should; and he must have been fitted by that night passed among these grim monsters to see grand sights. Daniel had a smooth time of it afterwards. The counsellors never troubled him again; the lions had taken care of them. There would be no more plotting against him. Now, believe me, to be decided for the right is not only the right thing but the easiest thing. It is wise policy as well as true probity. If you will not yield an inch, then somebody else must move out of the way. If you cannot comply with their proposals, then other people will have to rescind their resolutions. So you will find that, if you suffer, and perhaps suffer severely at first, for decision of character, you will get speedy recompense for all you endure, and a grand immunity in the future. There will be an end to the indignities that are offered you. Give the world an inch, and it will take many an ell. Be resolved, therefore, that no inch you will give, that to the lions' den you would sooner go than there should be equivocation, prevarication, or anything approaching to falsehood. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The Opened Window, or Character Formed.—The history of the world is mostly the history of individual lives, and the influence they exerted. It is not so much the story of the movements of masses, as of masses under leaders. This may be illustrated in (1) the characteristics of nations; (2) the acquisition of new territories; (3) the

influence of one nation on another; (4) in science and philosophy, in morals and in Church history. This view must, however, be set under due qualifications. It is also true that great men can but find expression for the spirit of their age, as is shown in the case of Luther. The Reformation was in Germany before Luther found it a voice. Daniel one of the best illustrations of this point—on what a man is must depend what he *does*, and what he is must depend on his relations with God. Daniel is heroic from both the secular and the sacred standpoints. The thing impressed by his story is the value, force, and assured triumph of sterling character. Is character a gift, or a growth? Is it something with which we are endowed, or something which we have to culture? It may be likened to a tree, and under that figure we now consider it.

I. THE ROOTINGS OF CHARACTER. Stability and vigour depend on rooting. The character of Daniel threw down two chief rootings of principle. It held fast by and fed itself on this:—1. A noble life must be ruled by something better than world-maxims; but to live by them is like trying to make a boat lie still on the heaving sea. 2. No shame, only strength and honour, can ever come by cleaving to God. It is sad and strange that ever young folk should think that shame can attach to a life of faith and prayer. Illustrate by contrasting the tree roots twining only about themselves, or clasping firmly the rich and fertile soil. **II. THE BRANCHINGS OF CHARACTER.** The manifestations of it in the duties and responsibilities of life. Character well rooted, shows, above the soil, moral strictness, trustworthiness, judgment, truth. Illustrate Daniel's power of decision, and also Joseph's. Show the relation of decision, as an element of character, to the act of decision in religion. **III. THE FLOWERING OF CHARACTER,** or the lighter manifestations of it in the intercourse and relationships of life. Hanging on the branches are such things as peace, joy, purity, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, all the graces of the spirit. Daniel's character then was rightly founded. His decision for God involved a God-fearing, prayer-loving life. Look in at that opened window of Daniel's house, and see how Godly character was nourished. There we find the secret of strength for the overcoming of all temptation. Daniel believed in God, and sought him. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The Open Window*:—What was the good of praying at this window that looked towards Jerusalem? Jerusalem was five hundred miles away across the wide Assyrian plain. You could not see it from Babylon. You brought it no nearer by gazing into the blue distance. Why be so careful about this open window? At best it was a piece of sentiment. And what use is there in idle sentiment? But all sentiment is not idle. There is a kind of sentiment which is foolish and worse than useless. But sentiment will sometimes prove to be of extraordinary power, and there is a sentiment which is not inconsistent with the finest manhood and the most impressive dignity of character. If it helped him, when he was praying, to remember that there, far away in the distance, was Jerusalem, why should he not accept the help? We may not think that it would have helped us very much. We may say that we could have prayed anywhere. But that is not the question. If it helped him, that was enough. There was a great deal in his circumstances and pursuits to shut out from him the vision of his early days. And if, among all the scenes of his daily life, in which was so much that was distracting, so much that was evil, it helped him, and kept him true to the past and true to God, to have that window open, who is going to smile at him? Who will condemn him? I think, on the contrary, that we might well imitate him. We who may be carried by the force of circumstances far away from our old home, and from things that were sacred to us in our childhood, may very fitly and reasonably see to it that we do not let those old and sacred things pass utterly away from our thoughts. It is good for us, too, to have an open window towards Jerusalem. There are those who, amid the stress and storm of life, have lost all remembrance of their Jerusalem. It is out of sight, out of mind. Heaven lay about them in their infancy. God seemed to be near to them when they were little children. Things spiritual and eternal were realities. The eye was clear. The ear was open to the divine voices. The heart was warm. The conscience was sensitive. Life was full of sacred meanings. But they were carried into a new world where other voices were heard and other influences were at work. Then the shades of the prison-house began to close upon them. The spiritual eye grew dim. Who can guess how many people there are to-day, middle-aged, prosperous people, who have been cut adrift from the Jerusalem of their early days and have almost forgotten how they once felt. They are much to be pitied. It is the experience of Daniel which suggests the association of these two things. For Jerusalem was to him first his old home, and next, in a special sense, the home of God on the earth. And there must be many whose experience would compare with his in this respect. They are to be congratulated. For there is nothing for which we have better reason to be thankful in after-life than for fathers and mothers who made us feel in our childhood that God was

about us, and that our home was the gate of heaven. There are those who do not seem to believe in any such necessity. It was said by Napoleon that Jerusalem did not come within the sphere of his operations. It is what many say in effect. They do not trouble about religion. They can do well enough without it. They have plenty to interest them in this wonderful world without the religious interest. It may not be so with others. Very well. Let each follow where his own taste and fancy lead him. Let him who is religiously disposed occupy himself with religious matters. As for them, they prefer to concern themselves with things of a more practical kind. I think, however, that those who talk in that light fashion are making a very grave mistake. For, after all, life must be a dull and poor affair if we are wholly without religion. Alas for us, if we are without any kind of heavenly vision! Man cannot live by bread alone. If, then, it is our wisdom not to forget Jerusalem, what are some of the windows through which we may look towards that fair city? Prayer, let me say first, is such a window. Heaven lies about us now, and ever will, as the air and the sunlight are about the houses we dwell in. But if we keep the windows shut, the air will not come in; and if we keep the shutters up, the light will not come in. Therefore, wise men throw back these shutters, and fling open wide the windows, that the glory and the freshness of the sunlight world out of doors may come in. And that is what we do when we pray. Obedience is another window by which we may look into this divine glory. If you are living a selfish and worldly life, you cannot expect to have any deep sense or clear vision of eternal things. You are refusing to listen to the voice of the Highest. But repent and obey the call of duty, and as you follow where duty leads you will begin to get some glimpse into the deep things of God. The way of duty is the way of peace, and it is the way of light. Let any man follow Christ closely, and the moment will come when Christ will, as it were, turn and look upon that faithful follower and make him feel that he is indeed at the gate of heaven. There are many causes that may account for it. But the rule is that obedience to duty is a true window to the soul, a window that looks towards God, and through which God will shine upon us for our infinite comfort and help. Another window that looks towards Jerusalem is the Bible. What does the Bible mean to us, I wonder? It means different things to different persons. Another window looking towards Jerusalem is Sunday. The world for many is like Babylon. It is full of cares, full of distractions, full of appeals to elements other than the highest in human nature, and their pleasures and recreations, though, it may be, innocent enough, are often not such as to raise and dignify the soul; and it is well if when they come into church they find it to be as the delectable mountains from which the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem may be at least dimly descried. A church may serve many noble uses and not the least profitable is that which it serves when it enables men who are often in darkness, and who feel that they are remote from the best and highest things to look for a little time into the world of spiritual realities, and to feel, upon the jaded mind and dull heart, the vivifying breath of the Spirit of God. (*A. H. Thomas, M.A.*)

And prayed.—*Good Prayer-habits*:—Every man ought to form, early in life, good religious habits, and especially habits in relation to private, personal, and intercessory prayer. They should be carefully arranged in view of his actual daily circumstances, opportunities, and needs, they should be maintained with a steadfast regularity, even at heavy cost of self-denial, and there should be a constant and a holy anxiety lest they should degenerate into mere forms, and the spiritual life and feeling in them fade down, or fade out. I. **MAKE GOOD PRAYER-HABITS.** It is of the first importance that these should be formed early in life; and you may well be reminded of the duty that lies on all parents, school teachers, and often nurses, in regard to the shaping of early prayer-habits. When life has become fixed, relations are settled, and habits are formed, it is hard indeed to get new shapings and fittings when the duty of daily prayer is brought home to us. Those parents do an unspeakable good for their children, who, from the dawn of intelligence, make prayer as essential as daily bread. Prayer habits should be formed carefully, with due estimate of our circumstances, and relations, and opportunities. And our prayer-habits should include all the kinds of prayer which make up this Christian duty. There are proper habits of confession, of thanksgiving, of petition, and above all, of intercession; and they will never come to any man as an accident; they are the blessed fruitage of thought, and strife, and care. II. **WHEN YOU HAVE MADE GOOD PRAYER-HABITS, YOU MUST KEEP THEM.** It is only necessary to state this very important addition, and to say: Beware of slight negligences and failures. There is nothing in our life which we need to maintain so resolutely. Let Daniel show you that quietly, simply, unostentatiously, you should persist in praying just when, and where, and how, you have arranged to pray. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*)

The Propriety of Daniel's Conduct:—It may be said, 1. That Daniel was chargeable

with rebellion, because knowingly, and avowedly he violated a law which had been passed by the highest legislative power in the country. We reply that God is the supreme lawgiver, that all the authority which man possesses over man, is derived from God, and limited by the divine law, and therefore the laws of man only bind when they are not inconsistent with the law of God. The moment they command what God has forbidden, or forbid what God has commanded, they cease to be obligatory upon conscience, and in such cases, so far from being sinful to disobey them, to do so is a solemn duty. The edict of Darius, being palpably opposed to the plainest commands of God, Daniel, in refusing to serve such a law, only acted the part which was incumbent on every loyal subject of the Most High. 2. It may be said, that Daniel might have prayed unto God in the heart, in despite of his enemies, and God would have heard him. Or, if he wished to pray unto him with the lips, he ought to have retired into some secret place; or at least, if he prayed in his own chamber, he should have allowed the windows to remain closed during these thirty days. Was it not, therefore, sinful in him to pray so ostentatiously as he did? Was not this unnecessarily to expose his life to danger? Was it not to forget that God is a spirit, and to place too much dependence upon that bodily service which profiteth little? We remark that, while the Scriptures assert that bodily service profiteth little, they nowhere assert that it profiteth nothing. There are occasions, when bodily exercise profiteth much, in which it is even a better test of a person's devotedness to God, than the inward frame of his mind. When God calls upon us to believe with the heart unto righteousness, no outward action, such as fasting, or praying with an audible voice, or the giving of our goods to feed the poor, or even the giving of our bodies to be burned, will be accepted by him as a substitute for faith. On the contrary, when God in his providence calls upon us to make confession of him before men, no inward frame of spirit, neither faith, nor love, nor self denial, nor heavenliness of mind, will be accepted by him as a substitute for our open and visible adherence to the cause of his truth, and of his glory. In a time of trial, a testing-time, it is not the inward feeling of loyalty to God, it is the outward manifestation of this; it is not the image of God in the heart, it is his "name on the forehead," which proves an individual to belong to the "called, and chosen, and faithful." Apply these remarks to the case in hand. Praying to God in the spirit was not prohibited, but only such prayer as came under the observation of men. Persons were not interdicted from believing in God, but only from rendering to him the outward acts of homage that were due unto his name. The point, therefore, on which the authority of God and man came into collision, was about the external acts of Divine worship. God had said "In all thy ways acknowledge thou me, and I will direct thy steps." Darius and his nobles, on the other hand, said, thou shalt not ask a petition of God for thirty days. In the present instance, therefore, loyalty to God could not be evidenced by what was inward, but only by what was outward, not by believing with the heart, but by confessing with the lips. The attitude of Daniel's body while praying, nay, the position of the windows of his chamber, was as important in the sight of God as the inward devotion of his soul. If he had shut his windows, if he had ceased to kneel, if he had ceased to speak to God with his lips, and rested content with the utterances of the heart, this would have been to homologate (approve, give assent to) the impious decree, and to deny God before men. That edict invaded the rights of Jehovah, not by prohibiting them from worshipping him in their hearts, but by forbidding them to worship him with their bodies. Bodily-service was therefore the only evidence of heart-loyalty to God, and worship that was purely spiritual would have been looked upon as the homage of a coward and a traitor—of a man who wished to serve two masters. Considering the weight of Daniel's character, and the importance of his situation, it will appear that a peculiar responsibility attached to his conduct in this emergency. Any indecision, any appearance of compliance with the decree, would have been productive of most baneful consequences. We may learn, from the passage before us, that God sometimes places his people in such situations that they must either sin or suffer. Learn also, that when God, in his providence, couples our performance of any duty, with circumstances of trial, the discharge of the duty thus circumstanced, is the test of our fidelity. And we may learn, that even when the performance of duty exposes to danger our adherence unto God should be open and avowed. (*William White.*)

Daniel's Prayers:—Dean Stanley writes,—“Daniel is, to all outward appearances, an Eastern sage rather than a Hebrew prophet. Well did the traditions of his countrymen represent him as the architect of Ecbatana, or even of Surra, as buried in state—not, like the other saints of the captivity, in a solitary sepulchre, but in the stately tower which he himself had built, in the tombs of the Kings of Persia. Well did the mediæval legends make him the arch-wizard interpreter of dreams. Rightly did the Frenchman artist at Dijon represent him amongst his exquisite figures of the prophets in

the garb, posture, and physiognomy of an Oriental magnate. Well did Bishop Ken, when he wished to pourtray an ideal courtier before the Stuart Kings, take the man greatly beloved: 'Not of the sacerdotal but royal line; not only a courtier and a favourite, but a minister—one that kept his station in the greatest resolutions, reconciling policy and religion, business and devotion, magnanimity and humility, authority and affability, conversation and retirement, interest and integrity, heaven and the court, the favour of God and the favour of the King.'" I. DANIEL AS A MAN OF PRAYER. It was his characteristic feature. How regular and steadfast he was in private prayer. He was willing to suffer, but he would not give up his prayer. What a strength for toil and duty he found it ever to be! Note his example of praying in the very midst of daily business. II. DANIEL AS AN INTERCESSOR. So a type of Christ. He took up his nation's burden on himself; made himself a representative, and pleaded with God on the nation's behalf. In the same way good people now take upon their own hearts the troubles and sins of their times, and speak to God just what the people around them ought to be feeling and saying. Illustrate by the work of the High Priest, and of Jesus, our Great High Priest. Without being appointed to the office, each one of us may become an intercessor. III. DANIEL AS A CONFESSOR. Or as one who gives an example of making confession. This is the sigh of penitence and humility. Only when men have learned thus the lessons of God's judgments can his restorations come. How full, sincere, and hearty are Daniel's confessions! Observe that in our Lord's prayers, or conversations, there is no sign of confession. Explain why, and why confession is such a necessary part of *our* prayer. IV. DANIEL AS A PLEADER. Especially dwell upon his example of importunity, as illustrating our Lord's parable of the unjust judge. The pleading is to be found in verses 18, 19. Shows how graciously God hears and answers such prayers as Daniel's. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The Way of Success in Prayer*:—Ill success in prayer is so common that men scarcely know it is ill success; they pray and nothing comes of it, so they are not disappointed. They take fruitlessness as the rule, and do not travel back to ask why prayer should be fruitless. In the history of opinion, Daniel has an unique place. When we look to Daniel for teaching we look to a man placed by his own age, which is apt to find out a man's inconsistency, supreme in spiritual achievement. What was, then, the meaning of Daniel's ritual in prayer? 1. He sought to place himself in the presence of God. To look away towards Jerusalem was to be delivered from servitude to the splendours of Babylon by the apprehension of a greater splendour. We need to remember the disadvantages with which we commonly start in our prayer; how disinclined our spirits are, and how ill the common circumstances of life prepare us for it. Our tempers have been fretted, our interests scattered, our judgments debarred; we have been meeting men on a low level of mutual mistrust, or in the interchange of social frivolities. And all of this has to be got rid of before prayer can have its perfect work. The larger soul in us must be called out, that we may even see what the objects of prayer may be. There are prayers offered which, without intention, exhibit every possible fault. They are irrelevant to the situation, asking what is not needed, and omitting what is needed; they are fretful instead of jubilant; their tone is distrustful, as if God were trying to outwit us. And nothing can sweep such prayers away except the noble use of memory. How can you thank God if you have not sought to remember all His benefits? What could Daniel look to? One object filled the hearts of all the Jewish patriots, a lamentable object. Their glorious city, of ancient story, and solemn observance, was desolate. The city was a heap of ruins; desecrated by sin first, and now by heathen conquest, and the land kept Sabbath in an awful loneliness. And Daniel strained his eyes across the endless plains, that sight filled his mind, and drew from him the importunate cry:—"How long, O Lord?" If his daily life furnished no other matter for prayer, there was matter enough in this. 2. After exercise in the thought of the presence of God, there is no discipline so necessary as this of letting visions of need rise before the mind. There should be pity given to the man who says he does not know what to pray for, and ampler pity for his neighbour who asks for what he does not want. The world is full of need, and its cry rises continually before God, sounding in the ears of all who can hear. There is no need of seeking or of refining in petitions; one day of life brings us into contact with need of all sorts—the helplessness of little children, the sigh of men overtasked, the care which has furrowed the brow and bent the shoulders, the satisfaction with a selfish life, the servitude to evil passion; there is no crushing the images of need which fit past our eyes even in the street. And a little thought deepens the awe; in ourselves we know so dark a world of discontent and defeat, of reproach and fruitless effort, of fear and sin, and all the men and women about us repeat the same story. And outside is a whole world of

gloom, of life without colour or joy, of men without God or hope. And rising a little, we see to the farther horizons embracing the great world which does not know the very name of Christ, and which is full of horrid cruelties. We may not shut our eyes to it in prayer; the world needs joy. And as we watch like Daniel, the thoughts of that overwhelming need thronging in upon us will wring from us prayers rising to passion. To have all that sorrow pressing on our heart would bring madness with it; our comfort is in being permitted to share the burden with Him whose heart is pierced as ours, and who by His strength has marked for it all a blessed end. (*W. M. Macgregor, M.A.*) *Prayer better than life*:—God's people are not often found in the high places of the earth. They do not covet such distinctions. But when he is pleased to call them to posts of worldly honour, he gives them strength according to their day. Daniel's elevation was remarkable. What a testimony do worldly men sometimes give to the value of religious characters! Darius the Mede soon found out his value. But he had enemies. He had only one vulnerable point—one point in which his character was open to attack from an ungodly world. His enemies said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." What a testimony did these men give unconsciously to the character of him they hated. But how could these men make Daniel's religious character a handle against him? Explain their ingenious plot. How did Daniel meet it? He was a man of prayer—he lived by prayer—he was frequent, fervent, zealous in the exercise—his hours of prayer were his most precious hours—and as for parting with this privilege, as for laying it aside for thirty days together, he would sooner part with life itself. Let worldly people plead necessity as an excuse for interrupting their devotions; the godly man knows no necessity so great as that of seeking God from day to day. Might not Daniel have evaded such a law as this, by praying to God in secret? He evidently felt that this was an occasion to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, and not to be deterred from it. He would not even *seem* to be obedient to a wicked law which went to rob the God of heaven of the worship due to him. Note the description given of Daniel's prayers. One thing to remark upon is their frequency—three times a day. Another thing is, he prayed "before his God"—prayed as in God's presence, as one who was really speaking to his God. Daniel's prayers were attended with thanksgiving. This is the Apostle's rule. (Phil. iv. 6). Notice his posture. "Kneeled." A posture, surely best befitting creatures like ourselves when we go as beggars to our Great Creator. Daniel prayed with his face toward Jerusalem. That circumstance in his devotions we are not called to imitate. The rule for us to follow is to have an eye to Christ in all our prayers. The rest of Daniel's history is a grand exhibition of what the Lord can do both in his saints and for them. Questions. 1. What do you think of Daniel? 2. What do you think of Daniel's God? (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Fearlessness and perseverance in prayer*:—Daniel made no secret of his prayers; he might have made excuses to his conscience, he might have said to himself that during those thirty days it would be better for him to pray without the possibility of being observed; to keep up his prayers secretly, and avoid openly breaking the King's decree. But Daniel was too honest to make to himself any such false excuses; he was not ashamed to confess his God openly. He prayed and gave thanks before his God. Faithful as Daniel was to the King, and attentive as he was to his interests, there was a point at which his obedience stopped. In all worldly matters he was ready to give way, but once bid him dishonour his God, and he was instantly inflexible. No love of worldly prosperity, no fear of human punishment could shake him. Here you see the secret of Daniel's character. He was a man of prayer. Daniel knew what it was to draw near to God—day by day to live in his presence—to look up to him—to seek his favour and protection—to make him and not man the standard to which he referred all his thoughts and words and actions. This has ever been the mark of the saints of God in all the ages. And if there is any true life in our soul, we also shall live in the constant habit of prayer. Consider what prayer is. It is the link which connects us with the next world—with the unseen yet ever present God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Once give up prayer, and you cut yourself off from God, you create a silence between your soul and God, you become a stranger to God, and God ceases to speak to you. But if we are really in earnest about our prayers, we may be quite sure that the devil will raise up obstacles in our path—that he will endeavour to hinder us in one way or another. Sometimes he tries to frighten us. But why should any of us be ashamed of our religion, or of saying our prayers? Sometimes it will seem to people that they have not time to pray; that their duties are so numerous, and so pressing, they have no leisure, no time to themselves. This is almost certainly a false excuse. It is entirely their own fault that they do not find or make time. Our time, really, very much depends on ourselves. If it is the case, that we have very little time

we can call our own, yet let us do our diligence gladly to give God of that little. There are those who complain that they are much hindered by wandering and idle thoughts in prayer, and perhaps they are tempted to think that it would be better to leave off praying than to go on in spite of the thoughts which trouble them in their devotions. But something may be done in this matter by a vigorous effort on our own part; a great deal lies in the power of the will. There are others who are tempted to give up prayer, because they do not, as they say, find such comfort and enjoyment in prayer as they expect. They cannot attain a sense of God's presence; they seem dull, and cold, and lifeless in their prayers. This may be the effect of some sin or self-indulgence, and if so, the remedy lies in greater strictness of life, and watchfulness over self; but it may be also that it is a trial sent by God to test their faithfulness. Let them persevere. And let us not be discouraged if God does not at once answer our prayers—if we ask, and for a time receive not. It is certain that God hears every prayer addressed to him. He will be sure to answer, in his own wise way. You can scarcely go wrong, if you continue instant in prayer; if you give up prayer you enter on the road which leads to destruction. Let nothing then be allowed to hinder you from your prayers. (*S. W. Skeffington, M.A.*)

The Characteristics of Daniel's Piety:—Daniel was equally distinguished for probity in his secular calling, as for fidelity towards God. If you would act your part well on great emergencies, it is necessary that you should attend to everyday duties. To overlook them is at once a proof of something radically defective in the judgment and character. I. THE REGULARITY OF HIS DEVOTION. In a man of leisure this praying three times a day would have been less remarkable. Daniel was not in private life. But, without being neglected, business was made to yield to piety. Prayer, so far from increasing his difficulties, was his consolation under them. It is the mental inquietude of a life of business which much more than bodily exertion tends to oppress the faculties. II. THE PLACE OF HIS DEVOTION. It would have been less wonderful had Daniel been thus regular in religious observances at Jerusalem. There were all the incitements which place and example supply. But the unpropitious character of Daniel's situation did not influence him in the discharge of his duty. III. THE POSTURE OF HIS DEVOTION. No particular attitude is essential to the acceptance of the petition of a sincere suppliant. If the inward, spiritual qualities essential to devotion are wanting, it matters not what are the outward positions. But everything should be avoided that savours of irreverence, or which is incompatible with fixedness of mind in devotional exercises. Kneeling is well suited to the nature of the exercise—prostration of body will correspond with humility of mind! IV. THE HEROISM OF HIS DEVOTION. It was the heroism of the confessor and martyr rather than of the soldier. Apparently reasonable excuses for yielding a little in this matter of prayer might have been found. Daniel allowed no weak accommodation to circumstances. We are not to do evil that good may come. Disobedience to what God enjoins, can never be required in order to the fulfilment of his purposes. V. THE GRATITUDE OF HIS DEVOTION. He "prayed and gave thanks." Prayer has been well defined as the "offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies." The situation of Daniel might appear, at first sight, ill adapted to the exercise of thanksgiving, however proper on fitting occasions, that duty might be. But a devout heart will discover reasons for gratitude when others can perceive nothing but occasions of lamentation. No condition of life is really so disastrous as to be incapable of suggesting motives of thankfulness to a spiritual mind. For the stream of life has always its interminglings of alleviation and comparative good. He could think of past mercies; and that he had been kept by divine grace. And he could be thankful for an opportunity of bearing witness to the religion of the God of Israel. Improvement. (1) Let Christians in general, and persons in active pursuits in particular, learn regularity in the exercises of devotion. (2) Let us cultivate a regard for the authority of God, as a motive to devotion. (3) Let us cultivate faith in prayer. (4) Be grateful that you are exempted from the evils which Daniel experienced. (*R. Brodie, A.M.*) *Daniel's Daily Prayers*:—Daniel is one of the brightest and loveliest characters of Scripture biography. He seems to have been the only prophet who enjoyed a large share of worldly prosperity. I. THE DEVOTIONS OF DANIEL. 1. The character of his devotion. In token of his humility, and of his veneration for the divine majesty whom he approached, he kneeled on his knees. See also his confession of sin; recognition of the divine mercies; and pleading importunity. Daniel's prayers were pious and patriotic. They were accompanied with thanksgiving. Praise is comely. 2. The scene of Daniel's devotions. His chamber. He chose seclusion: yet his windows were open towards Jerusalem. Not that he courted attention, but that he conformed to the established mode of Jewish devotion. 3. The seasons of his devotion. Three times a day. Prayer is a preparation for our

every-day duties in life. Daniel is an example to men of business. II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH DANIEL MAINTAINED HIS DEVOTIONS. He was faithful to his God and his religion. The Prime Minister was not compelled to profess the State idolatry. Daniel acted most advisedly. His spirit was one. 1. Of enlightened piety. Martyrdom he held preferable to the suspension of his hallowed communion with God. 2. Of courage. He feared God, and none but God. He braved all dangers, uninfluenced by the favours of his royal benefactor. Allowing no temporising considerations. His was the courage of piety. 3. Of prudence. He did not invite persecution. Nothing insolent, nothing ostentatious, nothing disloyal, was in Daniel. He obeyed the monitions of conscience. He prayed, *as before*. III. THE RESULTS. 1. To Daniel. 2. The spread of Jehovah's honour. The name of the living God is made known in all the empire. 3. The restoration of Judah followed the prayers of the faithful; e.g., of Daniel. (*W. L. Thornton, M.A.*) *Daniel at Prayer*:—I. DANIEL'S DEVOTIONS. He prayed. Prayer is said to be a calling, crying, knocking, seeking, asking, making supplication, pouring out of the heart, lifting up of the soul, lifting up holy hands, making intercession, etc. Daniel 1. Humbled himself when he prayed. The being whom we address, the circumstances in which we stand, the punishment we deserve all serve to inspire us with humility. 2. He confessed his sins, and the sins of his people, when he prayed; So did David and Jeremiah. This is the most effectual way to obtain pardon. 3. He deprecated punishment, and implored mercy, when he prayed. Sin deserves punishment,—God might justly pour out his indignation upon us. We have no appeal but to his mercy, through the blood of the covenant. 4. He pleaded with God when he prayed. We may plead with God also: plead his mercy, his promises, the sacrifice of his Son, and his glorious intercession in heaven. 5. And Daniel gave thanks. We can always find reasons and subjects for thanks to God. Daniel thanked him for what he was in himself—for what he did in the kingdom of providence, and for what he had done for him. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE PERFORMED THEM. 1. He went into his house, and into his chamber. The Jews were accustomed to set apart rooms as oratories, or places of devotion. Each house had generally one of these rooms, a chamber, most removed from noise and disturbance. Retirement is necessary to prayer. 2. He prayed and gave thanks three times a day. He evidently had stated times for private devotions. 3. He kneeled upon his knees and prayed. The position of the body is not of so much importance in devotion as the disposition of the mind. The Scriptures sanction different attitudes of prayer. 4. He looked towards Jerusalem when he prayed. The meaning of this will be understood by referring to the consecration of the temple. I. Kings viii. 44-48. Hence all those who were in Jerusalem turned towards the temple when they prayed, and all those who were in foreign lands opened their windows toward Jerusalem in performing their devotions. 5. Daniel's prayers were regularly performed. "As he did aforetime." Inconstancy is the fault of multitudes. There was a decision of character, and a uniformity of conduct, in Daniel, which all should be anxious to emulate. III. THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH HE WAS PLACED. 1. He was in a foreign land, far from his native country. 2. He was surrounded by the most inveterate and designing men, who meditated his ruin. Men who envied his popularity sought to find occasion against him, and did their utmost to persecute him, even unto death. Yet he maintained his integrity, stuck close to his devotions, and served his God with a constancy that nothing could destroy. 3. He was in high life, surrounded with temptations to pride, infidelity, idolatry, and a whole train of evils that swarm amidst the splendours and dissipations of a court. But he was innocent from the great transgression of apostatizing from God. 4. He was involved in most important business. He had the affairs of a kingdom to transact. How often is the urgency and press of business made an excuse for the neglect of religion. 5. He was prohibited from praying. By a cruel, senseless and atheistical decree. But nothing could shake the steadfast purpose of Daniel's soul. IV. THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THE WHOLE. 1. Whoever you are, and wherever you live, learn (if you serve God) to prepare your heart for temptation. Enemies you have. Temptations you must endure. 2. Whatever snares may be laid for your feet, never swerve from the line of duty. 3. The way of duty is the way of safety. 4. Persecutors often defeat their own object. 5. The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Daniel in Prayer*:—We have here recorded an action of great piety and religious courage. The account here given of the prophet's piety, who "kneeled upon his knees three times a day" is a description of his religious exercises, not only for thirty days, but during his whole life. "He prayed, and gave thanks, as he did aforetime." And upon this knowledge of his usual and daily course of devotion, the plot of his enemies was founded. We here see a person of great endowments of nature, and improvements of learning, eminent for skill in civil and sacred affairs, taking more delight in the

humble exercise of prayer, than in all those high speculations of science for which his mind qualified him; or in the public honours, to which his station entitled him; or in the ease and repose, which his great age seemed to require, in the vacancies of business. For this exercise, he allotted a considerable part of every day; and seems to have made his high offices, and large employments, a reason for increasing, rather than an excuse for omitting his prayers. Another thing that offers itself to our consideration, is the firmness and deliberate courage of this good man. His usual exercises of devotion were now under the interdiction of a law, and he was not one of those who pay no deference to the laws of men: the proper power of the magistrate he allowed, but not that of commanding what God forbade, or of forbidding what he commanded. The firmness and fortitude are shown in his continuing in all simplicity his fixed prayer habits. He retired. He kneeled. He did this three times a day. He both prayed, and gave thanks. (*T. Townson, M. A.*) *Constancy in Religion*.—It is peculiarly pleasing and useful, to be able to contemplate an instance of genuine, decisive, impartial, persevering, unrebukable religion before God and the Father. Such an one we have in Daniel. He had doubtless his infirmities; for there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not; but nothing is alleged against him. I do not remember that any other individual recorded in the Scriptures has entirely escaped censure. I. THE EMPLOYMENT OF DANIEL. It was pious. He prayed and gave thanks before his God. He was not one of those who are satisfied with morality without godliness. He well knew, that our greatest connections are with God; and that with him we have principally to do. He was a good neighbour, a good citizen, a good master and a good magistrate; but this did not excuse him from the worship of God. 1. He prayed. Prayer is the breathing of the desire towards God. Words are not essential to the performance of it. The expediency, the necessity, of prayer, results from our indigent, and dependent state. We need mercy and grace. God has determined, and revealed, the method in which he will communicate the blessings he has promised. In this appointment, his wisdom appears as conspicuous as his sovereignty; and his goodness as clearly as his wisdom. Nothing can be so beneficial to us as prayer is, not only by the relief it obtains, but by the influence it exerts; not only by its answers, but by its energy. Beyond everything else that is instrumental in religion, it improves our characters, it strengthens our graces, it softens and refines our tempers, it contributes to our spirituality, and promotes our holiness. 2. He gave thanks. This should always attend prayer. Whenever we go to God for new favours, we should be careful to acknowledge old ones. While we implore deliverance, we should be grateful for alleviations and supports. I am sorry to say, that this is so commonly neglected. There is no state that does not require gratitude. There is always much more to be grateful for, than to complain of—however afflicting our circumstances may be. 3. Daniel did all this “before his God.” By which we are to understand, that he placed himself in his religious exercises under the eye of Jehovah, and realised his presence. When we engage in devotional exercise, whether public or private, we are considered as withdrawing from the world, and appearing more immediately before God. And to impress our minds with this truth is the way to secure our profit. It will banish hypocrisy, and formality and carelessness; and unite our hearts to fear God’s name. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ACTION. 1. As regards the place. “He went into his house.” Every house not only may be, but should be, a house of prayer. In every family there ought to be an altar. And Daniel worshipped God alone, in privacy. 2. The posture. “He kneeled.” Though “bodily exercise profiteth little,” God is to be glorified in our bodies, as well as in our spirits. Kneeling seems to be the most proper and advantageous posture of devotion. It preserves us more from distraction, it is more expressive of reverence, humility and submission. 3. The direction in which he performed his devotion. His windows were open towards Jerusalem. Here we see the love a pious Jew bore to his native land, and the city of his solemnities. He hoped for the release and restoration of the Jews. Hence in his prayers he always remembered Zion, and would give God no rest till he established, and till he made Jerusalem a praise in the earth. A public spirit is a great excellency. 4. The Frequency of the exercise. He did it “three times a day.” This is little enough, considering the demand, “Pray without ceasing.” Habitual devotion is what we should seek to maintain; but, with many people at least, that which may always be done, is never done. 5. The constancy and invariableness of the practice. “As aforetime.” There was nothing new in it. It was not an extraordinary fervour, produced by the spur of the occasion. It was not occasional impulse; but the regular effects of principle and disposition. Daniel was a man of vast business, but he could find time for prayer—three times a day. III. THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ENHANCED THE VALUE OF THE PERFORMANCE. We all know that an action we admire, would not discover the same degree of principle in all circumstances. When a man is surrounded

with honour and applause—then—to think of himself soberly—this evinces his humility. When a man is insulted and injured—then—to rule his own spirit, and render blessing for cursing—this marks his patience and meekness. When a man sees his danger, but says “none of these things move me,” this is the trial and the triumph of his conviction and resolution. Daniel knew that the writing was signed, yet he determined to stand his ground. Whence we learn, that no danger should hinder a man from doing his work. Some, no doubt, would press Daniel to yield. Some would plead loyalty. Some would plead usefulness. Some would have recommended a plan of accommodation. When Sir Thomas Abney was Mayor of London, he made no scruple at the Lord Mayor’s feast, to rise in the evening and inform the company that he was going to withdraw, to perform the worship of God in his family, after which he would return again. Daniel by his example, rendered himself peculiarly useful. He obtained by this example the most distinguished honour. Whatever the world may think, there is a reality in religion; and it more than indemnifies its followers. (*William Jay.*)

On the Devotions of Daniel:—Daniel, as his enemies expected, honoured God rather than man, set at nought the imperious mandate, and punctually performed his accustomed devotions with a fearlessness of the results that did him honour. I. THE COURAGE AND STEDFASTNESS OF DANIEL. Christians in any state, should, to a certain extent, submit, for the sake of quiet, even to overstrained demands, and to regulations which their judgment may disapprove. Yet there are bounds to this forbearance; and a faithful servant of God will be content to endure any extremities, though with due reverence to the powers that be, sooner than comply with orders that violate conscience, or that clash with the discharge of paramount and higher duties. II. THE RETIREMENT OF DANIEL, AND HIS SPIRIT OF DEVOTION. What was his moral regimen? Retirement. Three times a day he withdrew into solitude, to compose his thoughts, to plume his ruffled spirits, to adjust his principles, and to commune with his God. III. THE TOPICS OF HOLY DANIEL’S MEDITATION AND DEVOTION. There would be direct reflection towards his active services; for he would judge contemplation to be preparatory to usefulness, as the leaves precede the fruit. This eminent example is pregnant with various instruction. Note the courage and stedfastness. The importance of devout retirement, which is the nursery of genius, the school of meditation, the forge of profound thought, of lofty enterprise, and of solemn purpose. Note also the religious turn of Daniel’s meditations. Indicated by his looking towards Jerusalem as he prayed. (*J. Grant, M.A.*) *Daniel in Babylon:*—The text states the result of the scheming of his enemies, so far as Daniel’s conduct was concerned. He altered not his course in the smallest degree. We observe in him no levity; no sarcastic defiance of the unrighteous law; no vain boasting of his superior religious knowledge; but a calm, serious, steady perseverance in the worship of God, which he knew that he could not neglect without exposing himself to a punishment infinitely more terrible than any that the courtiers of Babylon could devise, or the King of Babylon inflict. I. THE NATURE OF DANIEL’S DEVOTIONS. “He prayed, and gave thanks before his God.” 1. He prayed. Of all religious duties there is not one that is more important than prayer. It is, in fact, essentially connected with the origin and progress of personal goodness, with all spiritual blessings and enjoyments; and with the right discharge of our several obligations. Prayer is the grand means of receiving acceptance with God, and a participation of his holiness. The promises of Scripture are addressed to our faith, and their fulfilment is granted to persevering and believing prayer, and to that only. Numerous are the duties enjoined on us by the law and gospel of God. We cannot render to him acceptable obedience but under his gracious aid; nor will that aid be vouchsafed but in answer to prayer. Various are the evil influences which are perpetually erected upon the minds of good men, to draw them aside from the path of obedience. By the power of God only can they be preserved. The seasonable interposition of that power is to be sought in earnest prayer. Many are the sorrows connected with our present state of probation. Only by prayer can these afflictions be sanctified. It is by prayer especially that the people of God express their sympathy with the general misery of the world. Man was created for intercourse and communion with God. Whatever may be the dictates of what is called “natural religion,” the revelation which God has made of himself in his word directly tends to impress the minds of men with the necessity of prayer, and to encourage them in this holy duty. 2. He “gave thanks before his God.” Thanksgiving to God is a very delightful part of religious duty, and one which always accompanies the exercise of true prayer. The men who pray aright receive many blessings from God; and these kindle in their hearts feelings of lively gratitude to the Giver of all good. The spirit and habit of thanksgiving to God are peculiar to those who, being born from above, are made new creatures. Thanksgiving to God refers to the benefits which we have

received from him. These benefits are numerous beyond calculation; they are inconceivably great; and they are all absolutely unmerited and free. Daniel's thanksgivings were not interrupted by any of the calamities that he met with. II. **THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY WERE PERFORMED.** 1. They were performed in his chamber. He courted not the public attention. There are sins, imperfections, wants, and temptations, of which we are individually conscious, and which it is our duty fully and freely to confess to God; yet many of them it would be highly improper distinctly to specify, either in the domestic assembly, or the public congregation. 2. His devotions were performed on his knees. No wise man will despise the outward decencies and proprieties of divine worship. With reverence and humility all our attitudes, the very tones of our voice, should strictly correspond. 3. Daniel performed his devotions with his face towards Jerusalem. Partly because of his affectionate regard for his native land. It seems, however, to have been a common Jewish custom. 4. His devotions were performed with frequency and regularity. This is a proof of sound wisdom, as well as of an eminently devout spirit. 5. His devotions were performed with unswerving fidelity and perseverance. The history of Daniel presents (1) a proof of the power and sufficiency of divine grace. (2) Observe the manner in which he obtained the grace. (3) Be careful to show the benefits of prayer in the uprightness of your lives. (4) Note how the "Lord trieth the righteous." (*T. Jackson.*) *Christian Firmness*.—Daniel was a man greatly beloved of God. Though an unbending advocate for truth and righteousness, though a thorough opposer to idolatry, he was raised by a holy providence to the first station under the Persian Monarch. . . It is worthy of notice that the ungodly ordinarily assail the servants of the Most High, in those particulars respecting which God has claimed their services. Obedience to the moral law, or to any positive statute of Christ's Kingdom, has often been an occasion of calling forth their severe censure, and awakening a determination to overthrow them. There was one characteristic of Daniel which had not escaped the knowledge of these presidents and princes. They knew that he was a man of prayer. They understood that he was so attached to his work, as not easily to be driven from it. They supposed that he could not live thirty days without prayer. You will readily see what opinion the Babylonian idolaters had of the piety of Daniel. Here was a time when the mind of Daniel must have been brought to look distinctly at the consequences of perseverance in calling upon God. He could look forward to the day when, from his high elevation in the government, he should be taken and cast alive into the den of lions. See how he might have reasoned with himself, and excused, yielding, and giving up his prayer habits for a time. He might have adopted the opinion that, under such circumstances, compliance with forms is not essential. But the prophet could not be turned aside from true worship of Jehovah. He never seems to have sought for a way in which he might evade, on the one hand, a full performance of his duty to God, and on the other, the vengeance of Babylon. It is as impossible to have a spirit of prayer, which does not put its possessor into the attitude and the work of prayer, as it is to have a principal of natural life which does not set the heart to beat, the blood to circulate, and the limbs to move. Prayer should ordinarily put into undivided and combined use the feelings, the thoughts, and the tongue. This last was the manner in which Daniel prayed. Will you now go to Daniel's God, and take him to be your God? The care which he showed to Daniel, the protection which he gave to this servant in an hour when the ungodly rushed upon him to destroy him, ought to commend him to your affection and confidence. He is worthy to be believed, obeyed, and adored. To those who call on his name, he will surely reveal himself in hours of calamity and distress. But remember the example of the prophet and walk in his steps. In some respects the lives of the saints illustrate portions of duty, which could not be exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ. Though Jesus was a perfect example of obedience to the law, and in this respect ought to be followed, yet he could not be a pattern of the exercise of the Christian graces, for he had no occasion to repent, believe, or humble himself for sin. But all these Christian graces are illustrated in the feelings and actions of the ancient saints; and hence they are set before us everywhere in the New Testament as examples. While you meditate on this wonderful man, and on his wonderful deliverance, walk in his steps. Be neither intimidated, nor flattered, nor deluded into an abandonment of such prayer as that of the prophet. Let the warmth of internal piety control, and bring them into the work of supplication; and as it flows forth, let it employ your members as instruments of righteousness, and let your tongues call upon God, and speak his praise. (*J. Foot, D.D.*) *The Efficacy of Prayer*.—To be prepared for the future, and to make some provision against the contingencies and misfortunes of life, is a duty, the propriety of which we all admit. The same principle operates on most of us with regard to religion. We

have a consciousness, a conviction that existence does not terminate with death, and therefore to the prudent and thoughtful the future seems to demand the most anxious attention and most careful preparation. There is, therefore, in most minds, a desire to secure some ground of hope, some interest in the favour of that great and awful Being into whose hand we are again to commit the disembodied spirit, and who regulates all the affairs of the world, and the business of life. It must be the height of human felicity to have in addition to other grounds of confidence, the persuasion that we are under the mighty guardianship of God, and have, in the assurance of his power and love, a remedy for those evils which are beyond human control. Christ came to sweep away at once every obstacle and every doubt as to the character of God. We require you to associate God with all your affairs, to look to Him in all your distresses, to rely upon Him in all your difficulties. The Almighty is just what the psalmist describes when he calls Him a "refuge," and a "very present help in trouble." Man, from his circumstances and necessities, is constantly in need of such a refuge, of timely aid, of present help. It is of importance to know how this assistance may be reached, how this shelter may be secured. The answer is simple and obvious, by prayer. Prayer is the password which admits us into the presence of God; prayer is the spring which sets in motion the beneficent machinery of the invisible world, the summons which stirs the throng of ministering spirits, and causes them to rush down to our rescue. Prayer is the putting forth an appeal which, though weak in its argument, is irresistible with God, which moves Him at once to exercise His power on our behalf, and His mercy in our salvation. Daniel came to be placed in circumstances of great danger, and had a wonderful escape. The enemies of Daniel were just those which everybody finds who is in a better position than his neighbours. The charm which he employed, the miraculous help he called forth, was simply this—"He kneeled upon his knees, and prayed before his God, as he did aforetime." Such is an instance which the Scriptures supply, to show the power and success of prayer. It only remains for me to urge you to acquire and make trial of the prayerful gift. We are all more or less acquainted with the duty, but not many of us are aware of its comfort and value. When a man's heart is filled with the love of God, he delights in prayer—he derives his happiness from it. Prayer is with him the breathing of the soul—the means by which he obtains his spiritual food—the channel by which he carries on converse with his dearest and best friend. What food is to the body, what sunshine is to the earth, what health is to the sick, and joy to the sorrowing, such is the privilege and happiness of prayer to the Christian believer. Hence Daniel would allow nothing to hinder him from his prayers. He could bring himself to do without comforts and luxuries, so as to live on pulse and water; he could afford the loss of rank and honours, and the favour of his sovereign; he could even risk the peril of the lion's den, but he could not live without conversing with his God. This too is the custom, this the solace, of the true believer now. Whatever the form of temptation which assaults him, whatever the sorrow that befalls him, he can find relief from all. If you approach him in prayer, all his power, and all his goodness will be exercised on your behalf. (*A. O. Wickstead, M.A.*) *Secret Prayer*:—It has commonly been taught that prayer consists of four parts—adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition. There is a fifth part, total surrender to God. If you would know whether there is anything in prayer, try an experiment of prayer of the genuine sort. At a later stage of the progress of the soul towards the attitude of the complete consent of all its faculties to the supremacy of conscience, it usually happens that secret meditation and secret prayer have been measurably reduced to a habit. The time then speedily comes, when, not merely in glimpses of light, but with considerable steadiness, the man desires to see the truth, even in relation to his own most secret sins; a period arrives when he is no longer willing to feed himself upon sophistries; he wishes to face the facts of existence as they are. This wish is propounded when he is most completely alone, and most penetratingly conscious of the Divine Omnipresence. The point to be proved is the value of secret meditation and prayer. The single proposition by which the point is proved, is that secret meditation and prayer have a peculiar adaptedness to secure the commencement of continuation of a Christian life in the soul. This proposition is itself supported by four considerations. 1. Their peculiar adaptedness to promote religious thoughtfulness. 2. Their peculiar tendency to secure the supremacy of conscience. 3. Their peculiar adaptedness to preserve in the soul a sense of the Divine Omnipresence. 4. Their influence is attested by all that is known of the inner life of the best examples of religious experience among men. It is no new theological doctrine that God changes the soul according to the laws of the soul. (*Joseph Cook*.) *Daniel's Time of Trial*:—1. In the eagerness of rationalism to discredit the Book of Daniel, exception has been taken to the practice of praying at the three points of the

day. Such a devotional plan is said to have filtered from India "into the neighbouring countries of the West," and that not until Maccabean times. But the objector had forgotten Ps. iv. 17, or has to move it also to a later date. To ascribe this praying thrice to a Parsee origin is to forget that Parsee worship is a worship not merely at the turning-points of the day, but a worship of those portions of time. 2. This chapter contains a vivid picture of human nature, corrupt nature. The fact that Daniel was placed "above the presidents and princes" excited their envy. But what a witness we have in Daniel's integrity, that his enemies could find nothing to lay hold of except "concerning the law of his God." Then the shadow creeps again across the scene; and the intoxication of power, and the fascination of flattery and vain glory, is a sickening spectacle of human folly and deceit. See how Daniel behaved under the circumstances.

I. HIS CALMNESS. 1. There was enough to call up resentment. He was marked out as a victim by a secret cabal. 2. He did not angrily complain or demand any explanation. He retired to his chamber and prayed to God. 3. Calmness is the result of confidence in God. 4. Prayer was nothing new; it was the prophet's habit. The affairs of state, and the vast concerns which demanded his attention, did not thrust aside the claims of God. He found time for prayer, and turned to the fountain of light for guidance in the discharge of his daily duties. II. HIS DEVOTION. 1. Its regularity.

"All nations and all faiths of cultivated men have chosen the twilight hour, morning and evening, for their devotion." Though the midday prayer was not so general, yet pious souls at noontide refreshed themselves with an act of divine communion. 2. The posture. Kneeling. The higher spirituality which affects to disregard the posture of the body in acts of worship, finds no countenance in the Scriptures. 3. The direction. "Toward Jerusalem." Perhaps in obedience to the law (Deut. xii. 11), or to the Solomonic injunction (1 Kings viii. 44). Thus reminded of God's promises. III. HIS COURAGE. 1. The open windows are evidence that Daniel did not wish to hide his actions. 2. His faithfulness to God is more meritorious when his history is taken into account. Lessons. (1) The warning against the subtle sin of envy must not be overlooked. (2) The calmness of the prophet, and his immediate turning to God at this dire crisis, have the link of connection which has cause to effect. Calmness in difficulties is the product of confidence in and communion with God. (3) Daniel's devotion is exemplary in its regularity, reverence and direction. The windows open "towards Jerusalem" should remind us of the heavenward gaze of the soul in time of prayer. (4) Those who plead circumstances as an excuse for their moral and spiritual failure should contemplate the courage and faithfulness of Daniel amid an environment full of difficulty and danger. (*The Thinker*.)

Religion in a Busy Life.—It is always interesting to catch a glimpse of the private life of a distinguished man. A public career is seldom a revelation of character. History is constantly reversing the partial imperfect judgments of a passing generation: Heroes are destroyed or ennobled, as conduct is traced to its motives, and as motives discover character. A single passage of Holy Scripture conducts us to the private room of an Oriental statesman, and permits us to observe his daily life. 1. We see a statesman at prayer. Prayer is the best evidence of religion. Religion begins in the prayer of penitence, and it culminates in the prayer of "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Therefore we have a right to conclude that Daniel was a religious man. He had ever been loyal to God, and had ever enjoyed the restraints and encouragements of religion. He held firmly to the religion of his ancestors. He was not ashamed to be known as a godly man! His career was certainly a remarkable one. The religion of the Bible, as we see it in Daniel, is adapted to a busy life. Indeed, the concerns or occupations of a busy life demand the restraints and encouragements which this religion imposes. Besides religion places the present life in true relations to another—the future life. Religion consoles us when we are disappointed, and cheers us when we are sad, and makes us conscious of God's help and blessing, and teaches us the great lesson that to be is better than to get; to possess a noble character is the purpose of our existence. The offering of a noble character is the best tribute that a mortal can render to God, who creates, preserves, redeems, and sanctifies. 2. As we observe that the windows of Daniel's chamber are open toward Jerusalem. There the glory of God rested upon the mercy seat, which could be reached only through the appointed mediation of the High Priest. The redemptive idea was thus emphasized. Jerusalem was the city of redemption, because it had the temple. The pious emotions of devout men turned instinctively to Jerusalem, where the sacrifices were constantly offered. And through Christ we have access to the Father. His redemption is a constant appeal. The redemptive element in the divine character is always attractive. Men do not get very near to God, nor do they ever keep very near to him, unless they feel the constraint of redemptive love.

3. As we learn that Daniel is accustomed to kneel in his chamber three times each day, we are impressed with the necessity of frequent and stated seasons of prayer. Note the frequency and the regularity of this busy man's prayers. Have your stated seasons of prayer, and then believe that, at any hour, and in any place, you may cry unto God, and that he will hear you. 4. As we watch the enemies of Daniel, who rejoice that they have succeeded in their designs against him, we realise that the calm fulfilment of duty will ever meet with opposition, which God is able to over-rule. When Daniel knew that the work of his enemies was accomplished, what did he do? Moved calmly forward with the momentum of his devoted life, entering his chamber each day as usual, and praying there as he had been accustomed to pray. The pressure of an emergency was not to be the occasion of his fall. He was in God's hands. And the duty of prayer was evident. The conclusion of the whole matter is, to bring God consciously into life; to live with reference to his approval; to exercise a wise discrimination; to advance calmly but steadily; to be religious in the market place, and in the parlour, as well as in the sanctuary—such are a few of the lessons which we may carry away with us as we turn from the Chamber of Daniel, and go again to meet the toil and the conflict of a busy world. (*Henry M. Booth, D.D.*)

For Young Men.—From this event in Daniel's life we learn, I. PRINCIPLE IS THE CENTRAL POWER OF LIFE. The principle which distinguishes morally between men is a conviction of the difference between right and wrong, ascertained on good grounds, and carried out in the details of life. The orderly, irreproachable character of Daniel's behaviour in ordinary matters is remarkable. We sometimes meet people with great principles who do not seem to have discovered the application of them to their usual habits. It is by doing small and common things with uncommon care that we form the habits by which the highest end is attained. Daniel's conduct was guided by principle. This will become plain if we notice where he lived. His neighbours were pagans, and their scoffing jests, and unrestrained licentiousness were at variance both with the profession and the practice of a godly life. Mark also how Daniel was occupied. The common excuse for the neglect of religious duties, that men have no time for them; strikingly refuted by the instance before us. Then look at what Daniel was threatened with. Principle must have had a strong hold of his heart to enable him to resist his fears. There were so many loopholes by which a less resolute heart might have escaped the danger. Seldom is a situation outwardly so sublime as Daniel's; but we greatly err if we forget that there are parallels to it on every side of us. If there are no lions' dens, there are the snares of business, and the power of fashion, and the fear of the world's laugh. II. PRINCIPLE IS NOURISHED BY HABITS OF DEVOTION. Daniel's case not only enforces the duty of prayer, but explains its nature, and in every aspect in which we look at him as he prays, we are instructed by the sight. See what we learn about the manner of prayer. The need of privacy and retirement. The attitude—kneeling. The frequency of the praying. Observe what we can gather concerning the matter of prayer. In so far as it consisted of supplication, we easily imagine what he would pray for. He addressed God as "his God." How instructive it is to learn that Daniel gave thanks. Three thoughts in conclusion.

(1.) True prayer cannot exist without faith. (2.) Faith cannot exist without prayer. Prayer is the first, the best, the habitual exercise of faith. (3.) Young men have need of both faith and prayer. Let them try the good old plan of principle as the central power, and prayer as the unfailing oil by which that principle is lighted. It was thus that our ancestors made such strong men in contending for their faith. They were men of one Book, and they were much given to prayer. Let young men take with them faith in Daniel's God, with prayer to Him as their Father and Friend, and they will step forth to labour on the opening fields of life, hearing their Master's voice, "My son, go work to-day in my vineyard." (*A. MacEwen, D.D.*) *The Man of Prayer*.—Are we taught to pray that those good things which by nature we cannot have, may yet by the goodness and peace of the Spirit be worked in us? Then there is offered to us the life of Daniel—the man especially of prayer, and by a consideration of the circumstances in which Daniel was placed, the fidelity with which he persisted in supplication to God, and the deliverances which were wrought for him, we learn how very much the prayer of the righteous availeth, and that God is indeed both a hearer and an answerer of prayer. This prayer was the characterising peculiarity of Daniel. 1. No changes of life, or of abode, or of companions, could interrupt or shake the constancy of his adoration to God, and his hourly sense of dependence upon the Almighty. 2. Notice the example which Daniel has set us in his habit of prayer. How frequently he prayed. The posture he assumed in prayer. His indifference to the observations of wicked men. In conclusion, I would explain what are the blessings which you may look for, if you do imitate him. (*A. Gatty, M.A.*)

The Force of Prayer exemplified in Daniel:—Daniel appears from first to last to have kept innocent, and to have done what was right before God. The explanation is in the text. Daniel was a man of prayer. The Lord whom he sought upheld his goings. This was the secret of Daniel's strength, his habit of daily earnest prayer. 1. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his chamber and set open its windows toward Jerusalem. That opening of the window was a mark that Daniel kept true to the worship of his fathers, and was not to be induced by any threat or promise, to go after other gods and serve them. In this, he is a pattern to us. 2. The text says, he "knoeled upon his knees." His custom was to worship God with his body, soul and spirit; to omit nothing in his act of worship, which might serve to express the earnestness of his supplication, and the depth of his humility. 3. Notice the frequency of his prayer. "Three times a day." At nine, at noon, and at three in the afternoon. No doubt, Daniel lived a life of constant communing with God; but, with this, he had fixed hours for distinct acts of devotion. How is it then that we are found neglecting prayer? We might all of us find a few minutes in every day, for lifting up our heart to God. 4. Daniel had long been in the habit of praying. He did now only what he had been accustomed to do aforesaid. Prayer was not a new thing to him—not something taken up in haste, and on an emergency, but the regular daily practice of his life. This teaches us a lesson. If we are to know the privilege and blessing of communion with God—if we are to have God always at hand for our support and succour, we must accustom ourselves betimes to call upon him. (*R. D. B. Rawnsley, M.A.*) *Daniel continuing in Prayer:*—There is an instance of true courage rising out of right principles. It was not defiant, not obtrusive; but calm, cool, strong. Daniel was eighty-five years old. Though great, he bowed before God. Though busy, he found time to pray. Though wise, he did not escape envy. I. LOOK AT HIS WORSHIP. 1. It was his established custom. Not commencing with the danger. Not ceasing before the danger. 2. It was in his chamber. Where he retired into his individuality. Where he returned to his nationality. Where he reverted to his inferiority. 3. It was on his knees. [18]. So Stephen (Acts vii. 60); Peter (Acts ix. 40); Paul (Acts xx. 36); Christians at Tyre (Acts xxi. 5); Solomon (I. Kings viii. 54); Jesus (Luke xxii. 41). The attitude of humility. The posture of reverence. The position of creaturehood. 4. It was towards Jerusalem. His Father's God. His native temple. His heart's home. 5. It was three times a day. So David (Ps. lv. 17). Punctuality. Continuity [21]. Frequency. II. LOOK AT HIS TEMPTATION. The king asks no homage. The cessation only for a season. The conditions very severe. III. LOOK AT HIS SUPPORT. God may interpose. If not, death sets him free for heaven. Whether he lives or dies, God glorified. IV. LOOK AT HIS DELIVERANCE. His own heart cheered. Israel's spirits raised. The monarch's testimony given. Jehovah's name made known. The servant of God stands out in glorious contrast. Flatterers, plotters, are round him. He in his integrity, sincerity, simplicity, faith, has shamed them all. (*John Richardson, M.A.*) *Daniel's Prayer-Chamber:*—People imagine that Daniel went into his house, and opened his windows that everybody might see him. This was not the fact. To have done so would not have been religious courage, but foolhardiness and ostentation. Such conduct would have been mere bravado, a trifling with death. Religious courage is a calmer, wiser, braver thing. In a warm climate, the windows would be, as a matter of course, open, as we throw wide our windows in the summer. In later times, perhaps at the time of the captivity, the houses of Jews were built with an upper chamber, a room not in common use, a room in which to receive guests, and to which the people of the house might retire for meditation and prayer. Dr. Robinson's description of the house of the American consular agent at Sidon may help us to conceive aright of Daniel's house at Babylon. "His house was a large one, built upon the eastern wall of the city; the rooms were spacious, and furnished with more appearance of wealth than any I saw in the country. An upper parlour, with many windows, on the roof of the proper house, resembled a summer palace, and commanded a delightful view of the country towards the east, full of trees and gardens and country houses, quite to the foot of the mountains." Into such a chamber Daniel was wont to retire. Perhaps this was known to be the habit of his life. The windows (similar to our venetian blinds) were usually open, so they must be open now, for to seem to forego a duty or a principle is to forego it! (*H. T. Robjohns, B.A.*) *The Necessity of Prayer:*—One of the first things we notice about Daniel is his persistence in prayer to his God. He was a man, not of intermittent but of constant prayer. In the Old Testament we find examples of prayer, but not express commands to pray. Daniel not only prayed regularly, but he persisted in doing so, in the face of the enmity of the great ones of the kingdom, in defiance of the very edict of the Viceroy, Darius himself, and with the knowledge that he would be exposed to great peril, perhaps to loss of life in consequence. Though

he was not actually a martyr, he was one in spirit, if not in reality. It is not always easy to find sufficient moral courage to persist manfully in one's duty to God in the face of difficulties and dangers. The world in general attaches a higher value to physical than to moral courage; but in this, as in so many other cases, its judgment is quite wrong. There are sure to be many occasions in our daily life, in which we shall all need this moral courage. Some of us have it naturally in higher degree than others: but the weakest of us has a way to obtain strength from God, in which he can clothe himself as in unpenetrable armour—and that way is prayer. Another trait in Daniel is the unostentatious manner of his piety. We do not read that he ever paraded his love of God before the eyes of those who were around him, or that he made a show of it in public. His religion was of that quiet and unobtrusive kind which insensibly wins the hearts of those who behold it, and convinces them of its earnestness and reality. The same spirit of modest and retiring devotion he showed all through his life. It would be well indeed if Daniel's modest and unobtrusive piety were imitated more generally than it is now-a-days. We live in an age of deception and sham. Men appear to have arrived at the conclusion that no success can be achieved in any way without constant advertisement—self-advertisement. It seems to have come to this—that no man is to be considered worthy of any regard who does not trumpet forth his own merits in the loudest key. Not only in public but in private there seems to be a lessening of that reverent respect which should enshroud all that relates to God and his holy religion. There is another lesson we may learn from the history of Daniel, and that is, that God will not forsake those who truly love and worship him. But if we would have Daniel's reward, we must also have Daniel's faith; and if some now-a-days think that they are forsaken by their Heavenly Father, they must search and try their hearts and see whether the fault be not their own, before they presume to doubt the power of the Almighty to help them, for he will not listen to those who pray to him to him with their lips and not their hearts, as he has commanded them to do. The Jewish prophet did not try to temporise, to obey Darius and the dictates of his own conscience at the same time—he saw clearly what his duty was, and persisted manfully and honestly in carrying it out. Let us too try to serve God with singleness of heart, and uprightness of purpose: let us be, as Daniel was, prayerful, resolute, full of genuine and unostentatious piety, so that we may have the continual countenance of God with us, as he had. (*E. Martin Venn, B.A.*)

Piety and Business Compatible:—This incident yields us a glimpse of the ordinary tone and temper of Daniel's mind. "As he did aforetime." Piety gets reckoned sometimes as a supernumery grace, as though, without it, religion could reach as fine a point as is needful, practical, or practicable. The general scope of piety is not hard to appreciate. It is a subjective matter. It relates less to what a man is seen to do outwardly to relations than he is supposed to sustain inwardly. Daniel's piety betrayed itself by his thrice daily devotions, and otherwise. It consisted not so much in his belief in God, as in his constant intimacy with Him. He was a man whose integrity was beyond question; but quite beside this, God stood near to him, and was very real and personal to him. Piety denotes the holy affection with which we draw nigh to God, and in response to which he draws nigh to us. The common disesteem of piety proceeds from its supposed inutilty. Character is rated as an utility, piety only as a luxury. Nowadays the utilities and the humanities are sharply discriminated. Piety is treated as a kind of annex to character. Another ground of the disfavour is that piety is so easily shammed. Piety is a matter between man and God, and so can be assumed with considerable ease and safety. But the greatest hindrance to piety is the half-formed suspicion, that piety, all things taken into account, is not exactly practicable. Very likely we have not any of us got this matter so exquisitely adjusted that we can both pray in such a way as not to lose interest in our business, and do business in such a way as not to lose interest in our prayers. There are two or three principles, in the recognition of which all successful efforts at adjustment of piety and business will have to proceed. 1. A Christian, to be such in anything like its New Testament sense, has left him no choice to stop short of anything less than spiritual-mindedness. Devoutness, prayerfulness, entrance into God's intimacy, or call it by whatever name you will, is not a thing that Gospel Christianity can don and doff at its option. Christianity is not believing that there is a God; it is believing God; and so, fresh from the start, it is a matter surely personal between him and us. We begin to be Christians by drawing near to God. If we are trying to be Christians without being spiritually-minded Christians, we are attempting to compose the music of our religious life in a key nowhere set in the Holy Word. Such piety is no matter of unpractical extravagance. And our existence is not met by listening on occasion, to the devout supplications and spoken communings of any who may happen to be

standing in fellowship with God. His spiritual-mindedness is valid for him, not for others. Devoutness is not transferable. 2. Whatever our secular occupation may be, provided always it is a proper one, that we are to thrust ourselves into with just the same intensity of energy and heartiness of resolve! We shall never make a success of life, and compose its contradictions, by entering into its business pursuits with half-heartedness. It is in us, whatever vocation we have chosen, to enlist in it all our powers. We run against ineradicable instincts when we do otherwise. Of course, there is an extreme to which this might be pushed that would work mischief. Much confusion has come from assuming that secular life and religious life, necessarily work at cross purposes, so that what is taken from one is added to the other. On the contrary, a man's chances for holiness are bettered by his laborious intercourse with things, as certainly a man's chances in business are enhanced by his intimacy with God. Piety regularly retrogrades when it draws away from the business and contracts of secular life. Hermit religion is spindling and stinky, like wheat grown in the shade. (*Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*)

Daniel's Piety.—If we consider the prophet's situation, it will surely teach us much concerning both the frequency and the mode in which we ought to pray. Daniel was in a heathen country. He had much and laborious occupation. His situation was one of danger. The question now before us is not so much whether we ought to pray, as in what manner we should fulfil this essential duty. Remember that upon this occasion he was in much tribulation. Yet with all his prayers he offered also a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Let us abhor the sin of ingratitude. Perhaps you complain that the duties of your station in life, duties which you cannot lessen or omit, render it impossible for you to give that attention to those religious services which you feel to be due from the creature to his Creator. Take a lesson from busy Daniel. O that we may have his wisdom in discerning that no intensity of business can justify or palliate the neglect of prayer and praise. Learn also that this man who prayed "three times a day," acted thus "as he did aforetime"; and our services should be systematic, frequent, and persevering. There was no unusual fervour in Daniel's prayers and praises under these unusual and unexpected trials. If rule and system be necessary to the success of worldly transactions, surely, we might infer their important use in all the concerns of religion. As to the mode or manner of prayer, we notice that Daniel, when he prayed, attended to certain forms. He opened the windows of his chamber. He kneeled upon his knees. He looked towards Jerusalem. . . . Enough has been said to prove that, however willing Daniel was to obey the laws of the land when not in opposition to the laws of God, he was determined, if the case required, to die rather than dishonour his God; being anxious only that God should be magnified in his body, whether it were by his life, or by his death. (*Beaver H. Blacker, M.A.*)

The Character of Daniel.—In every age there have been witnesses for God—men who have stood pre-eminent among their brethren for piety, rising above the ordinary level of spiritual attainment, and shedding around them, in the midst of darkness, the steady light of a holy conversation. The exigencies of times required that such faithful witnesses for the true God should be raised up by a special providence, should be qualified for the task assigned to them, and carried through all its difficulties with credit to themselves, and to the cause in which they were embarked. The histories of such eminent individuals are preserved, on the imperishable record of inspiration, for the instruction of future ages. Their examples are held forth as models of imitation; and in this manner, "though dead," they "still speak to the world and to the Church," in the language of reproof, of encouragement, and of faithful admonition. The words of the text stand connected with a very distinguished character. 1. The history of Daniel. One of the children of the captivity, who showed early signs of genius. A circumstance soon occurred which at once proved the strength of his faith, and the supernatural character of his gifts, while it brought him into notice, and paved the way for his future advancement. Interpreting the forgotten dream of the king. His exalted station only rendered his piety more conspicuous, and its practical exertions useful on a larger scale. When Darius became King, he honored Daniel with high trust. Then came the envious scheme to destroy him, which seemed to succeed. It was a scheme characterised at once by impiety and absurdity. Daniel remained calm and unmoved amid the dangers which now surrounded him. The paramount rights of conscience and God, he fails not to respect. God defends his faithful servant. The time of man's extremity is often the time when God signally interposes in behalf of his people, and at this particular time and place, a supernatural testimony to the true religion, in the person of its distinguished representative, was essentially necessary. The effect on the mind of Darius was deep and powerful. 2. Lessons of practical piety, which the conduct of Daniel, in the instance before us, is designed and fitted to

furnish to our minds. (1.) An edifying example of well-principled and well-regulated devotion. Daniel, though a great man, was not ashamed to acknowledge a higher and greater than himself; to cherish towards him the sentiments and feelings of ardent piety, and to bow the knee in his presence, in the attitude of prayer. Prayer he recognised as a duty, and cherished as a source of consolation. Along with his petitions he "gave thanks." This was his ordinary practice. (2.) A noble example of steadfastness in the faith. Daniel knew that the decree was signed, and even a man of sincerity in the main might have thought himself warranted, in a case so trying, to have used a little management to secure his life, and yet not violate his principles. Plans and schemes, plausible as they might appear, would not do for Daniel. They all proceeded on the principle of concealment, or omission of duty, or a change in the usual manner of doing it, and all from the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. Daniel was a public man, and the representation of the more religious part of his countrymen, and the most prominent witness to the honours of the true God, in the midst of surrounding idols. The eyes of many were, therefore, on him; and had he failed, or appeared to fail now, when his principles were brought so decidedly to the test, "it would have been as when a standard bearer fainteth." Individuals of less decided character, and moving in a lower and more obscure sphere, might act with caution and reserve, but Daniel, who was a veteran in the army of the saints, and who had so many eyes upon him, must act with more courage, and for this very reason too, that he knew the law to be made expressly for him. He resolves not even to come short of his ordinary and accustomed duty. Our temptations to hide our religion from others are trifling in the extreme when compared with Daniel, and the good men of other days. So that our guilt is exceedingly magnified if it be so that we conceal our religious views for fear of displeasing those whom we wish to serve. Even now the disciples of the Redeemer may be called to suffer persecution. The sneer of ridicule may be pointed at their superior sanctity. In the ordinary commerce of life, there will be trials of faith, and Christians may be called to hold fast their integrity, at some considerable expense. The world loves consistency, and Daniel, through a long life of tried integrity, commanded the respect of his most determined enemies. (3.) We have in Daniel a practical illustration of the grand principles whence all true devotion, and all genuine piety must flow. Daniel prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem. Here is in this the pious recognition of Jehovah, as, in the most affecting and important sense, the God of Israel. The mercy seat is recognised as the symbol of divine mercy to mankind, and as typical of that "throne of grace," sprinkled with the blood of the Redeemer, to which "we have access with boldness, through the faith of him." (*Robert Burns, D.D.*) *Daniel in Babylon*:—Never, surely did the spirit and power of devotion shine forth with greater lustre, than at this time, in the person of Daniel, upon his knees, in such circumstances. Nothing ever ought to make us omit our daily devotions. It had been no wonder to have seen Daniel devout in Jerusalem. For there was the temple, the true church and worship. But he was now in a strange, heathen land. Perhaps, we think we have too much business upon our hands, to spare time for our devotions. Time is very precious with most people, when they are to perform their devotions; and if they have not enough for everybody, they generally make free, in the first place, with their Creator. Let these men of business consider the case of Daniel. It would puzzle one to conceive a man in a situation that would afford him less leisure. Yet all this business did Daniel discharge faithfully and punctually, and found time to pray, and give thanks before his God, thrice every day constantly. And this he continued to do, even when the law was passed, which made it certain death. We may learn from this great example, as to the place, posture, time, and matter of our daily devotions. Prayer and thanksgiving were the two parts of Daniel's daily service. Constancy in prayer can open the way to all blessings. (*Bishop Horne.*) *Character aided by prayer*:—Evidently trials of moral integrity and earnest religiousness have been as keen in days of old as in our own time; and the power whose zone and force they enbalme is a power which is available for us. I. THE CHARACTER REQUIRED OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD IS A COMBINATION OF FIDELITY TO GOD AND FIDELITY TO MAN—OR GODLINESS WITH UPRIGHTNESS. There may be fidelity to man where there is not fidelity to God; but we cannot reverse this statement, and yet accord the truth. For a man to be faithful to his Lord, and unfaithful or deceiving towards his fellow-men, is simply impossible. The impenetrable gulf is, however, attempted. The man who fulfils what is due to his fellow-men, and also that which is due to God—who wears the worthiness belonging to morality, and the dignity belonging to spirituality—he alone represents the true character of religion in the world. Like a stately tree, he strikes his roots downwards to draw all that is adapted to his life from the soil; and spreads his boughs, and opens his leaves, to catch the rain and the light

of heaven. Such an one was Daniel. His enemies regarded him as a servant of God so firmly attached to him, that he would endure any loss in preference to being unfaithful. Surely such should be the views taken of every religious man. II. HIS RELIGIOUS CHARACTER IS OFTEN DISLIKED. Daniel was no favourite with the other officers of the Median despot. I do not doubt that the dislike was rather to his uprightness than to his godliness. The secret homage which is paid to righteous proceedings prevented those high officials from directly attacking Daniel's administration. They scheme to overturn it by means of his fear of God. Uprightness is certainly worth something in our market, though it is not found at every stall. It may be as well to add that there is often a qualification of this dislike, in that worldly men are not always unwilling to use the consciousness and ability of a godly man. In trying circumstances they are known to pass by their most intimate friends and confide their cases to him who, by his fidelity to God and man, has been a butt for their frivolity, yet compelled their respect. III. THERE IS A WAY OF SECURING THIS RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. Supposing a man to be the possessor of the right character, how is he to maintain it notwithstanding all oppositions? Undoubtedly by his help who has impressed the character upon him. One of the methods he has chosen is prayer. Daniel was not wrongly judged by his enemies, and his course sets prayer in its human aspect before us. How prayer keeps step with the unswerving march of God's established laws, neither Scripture nor speculation determines. God enjoins, teaches, and hears prayer, and our concern is more with the right employment of this mighty instrument than with the way in which it operates on the government of God, if it is to be a support to godliness and uprightness. 1. Prayer demands a decisive step. Daniel went to pray at once. He went to pray undisguisedly. 2. Prayer must express various convictions. Daniel made it the medium of showing dependence upon, and the gratitude towards God. He affords an instance of the morally sublime. The conviction that God can help forms our addresses to him into requests; the conviction that he has helped, and will help, constitutes the framework of thanks. 3. Prayer should have suitable aids. Daniel kneeled, with his face toward Zion. 4. Prayer should be frequent. Daniel set apart three times a day for this exercise. And he did so, not under the pressure of a threatening calamity, but from a settled desire of his soul. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) *The Prayer of Daniel*.—When we contemplate the character of Daniel, one thing to be remembered is, that by the grace of God he was what he was. He was not only a moral and virtuous man, in the highest degree in which morality and virtue have ever been displayed by men, but he was a man of spiritual godliness. With God's special grace, Daniel could not have been what Daniel was, any more than Paul would have been what he became by grace. There was spiritual life in his soul. Without the regenerating, and sanctifying, saving grace of God, you may be amiable in your disposition and conduct, respected and honoured as useful members of society, but you cannot, because you are such, conclude that the life of God is in your souls. The chief points in the religious character and conduct of Daniel are his courage and consistency. See in him the wide difference between godly fear, and natural cowardice and terror. Godly fear was the very thing which made Daniel brave and fearless? The true fear of God, is another name for the love of God. This fear, this love, dismissed all other fear from Daniel's soul. If there is one situation more than another in which it is difficult to hold peaceful communion with God, it is where we know and feel ourselves to be watched by the eyes and ears of scoffers, who hate personal religion, and ridicule prayer, and what they think overmuch righteousness. But Daniel's soul was able, resolutely and devoutly, to meet such circumstances, and to rise above them; so courageous, so consistent, so calm was he in the service of God, through the grace which was given to him. See also, in Daniel, how the grace of God is able to preserve a man, as it did him, in the midst of earthly prosperity and power, from the manifold snares which surround them. (*Henry S. Richmond, M.A.*)

Vers. 11-14. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself.—*The Nemesis of Flattery*.—Daniel sought neither publicity, nor avoided it. He was too well acquainted with the methods of Oriental government to suppose that his disobedience to the King's decree could be concealed. Because he had given God his heart, he sought no evasions. He would have been untrue to his own feelings if he had cared for his own selfish ease and safety more than for God's honour. But he made no parade, or ostentatious exhibition of his piety. Amidst all the weighty cares and pressure of public business, this holy man found time for regular prayer. Vers. 12-14. Alas! Poor King! But a day or two ago he had sealed the giddiest height of human ambition. His courtiers had made him divine. Darius the infallible! It must be very trying to an infallible personage to have any of the ills that flesh is heir to

—such as a headache—and not be able to predicate for certain what will cure it. There was something worse here. These courtiers had snared Darius with his own vanity. So much adulation for bait, and when it was taken the trap would fall, and the King be caged. The Persian law rendered him impotent. He might repent, but repentance availed nothing. As a rule this Medo-Persian law probably worked well. It was intended as an obstacle to the too hasty enactment of a law. But the tumultuous entry of the conspirators demanding leave to pay him extravagant honour, was too much for Darius's prudence. He fondly imagined that their flattery was genuine, and that it arose from heartfelt respect for his great qualities. And now he was "sore displeased with himself," for he felt that he had been weak indeed. He had let himself be duped. Our sins, and even our follies, punish us with just retribution. For vain Darius there was self-contempt. By a just retribution God uses our own vices and weakness as the scourge wherewith He punishes us. Were we wise we should take the warning. But it is in vain that the moralist warns us that only the edge of folly's cup is tinged with honey, and that the long drought which follows ever grows in bitterness, and must be drained to the last foul dregs. But this, with us, is not inevitable. We do not stand, like Darius, sorrowful, reluctant, displeased with ourselves, labouring to escape, but with no outlet for deliverance. For us Christ has died, and he is our way of safety, our door for admittance into the fold of the free, and also our strength. He gives swiftness to the weary feet, power to the feeble arms, peace to the aching heart. (*Dean Payne Smith.*) *Conscience at Work*:—Why this uneasiness? Is he afraid of foreign invasion? Does he dread some internal rebellion? Or has disease assailed his constitution? No. His uneasiness arises, not from his body, but from his soul; not from his kingdom, but from his conscience. In the matter of Daniel's condemnation, he had acted a most unworthy, most unkingly, most unmanly part. No sooner is the act completed, than his heart reproached him with his weakness, and his conscience accused him of his sin. Why was he, on any account, accessory to the death of an innocent man? Why did he suffer a faithful servant to be basely betrayed and murdered? Why did he consent to tarnish his honour, to compromise his dignity, by becoming the reluctant accomplice, and the degraded tool, of envious and perfidious men? The more he broods over the matter, he becomes the more excited, till the fever of his mind was communicated to his physical frame, and rendered sleep impossible. From this we may learn, that sin, even when yielded to from weakness, will leave guilt upon the conscience, which sooner or later will cause uneasiness and pain. Conscience, it is true, may be so debilitated and exhausted by habits of sin, that it may allow the sinner to lie long under guilt without raising an accusing voice. God, however, can at any moment quicken it by one single beam of light, and so kindle and inflame it, that the most hardened sinners in Zion shall tremble, and fearfulness seize the most seared and hardened among the hypocrites. And when conscience is once quickened, the guilty man cannot escape from its accusations. Wherever he goes, he carries his accuser in his bosom. And the conscience will never be truly pacified, until it is sprinkled by the atoning blood of Jesus, and purified by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. When in this state of mind, Darius used no carnal methods to silence the voice of his inward monitor. He gave it full scope. He communed with his heart in the night season. "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him." The conduct of this heathen king reproves many, who, when their consciences are quickened by the word read or preached, or by some dispensation in providence, use means to lull it asleep, such as pleasure, or company, or dissipation. When conscience speaks, let us ever attend. Give ear to her faintest whispers. Be not afraid to listen to her loudest accusations. These may work your soul's eternal health. Those times, when a man's conscience is specially awakened, ought to be regarded as constituting eras of incalculable importance in his history as an immortal being. Let us, in such cases, looking up to God for wisdom to guide, and for grace to strengthen, endeavour to perform the first duty pointed out by the light which we have, and in the way of doing so, we will ever see the light shining before us, as we advance, and ever shining more and more, the farther we proceed. (*W. White.*) *The Conscience of the Wicked King*:—Study the character of Darius. I. HIS VANITY. He was proud of his position and power. He was attacked on his weak side. He would not make himself a god, but merely assumes God's prerogative for thirty days. But the one bad step brought its calamity; for sins are social—one of them is never alone. One of his presidents would worship his God all the time. The king sees the evil, but too late. He had done wrong, and he is now the slave of wrong. So with every man. Selfishness is his weakness. If he gives way, the first stone of his dungeon is laid. Then comes the unexpected evil; that one sin brings another. In

any crisis, small or great, when the question is between Christ and ourselves, if we do not crucify self, we open the long avenues of guilt, of which often there is no shutting afterwards. II. HIS PERPLEXITY. The king's conscience is aroused. Daniel! he cannot do such a thing with him, he must not do it. But he cannot help it. Surely Daniel can be saved. No—not even that. Then comes the actual evil. He cannot go back, he must go forward. He sinks lower, to sins of deed—weakness, cowardice, and even blasphemy. III. HIS REMORSE AND GOOD INTENTIONS. The king was sorry. Surely he was penitent. Now the tide was turned. Darius makes a new decree: the God of Daniel must be served, and no other. But we are not told that he turned to the Lord, that he learned His law, or kept it. So with us when the cloud breaks and the passion has spent its force, then the reaction comes, and repentance and remorse. If we repent *partially*, not because we have sinned against God, but have disturbed our own conscience or brought disgrace upon ourselves, if we are ready to go back to temptation afresh, then a new cloud hangs, threatening night. Come, not to boast, but to be forgiven; not to offer, but to receive. (*W. Murdoch Johnston, M.A.*) And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him. *Darius and Daniel; or the Necessity of an Atonement*:—Why could not Darius deliver Daniel? He was an absolute monarch, and had the whole power of the realm at his control. His inability did not arise from a want of disposition. The king was most sincerely disposed to deliver him, if he could. He passed sentence upon Daniel with great and evident reluctance. There are many things which a monarch, however powerful, cannot consistently perform. An absolute monarch may be so surrounded with checks and restraints, that he has really less liberty than almost any of his subjects. He cannot abrogate his own laws, or trifle with his own authority, or introduce principles of administration which shall go to encourage transgression, or to release his subjects from their obligations of obedience. There were but two ways in which Darius could deliver Daniel. The one was by rescinding and disowning his rash decree; and the other by forbearing to execute it, or, which is the same, by pardoning Daniel. In the first case he would have dishonoured the law, and disgraced himself for passing such a law. Could he not forbear to execute his rash decree? Could he not give this beloved officer a full and free pardon? Nay, he could not pardon Daniel, even if Daniel would consent to be pardoned, without dishonouring his entire system of government, weakening its authority, and exposing it to contempt. The consequence was, that the transgressor of the law must feel its penalty, and Daniel must go into the den of lions. The case of Darius and Daniel goes to illustrate another case, in which we are personally and immensely interested. We are the rightful subjects of an absolute Monarch—the mighty Monarch of the universe. He has issued good laws for the regulations of our hearts and lives, and has annexed to them a just, but a dreadful penalty. These laws we have broken; this penalty we have all incurred. In what way can we be delivered? True, our Sovereign has physical power enough to deliver us, for He is omnipotent. And He can have no pleasure in our ruin, for He is infinitely benevolent. Still there are some things which He cannot with propriety do. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot disgrace Himself. He cannot bring dishonour upon His holy law. He cannot do anything to weaken His authority in the eyes of those whom He rules, anything to invite or encourage transgression. How then are we, who have broken the law of God, and incurred its penalty, to be delivered? The laws of God are perfectly good laws; to set them aside would be inconsistent with His holiness. If God were not infinitely wiser than men, and infinitely more benignant and merciful, there would be no hope. What Darius could not do for Daniel, God has been able to do for us. He has devised a way in which His holy law can be honoured, and its authority maintained, and yet the penalty be remitted to penitent transgressors. By the voluntary sufferings and death of Christ, in place of the transgressor, the violated law has been honoured, and a way of deliverance opened. Sinners cannot be saved without an atonement, and they can be saved in no other way than by an atonement. (*E. Pond, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. That no decree nor statute that the king establisheth may be changed.—*Inviolable Law*:—These men were constitutional persecutors. They were constitutional liars. Some men are nothing if not constitutional. They would die for a constitution; they dream of constitutional order: these men who are so addicted to constitution precedent and usage could kill a man. That is the difficulty we always have to deal with. You cannot convert a scribe: with man this is impossible; with God all things are possible. Once let a man become the victim of the letter, and the case is hopeless. See how these men deport themselves: all for a law, nothing for a life; on the one side full of constitutional obedience, on the other without feeling in reference to a human soul, a brother's life; only shed man's blood, but keep the

letter of the law. The great complaint we have to make against this in all ages and countries, that it has about it a taint of respectability. You cannot get at the scribe on account of the scroll which he holds us between you and him. He is not worth getting at. He has the law, the chapter, the verse, the letter; he has no genius of law, no spirit of liberty, no inspiration and enthusiasm of human nature. The thing that was given to him as a hint, a help, a temporary assistance, is pressed so as to become an excuse, if not a defence, in the matter of murder. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; the law was made for man, not man for the law. We must take care how we throw things out of proportion and perspective, how we overweight the one side or the other; let us see what it is that is really involved: if it is criminality, it must be put down; if it is a difference of judgment, if it is an exercise of conscience, then we must see what relation the law has to such spiritual or intellectual relationships and possessions and responsibilities. What is God always doing? Setting law aside. That seems strange. Certainly, God must be strange. God's Government must be immeasurable in its inner thought, in its outward relation; it must be under his hand; it must lie well within the sweep of his omnipotence. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 16, 17. Then the King commanded and they brought Daniel.—*The Example of Daniel*:—It is the property of pure religion to invest the man who possesses it with excellencies which bear no resemblance to the "fashion of the world." His ambition rises beyond all human distinctions. Those endowments of mind and of character which arrested the admiration of Darius, and induced the smile of his complacency, awakened at the same time the fireful spirit of envy in the breast of his courtiers, who could not endure to contemplate the rising glory of the "man whom the king delighted to honour." 1. The text records the sentiments of an inspired prophet respecting the interference of human authority in the concerns of religion. Daniel honoured the King, but would not render to him the homage which interfered with the claims of God and the rights of conscience. Does it become Christians to evince less of fortitude and firm decision of soul? 2. In the temper and conduct of Daniel we may learn how all good men should act under the rod of oppression. To lawful authority obedience is due; but to yield submission to the will of a capricious tyrant, arrayed in the trappings of assumed and self-constituted authority, to a task dreadfully irksome to a reflecting mind. Absolute power cannot govern the region of the soul. If the Christian had power, he has no disposition to render evil for evil. His temper is that of meekness, and peace, and goodwill towards men. He, therefore, is not fitted to subvert establishments and to dethrone tyrants. His spirit gives him patience to endure, but inspires no feeling of resistance; and he prefers being made the victim rather than the agent of vengeance. 3. The case of the afflicted prophet reminds us how religious persecution defeats its object, by extending the cause which it is intended to repress. It was Daniel's fortitude in subduing misfortunes, and his faith which conquered death, that made his religion popular. 4. The holy fortitude and triumph of the persecuted prophet, show that God affords support to his servants under the pressure of their heaviest trials. Chap. 6, 16, 28. (*S. Curwen.*) *The Den of Lions*:—The precedency given to Daniel did not suit the mind of the other presidents and princes for various reasons. They were still jealous of the power of this foreign worshipper of Jehovah, and doubtless they were well convinced that, so long as Daniel had the final authority over the treasury accounts, there would be small chance for them to enrich themselves at the expense of the king's exchequer. They therefore immediately formed a plot for Daniel's overthrow. They perfectly understood that they could not sustain any ordinary charge against this man of blameless character and spotless integrity. So they resorted to craft. If Daniel was to be caught at all, it must be through his religious fidelity. The light that had shone so steadfastly and brilliantly in that great city for more than sixty years was not now to be hidden under a bushel. He disdained to condescend to unworthy compromises or cowardly evasions. I.—**DANIEL DELIVERED TO THE LIONS.** In the delivery of Daniel, to be cast into the den of lions, we are reminded at once of the similar fate which befell the three young princes, his early friends. Darius had been more boastful in the decree which made him god for thirty days, than had Nebuchadnezzar, who only ordered that his god should be worshipped by everybody; yet he had less power than his more modest predecessor. We cannot but reflect on the latent sarcasm involved in the boasted despotic power of earthly monarchs. Their power is always absolute to do evil, but limited to do good. Zedekiah could consent to the imprisonment of Jeremiah, but said he had not power to deliver him out of the hands of the nobles, his enemies. Herod had power to deliver John the Baptist to the executioner, but no power to save him from the result of his rash vow.

Pilate seemed to have no power to save Jesus from his malicious enemies, but had power to deliver Him to the cross. And so we might further illustrate this power for evil, this impotence for good, when it is vested in the hands of the kings of the earth; but these cases will suffice. It was thus that Darius exercised his power and exhibited his powerlessness, when he ordered Daniel to be cast to the lions.

1. The king's speech.—"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Thus he shifted responsibility from his own hands upon the God of Daniel, whom he had denied. So perhaps Herod hoped that somehow John the Baptist might be delivered out of Herodias' hands. So perhaps Pilate may have thought. Darius seemed not only to desire that God would deliver Daniel, but had a strong hope that he would. Perhaps Daniel had told him how, forty or fifty years before, God had delivered his three friends out of the fiery furnace; for Darius seemed to know a good deal of Daniel and his God. But this good-will, and even this gleam of faith in the power of God to deliver his servant, did not excuse his own evil act in delivering the innocent to death. If God does not interpose to frustrate our evil doings or overrule them for good, that does not make our sin the less, though it brings equal glory to God. 2. The double sealing of the den.—"And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel." This reminds us very much of what the rulers of the Jews did when Jesus was buried. Did these lords fear that somehow Daniel would come out of that den of lions? It would almost seem so. There is always a fear in the heart of those who fight against God that he will defeat them.

II. THE DISTRESS OF THE KING. 1. A troubled conscience.—"The king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and his sleep went from him." It was well that he did so; though it had been better had he boldly delivered Daniel. How often, when we weakly yield to sin, and suffer the torture of an offended conscience, we try to compensate for our sin by some acts of self-denial. If the fasting was a sign of repentance, it was well; but if it was simply to ease the pain of conscience, and seek in that way to atone for the evil, it was a mere mockery. We are so often quick to sin and slow to repent; prompt in doing wrong, but dilatory in making reparation. We are not sorry that the king had a bad night of it. We have had bad nights ourselves, and know how he felt. On the other hand, we cannot but think how differently the night was spent by Daniel. Peter slept quietly in his gaol while the angel was coming to deliver him; and Paul and Silas waked the prison's echoes with nightly song. Happy children and servants of God, who can be at peace, can sleep soundly or sing gleefully in lion's den or prison's dungeon, while the monarch persecutors spend nights with tortured consciences in their splendid palaces! 2. A morning drive.—"The king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the den of lions." He could not spend the whole night in his bed. With the first suggestion of dawn he was up and his chariot was ordered, and he drove in haste to the place where Daniel was quietly reposing with the lions and God's angel. This indeed is a strange spectacle, for the monarch of the world thus to be attending upon a condemned servant of God. The spirit of God working in the conscience of Darius, compelled him to do the same thing; as once before the fear of Zedekiah brought him to the dungeon of Jeremiah, the imprisoned prophet. God knows how to bring down the head of the proud as well as how to lift up the humble. Happy we if we also may always repent in time. 3. The king's lamentable cry.—"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" The king was deeply distressed and in an agony of anxiety. He had admired Daniel, and had listened to the old prophet's teaching concerning Jehovah. It all came back to him now; and he was both ready to publicly confess the excellency of the believer's character, and the dignity and sovereignty of the believer's God. In this "lamentable cry" there was both penitence and acknowledgment. What a splendid character he gave to Daniel: "Servant of the living God, whom thou servest continually." He also confessed God in a wonderful way: "The Living God." Thus he brushed aside all the pretensions of the idol gods, and gave honour to Jehovah. Daniel's teachings had not been in vain. III. DANIEL'S TRIUMPH. That must have been a welcome sound to the king's ear, when the voice of Daniel answered back in clear, calm, and humbly triumphant tone, "O king, live for ever." Human nature would have been inclined to have added: "But no thanks to you." 1. Praise to God.—"My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." In this he takes pains to ascribe his deliverance to his God. Here is a strong emphasis upon the fact that the Living God is not to be confounded with the false gods of the heathen. He is a God of providence, who watches over his servants and keeps his promise with them. 2. A defence of his innocency.—"Forasmuch as

before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, I have done no hurt." Daniel does not boast of his goodness, but would set before the king that the favour of God to his servants in such a case is not regardless of the law of righteousness. Daniel had honoured God at a time when the world-power was denying and deriding him. 3. Daniel delivered out of the den.—"Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den." Thus was Daniel delivered out of the den, and out of the hands of his enemies. His character was vindicated, and better still, his God was magnified and honoured. IV. THE EDICT OF THE KING. God has never left the world without a witness for him; and now the last witness is being given to the nations by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When this testimony is complete he will take to himself his great power, and finish the work in righteousness; he will set up his King upon the double throne of heaven and earth, and reign therein world without end. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *The Den of Lions*.—Almost every bas-relief exhumed in recent years, has some figure of the lion. Dens of them were kept for the royal pleasure, or to be the swift executioners of the realm. Here, in this lesson, is a series of striking contrasts, between the King and his Jewish officer. 1. The one does wrong and hopes; the other does right and trusts. The deification of rulers was their general, as still the Russians regard the Tsar, and till lately, the Japanese the Mikado. The jewelled crown and sceptre were the signs of omnipotence. Darius had the ideas of his own time. In a way, he believed in his own divine nature. The flattery of courtiers was pleasing, and the imposing displays, in capital and campaign, helped to foster the self-delusion. It would never do for the Median lord to confess a mistake. We turn to look at that sincere, calm soul, whose love for his home wavered not through a life-time. A life of devotion was not to be abandoned because of any proclamation from men. Spiritual communion was as essential, after the famous behest, as before it was issued. 2. The one regards death as a sure agent, the other as under divine control. The love of life is an instinct. No one in his senses courts death. The taking of life is the last dread resort of the civil law. The unscrupulous ruler can rely on it to work his will. Daniel felt that if God had more for him to do in witnessing to the truth here, all the brute creation could not harm him. Death is not a certain victor when it suddenly confronts us. 3. The one decreed a universal religion; the other preached and practiced it daily. The safety of Daniel was proof enough to the king that the God of Daniel was no myth, but the living God. So he published an edict, demanding of all homage to Jehovah. But piety can never be the fruit of proclamation. In striking contrast with such pretensions and wholesale religionism, there went forth, from the testing place, the plain lover of God, and preacher of righteousness, to take up his responsible duties as before, and to kneel in grateful acknowledgment of Jehovah's protection and furtherance. (*De Witt S. Clark.*)

Ver. 20. O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?—*The Lions' Den*.—The empire of Babylonia and Chaldea passed into the hands of a new dynasty, and King Belshazzar was slain in a night-assault upon his capital. On that very night he had clothed Daniel in scarlet, and made him the third ruler in the kingdom. This was providential; for, had Daniel been in obscurity, he would have been little likely to attract the notice of Darius; but, observing him in the palace, clothed in scarlet, Darius would naturally ask who he was, and enquire into his antecedents. The fame of his wisdom would be quickly told. Hence it was not at all surprising that Darius took great notice of Daniel, weighed his character, observed his conduct, and, after a while, exalted him to be prime minister of his realm. Daniel's prosperity and honours excited the envy of the courtiers. Can they discover a flaw in his accounts? Can they question the impartiality of his judgment? Can they detect a lack of loyalty in the administration of his government? Can they find fault with his private life? Nay; but is there nothing against him? Is Daniel such a four-square man that he is more than a match for them? At length the devil, who does not often run short of devices, puts them up to a fresh plot. O Satan, thou art full of all subtlety! "Let us contrive a new law," say they, "that shall bring his piety and his patriotism into conflict." They managed to involve the king himself in their iniquitous device, and to entangle him in such a way that he must either sacrifice his favourite courtier, or compromise his own truthfulness, and violate the sacred traditions of the empire. A royal statute was framed, and a decree published, forbidding any petition to be asked of God or man for thirty day. How preposterous! But when was there ever a despot who was not, sooner or later, deserted of his wits? The passion for power, when indulged without restraint, will lead a man to the utmost foolishness, and urge

him to a madness of vanity. There are many, nowadays, who hate nothing so much as a religious man. All the epithets in the catalogue of scandal are too good for the man who offers homage to God in everything. An infidel may be reputed honest, intelligent, and worthy of respect; but a genuine Christian is at once denounced as a hypocrite. So they told the king that the laws of his empire must be kept inviolate; good, loyal souls as they were, that would not have a statute broken for the world! There is an end to your monarchy if your royal proclamations are not to be respected! God, in his providence and grace, preserved his servant. I. First, I want to set before you DANIEL'S EARLY AND ENTIRE CONSECRATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. The king said, "Thy God whom thou servest continually." This was no empty compliment. His scrupulous uprightness had become so habitual that it was like an instinct of his nature. Daniel began to serve God in his youth. They, who give their morning to God, shall find that, in beginning early, they can keep pace with their work all the day. Happy Daniel, thus continually to serve his God from his youth up! For a while, Daniel retires into the shade. You hear nothing of him till Belshazzar ascends the throne, but he is still serving his God; I doubt not, sometimes ministering to his poorer brethren, and visiting the sick; but often in his chamber, by prayer and by study of the Scriptures, seeking and finding communion with the Most High. On a sudden, Belshazzar summons him to his presence. There is a mysterious writing on the wall, which can be read by no eye, and interpreted by no lip, but his. How confidently he speaks, "This is the writing"! And again, "This is the interpretation." His word commends itself to the conscience; no man dares to gainsay it. He is promoted to the highest honour in the realm; now what will he do? There has been a change of monarchs, but there is no change in Daniel. No time-server, he stand to his principles at all times. "Servant of the living God" is still his title. He had taken for his motto, when he began life, "I serve God" and he retains the motto to his life's close. The glory of his God was his one object throughout all his days; he never swerved. He is prime minister of the greatest monarch of the age; yet he abhors the idolatry of the heathen, and maintains his allegiance to him who ruleth in the heavens. They can find no flaw in him, though the eyes of envy watch him from early morning to dewy eve. O, it is a hard thing to serve God in high places! Many a man did seem to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour when humbly earning his livelihood by the toil of his hands, and eating his bread in the sweat of his face; but, afterwards, when advanced to ease and opulence, he turned his back upon his friends, and forsook the Lord. Be very jealous of yourselves if you are rising in the world. Now note the effect of what Daniel did. It is comparatively easy to follow the Lord in bright days; but the sun of prosperity suddenly darkens, and the man of God is encompassed with perils. If he continues in his holy course, he will forfeit the king's favour, and lose his life in the most dreadful manner. What will Daniel's determination be? Oh, the true grit is in him! He is a blade of the true Jerusalem manufacture, and is not to be broken. He will do just as he did before. Ah! some of us little know what these pinches mean. There are a few of you who do; you have endured torture without accepting deliverance. Witness the man who has a shop, which brings him in more profit on a Sunday than it does all the rest of the days of the week; and who says, "It must be one thing or the other; I cannot go to the Tabernacle, and keep my shop open too; which shall it be?" His faith proves stronger than his fear. The shutters are closed on the first day of the week. I daresay, had Daniel gone to consult Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and asked his advice, he would have said, "Well, you see, it is a very important thing for us to have you at the head of affairs; I do not think you ought to throw away such an opportunity as you have of doing good. It is not absolutely necessary for you to pray for thirty days! Would it not be better for you to trim a little, and yield a point or two? You do distinguished service to our cause; and, by keeping your position, you will be putting yourself to the non-plus. By compromise you will obtain concessions. Worldly wisdom is worth your study." At the call of duty, never parley with danger. Here I would remark that the only service to God which is real, genuine, remunerative, is this continual service that sticks at nothing. Any hungry dog will follow you in the streets if you but entice him with a piece of meat, or a bit of biscuit. How closely he keeps to your heels! But, after a while, the bait is gone, and the dog retreats. That is like many a professor. There is some little pleasure in religion, or some advantage, and so he follows Christ; but, after a while, there is an attraction elsewhere; and, impelled by greed rather than gratitude, he pursues it. Oh, those time-servers, who look one way and pull the other, like the wherry-men upon the stream! As for Lord Fair-Speech, Lord Time-Server, Mr. Smooth-Man, Mr. Anything, Mr. Facing-both-Ways, Mr. Two-Tongues, and all the

members of their club, Mr. By-Ends included, the entire company of them will be swept away when the Judge comes with the besom of destruction. I know you feel the force of this truth. How you loathe a friend who will not stick to you in dark times! This is but a picture of yourselves if you try to follow Jesus Christ only when you are in the society of his people, and as easily lend yourselves to sing a frivolous or lewd song when you are with the ungodly. That faith which lives on Jesus only, rests on Jesus solely, builds on Jesus wholly, and shows itself in earnest prayer, will give you a consistency and decision of character that will make you like Daniel in your days. II. Now, secondly, WHO WAS THIS GOD WHOM DANIEL SERVED CONTINUALLY? Let me ask,—Is Daniel's God worthy of our worship? I ask the question in all earnestness, because I feel positive that multitudes of men have a religion that, in their own judgment, is hardly worth debating about, far less worth dying for. Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of our love and our life? Words are wanting to tell the gratitude and joy that we cherish towards God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins. By faith, I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with his own heart's blood; and, by sweet experience, I know that he raised me up from the pit of dark despair, and set my feet on the rock. He died for me; this is the root of every satisfaction I have. You must be the best judges of your own religion, whether or not it is worth suffering for. If it is not full of immortality, I would not advise you to risk your reputation on retaining it. If it is only a fair profession, you may well blush for it as a foul delusion. Then there comes another question,—Is Daniel's God able to deliver us from the lions? You who are suffering just now for the cross of Christ, you who know what it is to be losers for Jesus, to stand out and to endure pains and penalties as Daniel did,—you are well aware that the lions are fierce and furious creatures. They are not stuffed animals, having the name without the nature of those beasts of prey. So, the sufferings of a Christian are not sentimental, they are real. The lions have sharp teeth, and they would have devoured you, only divine grace has found a means of delivering you out of their mouths. I ask the man, who has given up a profitable appointment because he would not be false to his convictions, whether, on shorter commons, he has not found the sweeter luxury of contentment? I asked him whether he has not enjoyed, on a harder pillow, more refreshing sleep! But should we even dwell among lions till we die, what joy it shall be to leave the lions, and be linked with saints and holy angels in the beatific hereafter! "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" And with a cheerful shout, loud as the voice of thunder, they cry, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." I look down upon another lions' den. There, sons and daughters of sorrow are tossed on beds of sickness. Thus they have lain for months, perhaps for years, all hope of health extinguished, all prospect of pleasure passed; their limbs paralyzed, their sight failing, their hearing dull; calamities of every kind have befallen them. God has permitted the great lions of affliction to come howling round. Tell me, ye Daniels, has your God been able to deliver you out of the mouths of the lions? And I hear each one say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" and all in chorus sing, saying "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath promised; our shoes have been iron and brass, and as our days so has our strength been." Shall I strain my parable too far if I turn my eye upon another lions' den? It lies in a deep valley. We call this place "the valley of the shadow of death." Methinks I am gazing now on the forms of shivering men and women as they are dragged down by the lions. One after another, my familiar friends descend into the grave; and I ask them, in the hour of their departure, "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Calm is their countenance, and clear their voice, as each one chants his solo, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" So, at length, this lions' den loses all its terror. Then I look into another den; it is almost empty. There is a lion in it,—a grim old lion, but I do not see so much as a bone to tell the tale of its victims. Of a sudden, I look upwards, and, lo! I see myriads of immortal souls, and they all tell me, "Our God delivered us from the grave, and rifled the tomb of its prey. By a glorious resurrection, he has brought all his ransomed people forth to meet their Lord at the great day of his appearing. There shall they stand before the throne of God, for he hath broken the teeth of the lion, and rescued all his children from the power of the adversary." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Servant of God Delivered*.—I. THE KING'S DENOMINATION OF DANIEL is worthy of remark. He does not address him as first of the presidents; but says, "O Daniel, servant of the living God." This was an honour above any official station

—angels and archangels can occupy no higher position. It was better for Daniel to have been a servant of the living God than to have been the first president of Persia. His piety was not a sickly, stiff, feverish, fashionable thing; his devotion was deeply rooted; he served God continually, not occasionally. His religion was so natural to him that he could not hide it; everything he did proved him to be a man that feared and loved God. O, what a living power there would be in religion if it were acted out in our social walks and public conduct, and not shut up to mould all week within the walls of our churches! Why should your labour and talents, influence and time, be principally devoted to the world which is passing away? The surest way to peace, and honour, and usefulness, is in the service of God. II. THE REASON FOR GOD'S INTERFERENCE IN DANIEL'S BEHALF WAS NOT THAT HIS CONDUCT REALLY MERITED SUCH AN INTERPOSITION. The meaning is, that God, being a witness of his innocence, indicated it by this interposition. You may learn, therefore, from this case, that God is the vindicator of his people. III. THE PERSONAL PROPERTY IN GOD, referred to both in the king's words and in Daniel's reply, is remarkable. The king said to Daniel, "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" And Daniel replies, "My God hath sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Mark the difference. Darius had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, Daniel was acquainted with him as a friend and a father. (*W. A. Scott.*)

Vers. 21-22. **My Lord hath sent His Angel.**—*Daniel's Marvellous Deliverance*.—These words are Daniel's religious and thankful acknowledgment of his deliverance. 1. Here is a reverend compellation. "O king." Darius was a heathen prince; an enemy to God's people; and he here makes a wicked law, forbidding religion, and enforcing idolatry. Yet the prophet acknowledges and honours him, as his king and sovereign. 2. A loyal and pious salutation. "Live for ever." He prays for him, wishes him both length and prosperity of life here, and eternity of life and felicity hereafter. He upbraids not the king with tyranny and impiety; charges him not with the cruelty of his usage; threatens him not with vengeance, and judgments from God. He will not pray to the king, but he ceases not to pray for him. 3. Thankful declaration of his marvellous deliverance. (1) The author; "My God." Two things: his helper—God. His hold that he lays upon this helper. "My God," by special service and religion, the God of my faith, and piety, and devotion; by special trust and affiance; by present evidence and experience; by resolution, and engagements of holy thankfulness. (2) The Instrument. "Sent His angel." Not my angel, but God's angel. It is not "the angel came," but God sent him. This ministry of an angel, in the delivering of Daniel, adds unto it three excellencies. It makes a comfortable deliverance. As a forlorn and forsaken man, he is visited by an angel. It makes a glorious deliverance. Such a saint shall have not only safety, but honour. It makes an irresistible deliverance. There is no disappointing of this salvation. (3) The manner of this deliverance: how it was wrought. "He shut the mouths of the lions." God delivers not from the den, but when in it. How did he shut the mouths? By a secret power, weakening or restraining them; or by taming and allaying their fierceness; or restraining or slaking their hunger; or by making the prophet appear awful and dreadful to them. (4) The measure of the deliverance. Complete. (5.) The motive which God graciously respected. A double innocence of the prophet. General, and particulars to this incident. (*Geo. Stradling.*) *Daniel's Deliverance from the Den of Lions*.—I. THE ANTECEDENTS OF DANIEL'S MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE. 1. They remind us that the penalty of greatness is the envy of inferiors. Daniel was as the sun in the Persian kingdom, showing to all who come under his influence what a good ruler really was. But the intense light of his character was too strong for men whose conduct he then condemned, and who were thus made painfully conscious of their own shortcomings. 2. Envy will seek an opportunity of false accusation. It was the envy of the Jewish rulers which was the foundation of their false accusations against Christ. 3. They remind us that it may be the penalty of moral greatness to be condemned by legal greatness. The law of a nation may be a very strong law because of its great antiquity, but it may be a very wicked law notwithstanding, and whoever obeys it may bring himself under the penalty of a much more powerful and a much older law, the law of moral rectitude—a law older than the creation of man. II. THE MIRACLE ITSELF. The lions did not act according to the instincts of their nature. This holding back of the appetite of the lions is the more remarkable, because the instinct returned as soon as Daniel's persecutors took his place in the den. Lessons: 1. The most pressing demands of business are not incompatible with daily waiting upon God in prayer. 2. Escape from trial of our constancy at one

time is no guarantee that we shall not be called upon to prove it at another. 3. Sometimes disobedience to man is the highest virtue in the sight of God. When man's laws are in opposition to God's, the breaking of them is righteousness. 4. We are in the path of obedience to God, even though the obedience leads to death. (*Outlines by a London Minister.*) *Daniel's Preservation from the Lions*.—For unshaken confidence in his God, zeal in His service, and for His honour, for fearlessness in danger, and for virtuous disregard of all human power and human threatenings, when employed against God and religion, the prophet Daniel is justly conspicuous in Bible history. No character in Scripture has attained more honourable distinction. Three things deserve our attention. I. THE CONDUCT FOR WHICH DANIEL WAS THROWN INTO THE DEN OF LIONS. Daniel's enemies contrived to obtain the king's consent to a wicked decree, binding all men to abstain from worshipping any god, or asking a petition of any god or man, except the king himself, for thirty days. But the prophet, knowing that when human laws are found to clash with the divine commands, it is right to "obey God rather than man," continued, regardless of consequences, to pray to his God three times a day, as he had heretofore done. In the discharge of his duty to God, he had no real cause for dismay. God, he knew, was with him. Having, therefore, faithfully performed his duty, he submits to the will of his enemies, commits himself to Him that judges righteously, and calmly and steadily leaves the event in His hands. II. THE EXTRAORDINARY FACT RECORDED, THAT DANIEL WAS TAKEN UP OUT OF THE DEN UNHURT. By this signal preservation of the life of Daniel among the lions, God displayed at once His power over the creatures of the forest which He had made, and His care over His servants when He calls them out to suffer for His cause. Under the protection of the Almighty, Daniel was as safe in the den of lions as he would have been in the palace, and under the protection of Darius. This God is our God for ever and ever. He will still honour and preserve them that honour Him, still bear up and support His faithful people. III. The reason assigned for the miraculous interposition of God on Daniel's behalf. "Because he believed in his God." Mark what honour God puts upon faith. Faith was the spring of Daniel's holy obedience to God. Faith gave him peace and comfort, and brought down the angel of God into the lions' den. This holy principle has never failed to attract the divine regard, and to insure the approbation of God. This subject may teach us: 1. The importance, under all circumstances, of steadfast adherence to the path of duty. "Duties are ours, events are God's." One common duty of Christians is that of calmly resting under affliction, in patient submission to the will of God. 2. The importance of steady trust in God, especially in the great event of death, that last trial of the Christian. 3. This subject affords a ground of consolation to all faithful Christians in tribulation, and to the surviving friends of the departed saints. (*J. Jaques.*) *Daniel taken out of the den*.—His case at first seemed very hard to flesh and blood. But here we see the end of the Lord. All was so over-ruled, that Daniel had no reason to repent of his conduct, or lament the result of it. How much did Daniel's steadfastness conduce to the glory of God, and the advancement of his cause! Christians never honour God more than in the fires. But the result terminated in Daniel's own honour and welfare. When taken up, how would every eye be drawn to him. What influence would be attached to his character! What weight to his advice and counsel! He is restored. He is promoted by his Sovereign to a higher station. And who would not have done what Darius did? He who had been faithful to his God, was more likely to be faithful to his king. This is indeed one of the ways in which Godliness naturally conduces to a man's present advantage. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, wished to know the character of those about him. He, therefore, called together before him, all the chiefs in his suite, and ordered them to offer sacrifices to his gods (he was a heathen), on pain of being deprived of all their honours and functions. The trial was severe. Many sunk under it. They could not give up everything that was dear and valuable. But some were inflexible. They had bought the truth, and they would not sell it at any price. Whatever they suffered, they were resolved to have a conscience void of offence. But what happened? Those who basely complied, he drove from his presence, while those who nobly refused, he entrusted with the care of his person, and placed them in the most important offices, saying: "On these men I can depend—I prize them more than all my treasures." And we know who hath said: "Them that honour Me I will honour; but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." (*William Jay.*)

Ver. 24. *Those men which had accused Daniel.*—*Righteous Retribution.*—The Bible from first to last is a revelation of God's active, personal, and intelligent presence in the affairs of men; and its elementary principles without which all approach to God is

impossible, are, first, that there is a God, and secondly, that he rewards and punishes. (Heb. xi., 6.) Daniel recognised the presence of this divine power when he said that "God had sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths." The sole difference between miracle and providence is, that in the former case the ordinary laws of nature are suspended and interfered with by a higher power; in the latter nature is made to do the will of God in conformity with its usual way of working. And these two ways of acting have had each a suitableness for the times when God used them. The reason of this deliverance Daniel finds in the just government of God. For Daniel's enemies there was a fearful retribution. They had digged a pit, and fallen into the midst of it themselves. In Daniel's wonderful preservation both the king and all who had not shared in the crime saw emphatic proof of the guilt of the conspirators. Their own execution was most just, but our feelings revolt at the inclusion in the sentence of their wives and children. But that seems to have been the Persian custom. It is explained by the solidarity of interest between the members of the same family or of the same nation. The sins of one member of a family often involve all in ruin. A whole nation has to pay the penalty of the fault of its statesmen; a whole army is destroyed by the incapacity of its general. But equally all share in the results of the virtues, the wisdom, the ability of their leaders, and it would be a poor world if it were not so. (*Dean Payne Smith.*)

Ver. 26. Men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.—*The God of Daniel*:—Religion has furnished the widest field for persecution. 1. The God of Daniel permits His children to be tempted and tried. Generally, trials are regarded as punishments and corrections. What divine end should we regard as attained by undeserved trial and suffering? Many evils befall good people because your bearing under the yoke conveys impressions of himself, and the work of grace in your hearts, which no other ministration can impress on the adamant heart of the ungodly. 2. Trials are also permissible as occasions of the revelation of God's special presence with His people. Not only was there something extraordinary in Daniel, but there was something more extraordinary around him. The animals were quiet. Daniel was protected by a divine hand. 3. There is here also the principle that faith is the link between the feeble and their God. "Because he believed in his God." It was faith that saluted the throne on high three times a day. It was faith that brought the assurance all would end well. It was faith that breathed calmness and patience in the breast. It was faith that made the heart rest securely on the Rock of Ages. O for a touch of that ancient faith. The angel of the covenant recognises faith, and helps her in her struggles with sin. 4. Here we see the God-revealing man. The king might have said, "The Daniel of God." What he said is more revealing, "the God of Daniel." What an association—the God of Daniel. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 27. He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth.—*The Idea of God as affected by Science*:—The picture formed of the Creator of the world has varied according to the strength or culture of the age through which the idea is passing. To the American Indian God is only a good spirit, the owner of a happy hunting ground larger than their own forests or plains. To the Hindoo, God is a great, idle, luxurious prince, passing his time in pleasure or sleep. The Greek Zeus, or the Latin Jupiter, was only a great statesman, and warrior, and judge combined. The greater an age became in its mental and moral development, the richer its offerings to the character of its Deity. The idea of God is always the store-house in which each nation treasures up all its slow accumulations of the true, the beautiful, and the good. It does not follow from this that God is only an intellectual image, a shadow of man's mind seen externally, just as man may see the shadow of his body in a glass. There are those who declare the idea of God to be only this external projection of human thought. The ever-changing ideas which the human race cherishes as to its deity, prove only that man passes through many gradations of thought, a fact which no more blots out the Heavenly Father than it blots out the stars or the ocean. The modifications which the conceptions of the divine nature constantly undergo ought to be expected, and confessed as perfectly legitimate, in a world where all truth is approached by gradual advances and where nothing is seen to-day in the colours of yesterday. That each tribe has cherished a peculiar conception of God, and heaven and hell weighs no more against the absolute fact of these entities than the notion of Plutarch that the moon were a bunch of vapour, would destroy belief in the moon as an absolute external reality. The God is unchanging. Man passes from infancy to manhood in the search of the truth. Reflect then upon the wonderful works of God. It touched the spirit of Darius that there was a Being who could accomplish such strange things on earth or in heaven.

In the classic ages there seems to have been little conception of divine power. The earth was the centre of a little system, and the stars not far away. So humble was the public estimate of God, that one of the Roman emperors asked the people to declare him a god. It is possible that there was less atheism in early periods than in the present, resulting from the fact that the ideal of God lay nearer to the ideal of man. The gigantic studies of all science and inquiry of late centuries have widened the gulf between man and God by declaring that there is but one God, and that he is measureless, formless, unthinkable. Under the revelations of science the name of God becomes daily laden with power, and indeed has wholly outgrown the grasp, and even the highest imagination, of minds, either scientific or theological. If the universe is so measureless, equally measureless must be its Creator. He must be a God of wonderful work also in the world of spirit. To man, another life seems difficult; to many, it seems impossible. The mystery of futurity is no greater than the mystery of the past. For ages men have been trying to find how life came into the insensate world. The gateway to life is just as impossible as the gateway to a second existence. The Testament has given us a Heavenly Father, science has given us an Almighty. So far, all well. Now the result we fear is, that science is teaching us God is doing all his wonders in regions apart from the soul. Never did any age so need the Christ as our era now clamours for His life and teachings. (*David Ewing.*)

Ver. 28. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.—*Daniel*.—The prosperity of this noble ruler clearly appears from the whole history of his life. Such another instance of long and increasing prosperity in public life, we presume to say, cannot be found in the whole history of man. Successful man has always been revered as well as admired. The Greeks and Romans held those in high estimation who appeared to enjoy the peculiar smiles of the invisible powers. What extraordinary qualities did Daniel possess, which mutually conspired to promote his prosperity in the management of public affairs? This prosperous and excellent ruler possessed I. **SUPERIOR POWERS OF MIND.** The Father of spirits has been pleased to display the same sovereignty in the bestowment of intellectual faculties, as in the bestowment of inferior favours. The minds of different men are differently constituted. In Daniel the various natural powers were equally strong and well-proportioned. His quick apprehension and retentive memory were happily united with a strong and penetrating judgment. He acquired knowledge with the greatest ease and rapidity. He was able to excel in every branch of science to which he turned his attention. II. **A LARGE SHARE OF GENERAL INFORMATION, WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO FORM HIM A GREAT AND SUCCESSFUL POLITICIAN.** Civil government is extremely complicated and extensive, both in theory and practice. No species of human knowledge is foreign to the business of a statesman, who needs to be universally acquainted with men and things. And he had the best sources of information in his own hands, the sacred books of divine inspiration. III. **EXTRAORDINARY WISDOM.** Before he was thirty, his eminent wisdom was universally known and celebrated, not only through the empire, but through all the neighbouring nations. Wisdom is a term of various and extensive meaning; it includes not only invention, but foresight and sagacity. IV. **DANIEL WAS A MAN OF INVINCIBLE FIRMNESS.** This was but the natural effect of his wisdom. He was able to think for himself, to form his own opinions, and to comprehend the nature and tendency of his own designs. This confidence inspired him with irresistible vigour and fortitude, in the prosecution of all his public measures. V. **DANIEL WAS A PATTERN OF INVIOLENT INTEGRITY.** He always aimed to do justice, and to treat every man according to the eternal rule of right. As a ruler, he acted upon principle, in guarding the lives, properties, and characters of his subjects. He derived his moral sentiments from the pure source of divine inspiration. The promotion of justice is the ultimate object of every branch of civil government. The exercise of justice is the indispensable duty of all civil rulers. Fidelity in civil rulers is, of all other virtues, the most acceptable to the people, who universally feel its happy influence in every condition of life. Aristides among the Greeks, Cato among the Romans, and Daniel among the Jews, will be for ever celebrated for their incorruptible integrity. VI. **NOTE DANIEL'S EMINENT PIETY AND DEVOTION.** His religion was neither a glowing enthusiasm, nor a gloomy superstition; but a pure and steady principle of universal benevolence. He gave God the supreme affection of his heart; and was neither afraid nor ashamed to profess the true religion, in the midst of a country and a court that were involved in the grossest idolatry. He walked within his house with a perfect heart, and every day called upon God at the head of his family. The first thing suggested by this excellent character is, that great and good rulers are worthy of the highest respect. Who can contemplate the pious, virtuous, and useful

life of Daniel, without paying him the sincere homage of the heart? All civil rulers of the same character are equally objects of the highest veneration and regard. The life of Daniel also admonishes civil rulers how much they are capable of doing, to promote the religious as well as civil interests of the people. We may learn, also, that those who sit in the highest seats of government, have no excuse to neglect the profession and practice of vital piety. Real religion is necessary on their own account, as well as on account of those who live under the influence of their powerful example. The faith and piety of Daniel reprove the ignorance and presumption of those politicians who profess and propagate the principles of infidelity. Also learn, that civil rulers had no occasion for the use of art or intrigue in any of their public measures. Those who conduct the intricate affairs of government ought to be wise and prudent, but they should never be artful or designing. And it may further be remarked that civil rulers have sufficient encouragement to be faithful in the discharge of all their public duties. Daniel found, by happy experience, that honesty was the best policy. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Daniel's Steadfast Piety*:—The lives of eminent men are a subject which seldom fails to fix the attention. The admiration excited by their talents and their virtues is a pleasing sentiment; our curiosity is gratified by marking the steps of their fortune; our views are enlarged by tracing the effects of their conduct, and our heart is made better by contemplating the generous principles from which their actions proceeded. No person introduced in scripture is more illustrious than Daniel. I. THE WISDOM OF DANIEL IS THE FIRST FEATURE IN HIS CHARACTER. That subordination and mutual subserviency which is the best cement of society, arises from the variety in the kinds and measures of wisdom which individuals possess; and the extraordinary degrees of it which raise some men above the rest of their species, are ordained of God to be the blessing or the scourge of the times in which they live. To Daniel was given to understand the secret things which belong to the Lord, and which are wisely and graciously hidden from all except those in whom it pleaseth the Father to reveal them. 1. This wisdom of Daniel was of use to the Jews. 2. To the Babylonians the wisdom of Daniel demonstrated the sovereignty of the true God. 3. To the world, the wisdom of Daniel opens a series of prophecies of general importance. II. THE PIETY OF DANIEL IS THE OTHER FEATURE OF HIS CHARACTER. By applying this word to express the moral character of Daniel, I mean to intimate that the principles which animated his conduct, are discriminated from a peculiar temperature of constitution, from a sense of honour, from a regard to the opinion of the world, from all the other circumstances which produce the morality of those men who have not the fear of God before their eyes. The word piety marks the sentiment of religion as the support of his integrity, the spring of his exertions, the source of his comfort and hope, the companion and the quickener of every good affection in the breast. Wisdom and piety are not always joined. Daniel confessed upon every occasion, that the superiority of his knowledge was derived from that God who revealeth secrets. The innocence of his life is mentioned with honour by the Jewish writers. Scripture classes him with Noah and Job. 1. The manner in which the piety of Daniel was displayed. (1) He performed with alacrity the business of his station. (2) He did not make any sacrifice of his principles. 2. The manner in which the piety of Daniel was rewarded. Were piety in every instance overwhelmed by suffering, our faith in that which is future and unseen might be shaken, and many would be tempted to say that it is vain to serve God. Daniel's reward was not less eminent than his piety. (1) Was distinguished by the protection of Heaven. (2) Daniel was distinguished by the respect of men. Learn from this example to despise the truckling, time-serving manners of those who shift their principles according to circumstances, and who make it the study of their lives to accommodate their discourse and their actions to the wishes of other men. Dare to be honest; and let your conversation in the world be in simplicity and godly sincerity. Follow the piety of Daniel, who, in all the changes which he saw, did his duty, and held fast his integrity. Do not expect, however, that the general goodwill which you may attain, will never meet with any interruption. You may experience the effects of that rivalry and envy which animated the breasts of those who sought to find occasion against the blameless Daniel. If you have a conscience void of offence, the favour of heaven will furnish you with a shield which all the shafts of malice shall not pierce. (*H. Hill, D.D.*) *How Daniel prospered*:—His temporal prosperity comes clearly and manifestly from his spiritual fidelity. We profess Daniel's faith; only, with this difference, that we ought really to have a more open vision of God and the verities of eternity than Daniel had. For heaven has been more widely opened since his day to the open eye of a believer's soul. Notice that when once a man, especially a young man in a great city like this, gives his heart, his destiny, openly, unreservedly, into the hands of a covenant

God, his life enters into a wonderful simplicity. Then you have only one thing to do. Blow high or low, come rain or shine, whatever be the circumstances in which you are placed, there is only one thing to be done—and that is in all to keep yourself true to God. Sailing across seas of time and sin to God's haven in eternity is the plainest sailing. You have simply all the time to keep on the one tack and set the bow the one way. Look at this narrative. There is a man here whose life is threatened. He was the best hated man in the city, and those who hated him were not fools. They baited the trap so skillfully that even King Darius jumped at it, and Darius was no fool either, but they fooled him. They put Darius in a trap. They failed to put Daniel in one. When he knew that the writing was signed, and he knew that if he prayed his enemies would be listening, he just went on praying as aforetime. It is not otherwise with us than it was with Daniel. The world still says, "We could put up with those Christians well enough if it were not for their Christianity." These men got to see that Daniel was the man he was because he was true to his God. They saw that God was the strength of his mind, as well as the name upon his tongue in worship. A Christian has only one thing to do. "Forgetting the things that are behind, to reach forth unto those that are before," and he must disregard everything that comes against him as he seeks in the way of whole-hearted consecration to live for God and for eternity, and to do his duty in the world, making God his mark, way and end, and being utterly done with self pleasing. This Daniel was a man of prayer. But Daniel was a busy man. He really had the government upon his shoulders. Yet this man found time three times a day to kneel and pray to the God of heaven. And the best method for the working of a heavy business, for getting through a heavy day's work, is to be a man of prayer. This principle of prayer—this fixed habit of communion with God—is like the policeman at a busy crossing. In his prayer Daniel "gave thanks." Think of that! Think of that hunted, badgered, persecuted man on that critical day going in before his God, and saying, "My God, I thank thee!" If you give your heart to Jesus Christ, you will never be without cause of thankfulness. The man who fears God only need have no other fear. . . . But suppose the lions had killed Daniel. What then? He still would have work. "They never fail who die in a great cause." If you are whole-hearted towards God, there is no defeat. See John the Baptist. Because he was faithful to God and conscience, his head rolled off the block into the basket. But he did not fail. There is no reverse, there is no possible disaster in any true sense, to the man who, like Daniel, has just one thing to do—to kneel down upon his knees in the high and awful crisis of his history to give thanks to God. (*John McNeill.*)

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 2, 3. **I saw in my vision by night.**—*Modes of Communication with God:*—Since the days of the apostles, the intercourse between Heaven and earth has been maintained through the ordinary channels. God speaks to man through the medium of his conscience—in the Bible, and by the operation of His providence. These are now the appointed means whereby we are to ascertain a knowledge of our duty. Not that our Heavenly Father is less desirous of guiding us into the path of truth, or that we, His children are more abandoned to the perils of the world than were the people of His inheritance in a former age; but the ransom of our souls having been effected through the meritorious sacrifice of the Son of God, the Saviour, having ascended into glory and "received gifts for men"; and instruction, accompanied with the most cheering promises, adapted to the case of every individual, having been imported in the canon of Scripture, the Deity has withdrawn Himself from holding a more immediate communion with His creatures, leaving us, not to ourselves, but to the influence of those aids which He has provided. Though visible conferences have ceased between the inhabitants of this world and their omnipresent Creator, we are still under Divine control, and derive our guidance, our strength, and our comfort from on high. . . . The ancient seers were instructed in different ways. Some were endowed with the gift of prophecy by the action of the Holy Spirit upon the mind, illumining the understanding, and conveying to the person so inspired the requisite acquaintance with events not yet accomplished. Angels were also employed to unfold to men the designs of the Almighty. During the ages of prophecy, dreams appear to have been frequently of a supernatural order, and highly significant of some important circumstance. (*Charles Popham Miles, B.A.*)

Vers. 4—28. And four great beasts came up from the sea.—*The Four Beasts:—*
 I. THE ELEMENT OUT OF WHICH THE WORLD-KINGDOMS CAME INTO EXISTENCE. "Four beasts came up from the sea." The sea, when looked at in some of its aspects, is a most fit symbol of the means by which human kingdoms without godliness have made progress in the world. 1. There is the element of treachery. The sea is at one moment calm, and apparently harmless; and the next, sending a nation into mourning by overwhelming her vessels and casting their crews into the depths of the ocean. 2. The element of restless change. From its creation to the present moment its waters have not been at rest for a single hour. 3. The element of destructiveness. The sea is a terribly destroying power. The Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires were destructive rather than constructive forces in the world. II. THE CREATURES WHICH ARE USED AS SYMBOLS OF THE WORLD-KINGDOMS. "Four beasts." The characteristics of these kingdoms were animal rather than human. There is no true humanity where there is no divinity. These kingdoms of the parabolic vision are symbolised by beasts of prey noted for their strength, and cruelty, and treachery; no animal of a gentle, peaceful nature is found among them; denoting the entire absence of these characteristics in kingdoms without godliness. III. THE KINGDOM THAT AROSE LAST OUT OF THE SEA OF TIME, EXCEEDED THOSE THAT HAD GONE BEFORE IT IN CRUELTY AND POWER. No mere animal could set forth all its destructive power; it had "iron teeth" and "ten horns." The longer wickedness goes on unchecked the more its evil tendencies develop themselves, and the more it spreads desolation in the world. IV. A TRULY HUMAN KINGDOM CANNOT ARISE OUT OF ANY ELEMENT OF EARTH, IT MUST COME FROM ABOVE. "The Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." The head of every kingdom except Christ's Kingdom has been a mere man. But the Son of man was from above, and He came to be the head of a kingdom of true humanity. The subjects of His Kingdom become partakers of the Divine nature, and, therefore, this kingdom exhibits none of the characteristics set forth by the beasts. It is a human kingdom because it is a Divine kingdom. Therefore, it is an everlasting kingdom. This vision teaches us: 1. The knowledge of the eternal in relation to human affairs in the ages to come. 2. That God has stretched a measuring line across the bounds of every kingdom. He has appointed the bound of their habitation. 3. Human kingdoms form a dark background to reveal the beauties of the Kingdom of Christ. (*Outlines by London Minister.*) *The Symbolical Beasts:—*Let us first attend to the place from which these beasts seemed to issue. It appeared to the prophet that they came up from the sea. We are not to interpret this literally. The sea, here, represents or symbolises something else, and, in a subsequent verse, we are told that it signifies the earth. "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." Now the word earth is often to be understood, not of this material globe, but of its inhabitants, as in that passage of Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." And that in Psalms, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise." In this passage it is also to be understood of the inhabitants of the earth, or human society. When, therefore, these kings are said to rise out of the earth, this signifies that they would rise up out of the social state. But these beasts did not simply come out of the sea, when they rose out of it the sea was in a very marked condition. The four winds were striving upon it. Since the sea is the emblem of society, the sea, with the four winds striving thereon, is to be understood of society in a state of very great and violent commotion. Now, whereas the sea is represented as being in this state, when the several beasts came out of it, this clearly intimates that these kingdoms would arise amid great commotions, and that, compared with what was to follow, society might be said to continue in this state, and the earth to have no rest, until this extensive prophecy was fulfilled. In particular, we find the great empires, here predicted, rising to ascendancy amid the hurricanes of civil commotion, and convulsing the world by the shock of their fall. The four beasts which came up out of the sea signified four kings. "These four beasts are four kings that shall arise out of the earth." In this passage the word king is of equal significance with the word kingdom. This is evident from verse 22, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms." Here the fourth beast is called the fourth kingdom, which undoubtedly implies that the three preceding beasts were three kingdoms. Whereas these kingdoms are symbolised by beasts, this was probably intended to describe the qualities by which they would be distinguished. It seems to intimate that all these governments, as to their principles and aims, who would be more characterised by what was common to man with the inferior creation than by those principles which connect, and ally, and link him to creatures holding a higher place in the ascending scale of existence. They are not simply represented by beasts, but by beasts of prey, by the lion, and the bear, and the leopard, and another beast which was dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly. Now beasts of prey are principally distinguished from others

by two things, they are strong and fierce, they take by violence and use with cruelty. And do not these symbols prove their own divinity? For what has been the character of all the great monarchies since the time of Daniel, as developed in their public character? May not a great part of their history be summed up in this, that they were strong and fierce, that they acquired dominion by violence, and used it in oppression? When brought to the test have not all governments accounted might to be right? Have not nations, up to this date, been known to one another principally as military establishments? Is not the history of empires a history of wars, murders, rapine, and desolation? If there be any variation in these murderous annals, it is when force gives place to policy and intrigue; it is, however, the wild beast still, though crouching in concealment, in order that he may spring unexpectedly upon his unprepared victim. Violence and fraud have been characteristic of every government that has risen hitherto upon the earth, even when individual rulers were personally of good character, and arts, commerce, and science were encouraged. There never was an instance of a government acting steadily on the great principles of truth and holiness. These beasts were four in number, and represented four kingdoms that were to arise upon the earth. That these were the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires is evident from a variety of considerations. In the first place, the symbols, here employed, will be found inapplicable to any other connected chain of history. An individual king may be found to whom some of the symbols apply, but a succession of four monarchies rising after one another will nowhere be found to which these words can with any plausibility be referred. In the second place, the application of the symbols to these four empires is so easy and natural as to show that the former were designedly employed to represent the latter. In the third place, this will appear from a comparison of the seventh with the second chapter of Daniel. These two chapters evidently refer to the same subject. Four kingdoms are symbolised in the second chapter, four kingdoms are symbolised in the seventh. In both chapters these kingdoms are represented as extending down to the period when God would erect His kingdom on the earth. In the second chapter the fourth kingdom is represented as being one of irresistible strength. In the seventh chapter it is described as being dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly. The fourth kingdom, in the second chapter, is represented in its later stages by ten toes. In the seventh chapter its last form is symbolised by ten horns. There cannot remain, on any mind capable of weighing evidence, the faintest doubt that the second and the seventh chapters relate to the same subject. This being ascertained, it is easy to prove, from the second chapter, that the four kingdoms must be understood of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. In the second chapter the head of gold denoted the first monarchy; but Daniel said unto Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold"; the Babylonian empire was, therefore, the first of these kingdoms. Now, in the second chapter, the four empires are symbolised by one image. They must, therefore, have come after one another in the order of immediate succession. The other three kingdoms, then, must signify the three great empires which immediately succeeded that of Babylon. But it is matter of undeniable and immutable fact that the empire of Babylon was succeeded by those of Persia, Greece, and Rome; the Babylonian having been overthrown by the Persian, the Persian being overthrown by the Grecian, and the Grecian being overthrown by the Roman. Notwithstanding of certain minor exceptions that have been stated against it, we regard this theory as one at which we have arrived by the sound and simple exposition of the sacred text itself, and which has been tested by time and proved to be genuine. But while the fate of empires is concealed from man, it is naked and open to the eyes of God. Kingdoms rise and fall by Divine ordination: "Surely their days are determined, the number of their months is with God, he hath appointed them a bound which they cannot pass." And, from the book of His immutable decrees, it is easy for Him to transcribe any page of the future with as much exactness as the historian can describe transactions that are past. But why, it may be asked, are only these four empires pointed out in prophecy? Why does the Holy Seer confine His revelations to this limited district of the world? Beyond it were myriads of the human race, and old and mighty dynasties, were then existing, elsewhere, or were afterwards to arise. Why in this symbolical representation of empire are not India and China included? Why are the two great continents of Africa and America wholly omitted? For this limitation we may venture to assign two reasons, not indeed drawn by exposition from the Scriptures, but drawn by exposition from the oracles of Providence. From what we see of His actual doings by means of these empires, we are perfectly safe in asserting that they occupy the sole place in these predictions on two accounts: 1. Because they were to exercise the greatest influence upon the church during the period to which this prophecy refers. 2. Because through them God intended to civilize and Christianize the whole earth. It is a fact which will not be denied that these empires have had the principal effect upon the church for good or for evil. In the

days of Daniel, the church existed only within the limits of the Chaldean empire. Afterwards, we find it within the Persian empire. Then we find it principally connected with the Grecian monarchy, favoured by the great Alexander, and persecuted by more than one of his successors. In the latter days of the Jewish dispensation, we find the Old Testament church connected with the empire of Rome. It was by Rome that Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews driven into exile. The place of their dispersion, and the scene of their sufferings, during a period of nearly eighteen centuries, has been almost exclusively within the limits of the four prophetic monarchies. Within this district the Son of God became incarnate and was crucified. Here the fires of persecution blazed most fiercely against His devoted witnesses. Here the great apostacy from the truth was generated. This district was the battle-field between Christ and anti-Christ during many generations. It is the centre still of all the contests between light and darkness, between God and Satan. It is thus a fact that these four empires have had most effect upon the church for good or for evil; and, therefore, we seem warranted in concluding that they alone are mentioned in these predictions, because of the influential connection in which they were to stand to the church. And it is not less true that these four empires have had the principal effect in the Christianization and civilization of the other districts of the world. Beyond the limits of these monarchies, the four winds have striven on the great sea. There have been wars, and changes, and conquests, but, unless we greatly mistake the matter, there is a very marked difference between the political commotions and changes which took place within the territorial limits of the four empires and those which occurred elsewhere. Beyond this district, we will see one great conqueror after another sweeping over the earth in the same murderous career. But we see no permanent current of civilization following these commotions. We see no advancement amid all these changes. We see the nations living in the same barbarous, or semi-civilized, condition in which they were in the times of Daniel. But the commotions which have occurred within the limits of the four monarchies have had a civilizing tendency in the issue. Not to ascend higher, wherever the Romans carried their arms, they carried their noble literature, and left a seed of it behind. Their later conquests were preparatory to the dissemination of the gospel; and to the fourth empire, as the Divine instrument, may be traced the whole of European civilization. Look beyond the limits of these four empires, and wherever we see civilization it will be found to have come from them. Civilization and religion went from them to America, to Greenland, Australia, the isles of the Pacific, and to many spots in Africa. And there can now be little doubt that by means of the fourth empire, in its last form, and of the church within it, God intended to originate those movements which shall result in the Christianization of the world. How thankful should we be unto God that we have been born within the limits of these four monarchies, not merely because the currents of civilization flow there, but because of the streams of life by which they are watered and fertilized. How great and glorious does God appear in connection with this prophecy! How low should we lie in the dust before Him, under a profound feeling of the nothingness of our intellects, when we see His omniscient eye piercing the vista of ages and generations, and unfolding the end from the beginning! When we survey the long and dreary domination of the four predicted beasts, we are apt to be seized with a feeling of despondency. Why has wickedness been permitted to exult so long? But when we remember that the Lord reigneth, and that the past stages of the world are merely preparatory to its future glory, a prospect opens on our view delightful beyond all description. If rays of the Divine glory are seen sparkling out amid the eras that are past, we are prepared for the announcement that, when the work is completed, "the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." (W. White.) *Vision of Four Wild Beasts*:—The first of these is the Babylonian empire. In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar its symbol was the head of gold, and in the dream of Daniel, the first wild beast, which was like a lion and had eagle's wings. The superior excellence of the head of gold to the silver, brass, and iron of the colossal image corresponds with the superior excellence of the first wild beast, which had the body of the king of beasts and the wings of the king of birds, to the three other wild beasts which came up afterwards out of the sea. A royal dignity belonged to the Babylonian empire which was lacking in its successors. It is true that when Daniel had his dream the Babylonian empire was near its end; but as the stand-point of Daniel in the dream was before the wild beasts came up out of the sea, the interpreter justly spoke of them to Daniel as "four kings which shall arise out of the earth." In the dream the Babylonian empire was yet to come; but in point of fact it had already come, and was on the eve of passing away. In the plucking of the wild beast's wings, which deprived it of its soaring ambition, and in lifting it up from the earth and giving to it a man's attitude and heart, which deprived it of the voracious nature of the wild beasts, there seems to be a reference to the madness and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar. The judgment which humbled

and ennobled the great king, paved the way for the overthrow of the first great world-power. The empire after the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar had never been so glorious; but the change wrought in him had deprived it of the conquering and destructive power of the wild beast. The lion-like ferocity and eagle-like swiftness in pouncing upon the nations had given place to the kindness and consideration of a brother man. And when the great king died the glory had departed. None of his successors had either his genius or his strength and nobility of spirit; and in twenty-three years the Babylonian empire had ceased to be. The second world-empire is the Medo-Persian. Three reasons seem to place this opinion, which has been common in all ages, on a solid and immovable foundation. (1) It is historically true. It is admitted on all hands that the empire which succeeded the Babylonian was the Medo-Persian. To suppose, as the higher critics generally do, that the kingdom meant in both dreams is a kingdom of the Medes, is to ascribe to them a grave historical blunder, since the kingdom of the Medes lost its separate existence and became a part of the dominion of Cyrus eleven years before the downfall of the Babylonian empire. (2) It is the empire meant in the sacred narrative. This seems clear from the following facts. In his interpretation of the mysterious writing which portended the doom of Babylon, Daniel says of one of the words which suggested the Persians: "Perez: thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" (v. 28). It is no doubt true that Darius the Mede is mentioned as the first king; but then it is to be noted, not only that Darius the Mede "received the kingdom," but that he and his councillors regarded the edict as unalterable, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians" (vi. 8, 12, 15). (3) It is the only empire which fits the symbols. The symbol of the second empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is "the breast and arms of silver." The symbol is emblematic of its inferiority to the first empire, represented by the head of gold, and the two arms are the two people who composed it. Its symbol in Daniel's dream is the second wild beast, "like to a bear, raised up on one side, with three ribs between its teeth, to which it was said, Arise, devour much flesh." The Medo-Persian empire, like the bear, was powerful and destructive; one of its two peoples, the Persians, like one of the sides of the bear, was more prominent than the other; it had in its grasp, like the bear with the three ribs in its mouth, the three kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt; and it was sluggish, like the bear, and needed to be stimulated in its destructive voracity. The Medo-Persian empire fits exactly both symbols, while the empire of the Medes fits neither. On these three grounds it seems certain that the second empire symbolised in the two dreams was the Medo-Persian. The third world-empire is the Greek or Macedonian. Its symbol in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar is "the belly and thighs of brass"; in the dream of Daniel, a leopard with four heads and four wings. The leopard is a fierce animal, remarkable for its swiftness and agility. When the prophet wished to impress his fellow-countrymen with the exceeding swiftness of the horses of the Chaldeans, he described them as "swifter than leopards" (Hab. i. 8). This quality of swiftness is here intensified by the leopard "having the four wings of a bird." The lion, the symbol of the Babylonian empire, had only two wings; but the leopard, the symbol of the Macedonian, had four. The exceeding swiftness of such a wild beast is an emblem of Alexander the Great in his conquering career. The rapidity of his military movements was not only superior to those of Nebuchadnezzar and of Cyrus, but perhaps unexampled in the history of the world. The four heads of the leopard represent the four kingdoms into which the Macedonian empire was divided after Alexander's death. The third wild beast seems in every respect an apt symbol of the Macedonian empire. The higher critics generally, on the other hand, take the third wild beast to be a symbol of the Persian empire. I have already given three reasons for thinking that the second wild beast must be intended for the Medo-Persian empire. After the Babylonian empire there was neither a Median nor a Persian empire, but only a Medo-Persian empire; and if the second wild beast refers to the Medo-Persian empire, then the third wild beast must refer to the Macedonian empire, which immediately came after it. But in addition, the third wild beast is not an apt symbol of the Medo-Persian empire. The four-winged leopard might be looked upon as a fit symbol of Cyrus, though not nearly so apt as a symbol of Alexander the Great, either for rapidity or ferocity; but it is altogether inappropriate to the general character of the Medo-Persian empire. Instead of being like a four-winged leopard, it strikingly resembled the awkward, slow-moving bear. Again, the four heads are not satisfactorily explained of the Medo-Persian empire by supposing that they refer either to its universal dominion—the four heads being understood as the four points of the compass towards which the empire spread—or to four of its rulers. The heads naturally suggest kings or kingdoms, and the four heads being on the beast at one and the same time suggest four contemporaneous, and not four successive kings. The fourth world-empire is the Roman. The fourth wild beast, as it appeared to Daniel in the dream, is said to be "terrible and powerful, and strong exceed-

ingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." There are two striking points of resemblance between this symbol and that of the fourth empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. One is, that both have iron as a characteristic feature. The fourth wild beast had great iron teeth, and the fourth or lowest part of the colossal image was iron; and as iron was an emblem of a breaking and subduing power, it strikingly shadows forth the Roman empire. The other is, that both were marked by the number ten. The fourth beast had "ten horns," and the iron portion of the image "ten toes." The ten horns and the ten toes represent the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire would be divided; and here, as elsewhere in Scripture, the definite number ten seems to be used in an indefinite sense for a great many. But while an apt symbol for the divided Roman empire, the number ten seems totally inapplicable to the Grecian empire, which is the favourite view of the higher critics. We come now to what is said about the Little Horn. "I considered," says Daniel, "the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." He says also in the 21st and 22nd verses: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The general opinion of the higher critics is that the little horn is a symbol for Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the Grecian kings of Syria (175 B.C.-164 B.C.), and the arch-persecutor of the Jewish people. But this empire cannot be correct if, as we have already tried to show, the fourth world-empire is the Roman. Antiochus Epiphanes belongs to the third world-empire, and not to the fourth. Besides, there are two things in the symbol which show that it could not refer to Antiochus Epiphanes. One is, that the little horn came up after the ten horns, and was distinct from them. Antiochus, on the other hand, was one of the ordinary kings of Syria. His kingship was not distinct from those of the divided empire. The other is, that the little horn rooted out three of the ten. There is nothing corresponding, or approaching to, this in the history of Antiochus Epiphanes. The little horn means, I have no doubt, Papal Rome. In the fifth century of our era the Roman empire was broken up by the invasion of northern hordes; and amongst the kingdoms into which it was divided the church in Rome, with its bishop, sprang into existence as one of the kingdoms of the empire. This took place in 755 A.D., when Pepin, king of the Franks, granted to the Pope for a temporal dominion the Ex-archate of Ravenna, the Pentapolis, and the Duchy of Rome; and so, according to the prophetic dream, the new kingdom came up after the other ten. It was also a little horn, whether you look at the church in Rome as an ecclesiastical body or at the temporal dominion with which it was invested. The States of the Church, even with the Dukedom of Spoleto, which Charlemagne added in 774 A.D., formed only the central part of the Italian peninsula. In 1870 these States were lost to the Church of Rome, and in 1871 formally annexed to the kingdom of Italy, while the Italian parliament agreed to allow the Pope to live in the Vatican as a sovereign, not subject to the laws of the land, and to grant him an annual appanage of nearly three and a quarter million of liras. So far, then, as temporal dominion is concerned, the Pope has always been a little horn. Again, Papal Rome, like the little horn, is diverse from the other horns of the empire, inasmuch as the spiritual power is combined with the temporal, the ecclesiastical with the political. Another thing noted of the little horn is, that "before it three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots." This also is true of Papal Rome. Of the various opinions as to what the three extinguished sovereignties were, I am inclined to adopt that of Sir Isaac Newton, that they were the kingdom of the Lombards, the Ex-archate of Ravenna which represented the dominion of the Byzantine emperors, and the Duchy of Rome. Gibbon, in the forty-fifth chapter of his great work, says: "during a period of two hundred years, Italy was unequally divided between the kingdom of the Lombards and the Ex-archate of Ravenna." And there can be no doubt that it was the Pope, by means of Pepin and Charlemagne, who put down these two sovereignties in the empire. The Duchy of Rome, which he also plucked up by the roots, though small in size, was yet, on account of its prominence and importance in the empire, well entitled to be represented as one of the ten horns. And it is a memorable and suggestive fact that the Pope, alone of all sovereigns, wears a triple crown. Again, Daniel says of the little horn: "Behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows." The eye is the symbol of intelligence, and the eyes of a man in the little horn imply that it would be distinguished amongst the kingdoms of the world for its subtle and astute diplomacy. Its intelligence would be that of a man, as compared with that of a wild beast. And such extraordinary intelligence has been a

distinguishing feature in the worldly policy of Papal Rome. Its diplomacy is unrivalled for duplicity and craft. And no worldly power ever approached it for speaking great swelling words of vanity. This is what is said to the Pope at his coronation: "Receive the tiara ornamented by the three crowns, and know that you are the father of bishops and kings, the earthly governor of the world, the vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be honour, world without end." Another feature of the little horn, which belongs also to Papal Rome, is its persecution of the people of God. "I beheld," says Daniel (v. 21), "and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." In interpreting this, the angel said to Daniel (v. 25): "And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and half a time." There is no need to enlarge upon the persecutions of the Papacy, as there is no land in Christendom whose soil has not been stained with the blood of the martyrs which she has shed. Happily its power to persecute is for the present, at least to a large extent, taken away. The next thing in the dream is, the doom which was to befall the little horn. First of all, there is the sitting of the Heavenly court on the conduct of the little horn (v. 9, 10). There are judgment days in Heaven continually occurring with regard to human affairs. After the destruction of the little horn, the world-wide empire of the Messiah begins. Daniel thus continues his dream (v. 13, 14). (*T. Kirk.*)

The Vision of the Four Beasts:—Let us attempt to get at the practical and permanent principles which underlie this remarkable prophecy, and which are at once profoundly suggestive and exceedingly important. 1. The terribly significant truth, that earthly power, in and of itself, degenerates into brutality. The appropriate symbol of a great empire is a wild beast. The kingdoms of the earth have stood on military conquest. Might has taken the place of right. The sword has been the arbiter of imperial dynasties, and the struggles between rival powers have been as fierce and destructive as the contentions of wild animals in the jungle. 2. The tendency of this brutality is to increase. Note the order in which the four beasts are set. Bad as the Babylonians were, they were outdone by the Persians; these were exceeded by the Greeks; while the Romans were the worst of all. Note that all this while the nations were growing in what has been called culture and civilisation. This was a merely superficial thing, and served only to veneer the rottenness and cruelty which were beneath. 3. The restoration of man to humanity must come, not from himself, but from above. He who introduced the healing salt which is yet to purify thoroughly the bitter fountain of our earthly life was sent forth from "the ancient of days." There are few more striking arguments for the Divine origin of the Gospel, and the deity of its author, than that which may be drawn from the contrast between the character of Jesus and that of His age. Surely, the hope of the world lies in the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ. Wherever the Gospel goes in power, it restores men to humanity by bringing them back to God. Civilisation without the Gospel is only a veneered brutality. (*William M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Daniel's First Vision:—This first vision of Daniel is confessed on all hands to be an expansion of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's dream had represented human empire in its intelligent, well-proportioned might. It was man's power as formed, in some measure, in the image of God. The substance, the strength, the character of the several empires were different; the form was one. Daniel's vision exhibits them on another side. The four winds of Heaven are driving upon the great sea, that representative, throughout Holy Scripture, of our troubled world, and out of it there arise forms of more than human strength. The terrific and wasting power of the world-empires is exhibited under the symbol of brute force. A sort of unity is given to them, in that they are all exhibited at first to the prophet's eye at once. God shows them to him first, as He Himself sees all things, at once; then, as they arose in fact, succeeding one another. Nor did they arise of their own power. "Not without being acted upon by the winds of Heaven does the sea send forth those beasts; not without being set in motion by the powers above, does the heathen world form itself into those great empires" (Hoffman). As the Babylonian empire had been exhibited to Nebuchadnezzar under the symbol of the richest metal, "gold," so now to Daniel under that of the solid strength of the king of beasts of prey, with the swiftness of the royal bird, the eagle. Jeremiah and Ezekiel had likened Nebuchadnezzar to both. The second beast, the bear, corresponds with the solid, heavy, chest of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. The twofold division and the relative strength of the two sides recur in this symbol also. It lifts itself heavily, in contrast to the winged rapidity of the Chaldean conquests. The "three ribs in its mouth" correspond accurately to the three kingdoms which the Medo-Persian empire swallowed up, the Lydian, Babylonian, and Egyptian. It is bidden, "Arise, devour much flesh," in conformity with the greedy character of the animal; waste of human life was a characteristic of the Persian empire in its heavy aggressiveness. Heaviness was, after Cyrus, the characteristic of

its wars. Of the third empire, the characteristics are insatiableness of conquest, and swiftness, and fourfold division. The panther, an animal insatiable above every other beast of prey, gifted with a swiftness which scarce any prey can escape, is represented yet further with four wings. The subdivision of the empire is indicated by its four heads. Its colour corresponds to the brass of the image, its swiftness to the activity of the loins and thighs of the image. Probably the multiplication of the heads was a symbol of circumspection, of manifold, versatile intelligence. But, again, the chief object of interest in the vision is the fourth empire. For the living creature which can represent it there is no name. "In the former beasts," says Jerome, "there are single tokens of terribleness; in this, there are all." Of this last empire Daniel sees not only certain characteristics, but a history. Intervals of its history are marked. It embraces a long period. Its characteristic is stupendous strength. Permanent subdual characterised the Roman empire, but it had not the power of consolidating into one the disjointed materials of its greatness. The period after the destruction of the whole fourth kingdom is indicated by the words: "And the rest of the beasts, the other kingdoms, had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time" (v. 12). This sentence seems to relate to a time after the destruction of the fourth empire, but this, being still future, we cannot explain certainly. The chief object of interest, that chiefly expanded, is that in which all the kingdoms end—the Kingdom of God victorious over the evil of the world. . . . It is a sublime picture; man, with his keen intellect, a look more stout than his fellows, overthrowing kings, doing his own will, speaking against God, placing himself over against Him as His antagonist, having, for a set time, all things in his hand; and above, out of sight, God enthroned in the serenity of His majesty, surrounded by the thousands of heavenly beings who serve Him; and near Him, One in human form, born of a human birth, yet, like God, above in the clouds of Heaven, the darkness shrouding Him from human eye, but reigning and to reign for ever, His Kingdom neither to pass away by decay, nor to be destroyed by violence. "God is patient, because He is eternal." Below, all is tumult; above, all is tranquility; the Heavenly King over against the earthly potentate, until the last blasphemy draws down His lightnings upon him, the voice of his great word ascends, the judgment of God descends. (E. B. Pusey, D.D.) *The First Two Visions of the Book of Daniel*:—Two emblems are here used to describe the corruption of human states in past ages, the great image and the four beasts of prey. False religion and worldly ambition, with its natural fruits of cruelty and crime, are vividly portrayed by this twofold emblem. The redemption of man from this twofold fall must begin with their separate members. Let us, therefore, trace, from the emblems themselves, the bright and holy contrast which is waiting to be realised in the coming Kingdom of God. 1. Man, in his state of nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. In the symbols of the prophecy he is an atom of the dazzling, but lifeless image; a member incorporated in the wild beast of prey. The first work of redemption is to deliver him from this state. The bestial nature is then crucified and done away; and he becomes a living member of the body of Christ. He is no longer a lifeless atom of clay in the feet of the image. The breath of a new life has been breathed into his nostrils, and, like Adam in the day of creation, he stands once more erect in the image of God. 2. The prophecy leads us to contemplate the true character and blessedness of a righteous nation. The closing part of these visions teaches us: (1) The intense reality of God's providence here below. (2) The true standard of national excellence and honour. Not wealth and riches. Not military ambition. Not the cold and heartless theories of political ungodliness; but ordinances of royalty and righteous dominion. (T. E. Birks, M.A.)

Ver. 6. Like a leopard.—*Alexander the Great*:—The empire which rose on the ruins of the second monarchy was the Grecian. Alexander the Great subverted the Persian empire. The leopard is remarkable for its swiftness, and for the eagerness with which it springs upon its prey; and we know, also, how rapid were the conquests of Alexander, how eager he was to subdue all nations. This rapidity is symbolized in the vision by the four wings which the leopard had on its back. The leopard with four wings reigned over the vanquished bear. The leopard also prefigured the downfall of the Grecian kingdom. The leopard was seen with four wings upon its back; but besides these wings, it is described as having four heads, and these four heads symbolized its downfall. When Alexander died, his kingdom was divided among his captains, four of them. (W. Wood, A.M.) *The Wings of Alexander the Leopard*:—During the time occupied in the reduction of the Sogdians, the most heroic opposition was displayed by a company of the people, who, under the command of their governor, Arimazes, had fortified themselves upon a rock, situated near the river Oxus, which was considered impregnable. The Macedonians were as determined to drive them from their stronghold as the besieged were resolved not to be overcome. Alexander summoned the barbarians to yield themselves his prison-

ers; whereupon Arimazes, conceiving it impossible that his position could be reached, and knowing that he possessed ammunition and provisions sufficient for two years, returned the following laconic and undaunted answer: "Can Alexander, who is able to do all things, fly also? And hath nature, on a sudden, given him wings?" Exasperated at this reply to his message, the emperor gave orders to three hundred mountaineers, chosen from his army, to scale the place of refuge by night. Notwithstanding the perils attending so arduous an enterprise, the men succeeded, after witnessing the sacrifice of thirty-two of their party, who were precipitated and destroyed, in attaining a point higher than that inhabited by the natives. In the morning, when the signal on the peak of the rock was descried by the Macedonians waving triumphantly over the heads of the Sogdians beneath, Alexander despatched one of his retinue to the governor, with an imperative injunction to surrender. Arimazes, being still ignorant of the extraordinary feat that had been performed, sent back an answer equally insolent with the former; but the officer, instead of returning with the reply, pointed to the soldiers stationed on the height above, and, remembering the nature of the message recently transmitted to his master, exclaimed, "You see that Alexander's soldiers have wings." At this, Arimazes surrendered the garrison and supplicated clemency. (*Charles Popham Miles.*)

Ver. 8. Another little horn.—*The Little Horn is Antichrist*:—1. By the ruin or destruction of this little horn, the fourth beast, or human kingdom, is said utterly and finally to fall (v. 11). Therefore, it cannot represent Mahomet. 2. The destroying of the beast and little horn is described in such forms as are in the book of Revelation, interpreted of Antichrist (Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10, 11.) 3. This little horn is conjoined with the ten horns (v. 7, 8, 20, 24), accordingly as Antichrist is conjoined with them. (Rev. xiii; xvii.) 4. The characters attributed to him are the same which are attributed to Antichrist. (1) He shall speak great things against the Most High. (2) He advanceth himself above the civil magistrate. (3) He changeth the laws and times. (4) He maketh war with the saints, and prevaileth against them. (*Thomas Parker.*)

Vers. 9, 10. The ancient of days did sit.—*The Ancient of Days Coming to Judgment*:—Daniel claimed two offices for the Messiah. 1. He should be a King. 2. A Judge. These claims rested on the unity of nature—the "ancient of days" being "brought near" and taking "hold of" the Son of man; thus making both One and this One offering a propitiation—being "cut off," but not from Himself. The first claim has been met; Christ is the King! He shall be the Judge. Kingship becomes the guarantee of Judgeship. We proceed to proclaim a coming judgment. I. IT IS THE UNIVERSAL EXPRESSION OF OUR RACE. 1. By personal conscience. 2. By relative necessity. 3. By ideal anticipation. II. IT IS THE UNIFORM TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE. The Bible teaches throughout that "the judgment" will take place. In this testimony we find three grand facts. 1. All the dead are reserved to judgment. 2. All the living are going to judgment. 3. All conditions of life will be known at the judgment. (1) Surroundings. (2) Character. (3) Destiny. III. IT IS THE INVOLVED CULMINATION OF REDEMPTION. 1. It will exhibit the personal glory of our Redeemer's character. 2. It will vindicate the supreme importance of our Redeemer's mission. 3. It will display the impartiality of our Redeemer's administration. 4. It will declare the immunities of our Redeemer's followers. (*Joseph Odeh.*) *The World's Assize*:—In metaphors borrowed from the solemnities of earthly tribunals, and particularly from those of the great Jewish Sanhedrim, the prophet describes the process of judgment. As, in that assembly, the father of the consistory sat with the assessors ranged on each side in the form of a semi-circle, with the people standing before him, so here the prophet speaks of God as seated on His throne of judgment, attended by thousand thousands who minister unto Him, whilst ten thousand times ten thousand stand in His presence. We are disposed to regard the language of the text as descriptive of the Great Assize. I. THE GLORIOUS APPEARANCE OF OUR SAVIOUR. 1. That Christ will re-visit this earth is a fact stated in many passages of Scripture. What shall be the nature of the grandeur and glory of His final appearing, or how it will be displayed, none can tell. II. ITS ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES. More particularly as to ourselves and mankind at large. Mark how diverse the characters of those around the throne! What an affecting contrast is presented to our minds! (*Edward Pizey, B.A.*) *Manifestation of God by Fire*:—Grotius remarks that the ancient thrones and curule chairs had wheels. Those in the text being like "burning fire." Dr. Cox observes: "Prognosticate"; "at once the majesty of the judge, piercing, penetrating, awful, and the rapid progress of those providential visitations which would hearken the indignation of a sin-avenging Deity." "The fire-scattering wheels," says Keil, "show the omnipotence of the Divine throne of judgment—the going of the judgment of God over the whole earth." He further observes: "Fire, and the shining of fire, are the

constant phenomena of the manifestation of God in the world. The fire which engirds His throne with flame pours itself forth as a stream from God into the world, consuming all that is sinful and hostile to Him, and rendering His people and kingdom glorious." *Thousand thousands ministered unto Him.—Benefits of Meditation on the Holy Angels.*—The thought that the Christian life consists in the performance of everyday duties on the principles of the Gospel, and with the temper and disposition of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven, may help to restrain us from two serious errors into which, from our extreme frailty, we must confess ourselves but too liable to fall. One error is the disposition to imagine that religion is a matter of so transcendently high and spiritual a nature as to be quite above and unmixed with earthly things. The other error is the disposition to lower the standard and measure of Christian morality. It is of the highest importance that we pray and endeavour to have our affections deadened to this present world, and our minds drawn up to high and Heavenly things. Habitual reflection on the habits of glorified spirits in the beatific presence of their and our God would greatly tend to wean our affections from mean, unworthy objects, to fill us with humility and awe, and, at the same time, to give us a notion of our true dignity as God's adopted children in Christ Jesus. The mere thought that there are in existence innumerable glorious immortal spirits—that their God is our God—that let our condition in this world be ever so poor and degraded, yet these blessed angels disdain not to acknowledge themselves our "fellow-servants"; that they care for us, and minister for us as Christians, and heirs of salvation, may well arouse us from the low-born cares and follies of this present world, lead us to consider what we are, and what we are coming to. To be in the presence and favour of the Almighty God, this and this only can constitute the happiness of all reasonable creatures, of angels in Heaven, or of men on earth. To live in the presence of God is the happiness of glorified spirits in Heaven. To live as in His presence is the great rule of holiness to men on earth. It is of great consequence for serious minds to raise their thoughts to high and Heavenly realities; especially to the thought of the innumerable society of good angels, who sing their Alleluias before the throne. (*Sermons by Authors "Tracts for the Times."*) *The Heavenly Service.*—The curtain of Heaven was lifted up, and Daniel, wrapt in the spirit and vision of prophecy, was favoured with a view of the celestial regions. The scene is laid in the wide etherial of the third heaven. The Ancient of Days appeared upon a burning throne, which, being provided with wheels, was the chariot in which He made the immense circuit of His dominion. A numerous and splendid host of angels and redeemed spirits minister unto Him, and stand before Him. To minister and to stand in Scripture language, mean service. These countless millions, therefore, stand before God to wait His commands, and then they minister unto Him, that is, they flee to do His sovereign pleasure. The truth to be gathered from this part of Daniel's vision is, that Heaven is a state of exalted service. I. THE PECULIAR NATURE OF THE HEAVENLY SERVICE. 1. It will be suited to a state of final reward. There will be nothing that will imply a state of probation or trial. When we reach Heaven, all service which had the nature of a means to attaining the end of moral perfection will pass away. 2. It will include all essential duties that are due from the creature to the Creator. Many of the duties of revealed religion will cease in Heaven, because they are designed to effect a temporary purpose only. Through eternity, angels and redeemed will be dependent upon God, and receive all good from Him. Love, and the manifestation of love, will be one portion of this exalted service. A holy fear of, and respect to, the majesty of God is due from the creature to the Creator, and the manifestation of this will be one part of the service of Heaven. A voluntary dependence on God; an absolute and unlimited subjection to His supreme authority; a continued aim at His glory—enter into the duty of the creature towards the Creator. 3. The Heavenly service will be the united service of angels and men. The assembly of Heaven is one, the worship or service is one, the temple is one, the song is one. 4. The Heavenly service will consist in immediate attendance upon God. Here ours is the service of trading for our great Master while He is in a far country. But in Heaven we shall serve in His presence; we shall be His personal attendants. 5. It will be a service of subordinate dominion. The Scriptures assure us that the saints are to be rulers and governors in the world to come. What an honour and satisfaction it will be to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords, as kings and rulers under Him, and this honour shall all the saints have. 6. The Heavenly service will be a sabbath service. The earthly sabbath is a type of Heaven, and it shadows forth the state and employments of the saints there. It is a rest from worldly toil and labour, but not a cessation of all activity and service. 7. The service of Heaven is temple service. The ancient temple was a type of Heaven. 8. The service of Heaven will be a service of praise. To think of God, to admire Him, to behold His glory and rejoice in it, to love and praise Him, will be the sweet employment of Heaven. The Heavenly service is the engagement of spirits freed from sin; pervaded with light, fired

with love, enraptured with delight, and bound by sweet and immortal bonds to God and to each other for ever. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS SERVICE WILL BE RENDERED.

1. Without the least reluctance. The service of God will be voluntarily rendered, deeply loved, and highly enjoyed.
2. Without weakness.
3. Without weariness.
4. Without distraction.
5. Without intermission.
6. Without defect.
7. Without end. If this service will be our happiness and honour in Heaven, let us take care that we deem it our happiness and honour on earth. None who refuse to serve God on earth shall serve Him in Heaven. (N. Gregory.)

Vers. 13, 14. **One like the son of Man.**—*Meessiah's Kingdom*:—Daniel had this vision some fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar had the vision of the composite image; but his vision harmonizes with it, and is descriptive of the same great kings and monarchies. The kingdom given to the Son of Man is the kingdom which was symbolized by the stone cut out without hands, which grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

I. WHEN THIS KINGDOM WAS GIVEN TO OUR LORD. 1. Our Lord is described as coming with clouds in the day of judgment. But the coming of Christ to the universal judgment is not the coming of Christ spoken of in the text. The coming of Christ to judge the world will be the end of all things; but the coming of Christ in the text must be during the time of the fourth or Roman empire. The coming of Christ to the universal judgment will be to reward or punish mankind; but the coming of Christ in the text is to receive a kingdom for Himself. The coming of Christ to the last judgment will be to utter the final sentence and to fix the eternal state of all the righteous and the wicked; but the coming of Christ in the text refers to temporal events, and to temporal kingdoms.

2. What can the coming be but His coming from earth to Heaven at the time of His ascension. The prophet does not represent "the Son of Man" as coming in the clouds from Heaven to earth, but as coming with the clouds of Heaven from His former residence on earth towards the Ancient of Days on his fiery throne. The description of Christ's ascension by the Evangelist is the best explanation of this part of the vision of the prophet. Again the prophet says, "And they brought him near before him," *i.e.*, they brought the Son of Man near before the Ancient of Days on His throne. Again, "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." In His hand was put the sceptre of everlasting empire. When, therefore, our Lord ascended on high, and sat down on the right hand of God, then He received His kingdom and glory.

II. THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM. 1. It is Divine. It is altogether of God; it is given to the Son of Man by the Ancient of Days; it is set up on earth by the God of Heaven; it is not of this world, it is a spiritual kingdom. As God alone could set up this kingdom in the world, so God alone can make men its willing subjects. 2. It is universal. From the first the greatest opposition was made to the establishment of this kingdom. But in the course of three centuries all opposition was overcome, and Christianity became the religion of the world. 3. It is everlasting. "Of his kingdom there shall be no end." The subject is instructive, alarming, and consolatory. (1) It teaches the magnificence of the scheme of salvation by Christ crucified. It teaches who in times past has shed, like water, the blood of the saints. It teaches the folly or the impropriety of attempting to change Popery, or to conciliate Antichrist. Popery cannot be changed. Antichrist cannot be conciliated. (2) The subject is alarming. It is full of terrors to all who live in sin, and oppose the Kingdom of God. (J. Cawood.) *The Kingdom of the Son of Man*:—This chapter has been well called "a religious philosophy of history." It is a philosophy rather than a foretelling of the future, but it is the philosophy of a prophet who speaks for God. Daniel saw four great beasts come up out of the sea of nations. These represent four kings. They are divers one from another; the first is like a lion, and the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, the fourth is dreadful and terrible, apparently indescribable. These beasts have dominion for a time until the Ancient of Days sits upon the throne of judgment. Then the dominion is taken from them and given to one like unto a Son of Man. His dominion is everlasting, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed. Consider this distinction between kings represented as "beasts" and "one like unto a Son of Man." The four beasts have one thing in common; they are all beasts. They represent the sovereignty of brute force. They are strong, cruel, rapacious. The final kingdom is given to the representative of humanity. But these kings are men. Therefore, it is not enough to say that the Son of Man is human. In the interpretation given to the vision, the phrase is explained thus: "The Saints of the Most High." Remember that man was made in the image of God: *i.e.*, what distinguishes man from other animals is his moral greatness. He is an animal in his lower nature; but he has a higher nature which makes him "man." Therefore, this vision describes the victory of the kingdom in which man's moral nature is redeemed from sin, and is made supreme over the kingdom in which his lower animal nature is victorious. It teaches that the domination of brute force and the sovereignty

of selfishness do obtain; but they are judged by God unworthy to continue, and must give place to the domination of redeemed humanity and to the sovereignty of goodness. Only a kingdom represented by a Son of Man can be lasting and universal. One of the most striking thoughts here is that a civilisation which may appear very splendid to man, may appear very unworthy to God. The prophet describes these world-powers from God's standpoint. He judges the beast unworthy to rule, and gives the dominion to the Son of Man. Now it does not concern us to identify very closely these "beasts" with the world-powers they were meant to represent by Daniel. Probably they were the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar, the Median empire, the Persian empire made splendid for a season by Cyrus Darius. Artaxerxes and Xerxes, and the Greek dominion in Asia connected with the meteor-like glory of Alexander. These were all mighty empires. Some aspects of them appeal powerfully to our senses. No one can consider these ancient empires without being affected by their magnificence. But there is another tribunal before which they must be judged. The eyes from which no secrets are hid look beneath all this dazzling glory; and they see there—brutality! These empires are founded upon the supremacy of man's animal nature. They rule because they are strong. They have great iron teeth! They devour much flesh. They speak great things. And this is the supremacy of the lower nature. This is a very instructive analysis of greatness. The prophet's inward vision has been purged when he can see that all selfishness is essentially bestial. Let us pray to be delivered from deception by dazzle! We admire power and massiveness, whether in individuals, or societies, or empires. Let us be sure to examine what lies behind the glory which appears. Nothing can match the story of the uprising of these ancient empires except the story of their fall. They seemed destined to continue for ever. It looked as if nothing could destroy them. But with startling suddenness they tottered to their fall. So must fall every dominion which is brutal in its foundations, which is founded on strength and selfish instinct rather than on goodness and reason. The only dominion which can be finally triumphant is the dominion of the saints of the Most High. What representative is like unto a Son of Man? The consideration of this phrase leads us to take a big step forward. As Daniel used the phrase, it is probable that there was no definite personal reference. The phrase is "a Son of Man," not "the Son of Man," and in v. 27 it is substituted by "the people of the saints of the Most High." Doubtless Daniel shared the Jewish hope that the final kingdom was that inaugurated by the Messiah; but here the phrase "a Son of Man" is meant only to contrast the human kingdom with that of the beasts. Now, if we compare the usage of the name in the Gospels, it seems clear that Jesus took the name from this very passage. Daniel may not have meant to describe the Messiah by it; but when the Messiah came He adopted it at once as an admirable description of Himself. This means, therefore, that Jesus considered that He was founding that kingdom which should be universal and everlasting. He was that representative of the race whose sovereignty is guided by the highest principles of reason and goodness, and to which the Ancient of Days will give "dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve Him." The kingdom which Jesus founded is the kingdom of wisdom and love. It is to take the place of all kingdoms in which man's lower nature is supreme. It is to be the sovereignty of a redeemed humanity. This philosophy of history has been justified not only by the overthrow of the ancient monarchies, but also by the gradual permeation of modern monarchies by Christian teaching. There is abundant evidence that the nineteen centuries of the Christian era have seen an ever-increasing application of Christian principles. Brute force is not worshipped to-day as it was in the days when Roman legions ruled the world. Character is becoming more and more the object of our praise. An altogether higher standard of duty obtains in every department of life. Selfishness in every form is being condemned increasingly. This transformation must go on until everything that is brutal is destroyed and man's highest nature redeemed from sin is supreme. The dominion of the Son of Man is to be universal and it is to be everlasting. That is what you and I are to believe! I suppose that we are all prone to believe that the reforms of the past were wise and good, but that it is hopeless to expect much further change. That is the temptation of the devil to little faith, and it must be resisted earnestly. We must be much more worthy of the title, "Saints of the Most High." And we must have more faith in the triumph of our Saviour's kingdom upon earth. Think of this prophet away in the pre-Christian times when might was right and all the world seemed against Him. It did require faith to call this might that of a beast, and to speak of a Son of Man to whom the kingdom was to be given. But Daniel could believe it. Surely we can! "To doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin." Let us be more bold in our claims, more fearless in applying our principles, more confident of victory. The limit of the sovereignty of the Son of Man will not be until dominion and glory and a kingdom are given unto Him, and all people, nations and languages shall serve Him. Therefore, there is very

much land yet to be possessed, and there is very much for us followers of the Son of Man to do. I want to ask you whether you belong to this kingdom of the Son of Man? There is a very simple test. "Is Jesus your King or is He not?" If He is, you are in His kingdom. If He is not, you are outside. If He is your Lord, you belong to a kingdom which is everlasting, and you have eternal life! Death will not divide you from His dominion. Death will set your spirit free from the trammels of your sinful fleshy nature, and will usher you into His immediate presence. But if you do not belong to His kingdom, then know that you belong to the kingdom which is essentially brutal, because you are giving the victory to your lower animal nature. Perhaps there are fine qualities in your character which you admire and seek to develop. Perhaps there are splendid moments when the Godlike in you stands erect and declares it will be supreme. But if you reject the Son of Man, you turn away from the only One who can redeem you from sin and make you a saint of the Most High. And so the crown is upon the head of that which makes you like the brutes that perish. That kingdom cannot stand. The Eternal God has judged it; it stands condemned to destruction. (*J. E. Roberts, M.A.*) *The Majesty of the Messiah*:—The venerable and saintly minister of a mighty world-empire, august in his unrivalled reputation, his unique position, and his immense personal dignity, with an enthusiasm for God and His laws which had braved the most appalling dangers from irresponsible despots, was just the man to be permitted to see the things which were hidden from the eyes of the rest of the world. There had been brought before him in a vision the survey of a series of vast temporal powers, under the forms of huge, terrific animals, horrible as nightmares, which filled even his calm and lofty spirit with dread. And then he was reminded that behind and above all these was a greater power still, the everlasting omnipotence of God. He saw the Ancient of Days, the Eternal Being, seated, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. And then, in contradistinction to the horror of the typical monsters, one like the Son of Man, in all the beauty and gentleness of a perfect human nature, came with the clouds of Heaven, in all the strength of a Divine power, and came to the Ancient of Days. He had been before among the millions of the Heavenly host, but now His time was come; and to Him was given, not one of the temporal thrones, however splendid, because that would soon pass away and be gone for ever, but dominion and glory and a kingdom such that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him; His dominion was an everlasting dominion, which should not pass away, and His kingdom that which should not be destroyed. It is useless for unbelievers to say that by this magnificent imagery and exalted language Daniel meant nothing but the Hebrew people in a state of improvement. The seer himself shows that he was thinking of nothing of the kind, but of the personal Divine and human Redeemer, when two chapters later he utters the solemn and mysterious words, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself. He whom the wise and experienced statesman beheld shining bright and glorious in the clouds before the burning throne of the Most High was the very same as He whom Abraham saw, and David, and the long line of psalmists and prophets, with different degrees of clearness, certainty, and understanding. It was the very same who was revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, of whom the awful voice from Heaven has heard declaring, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him!" These thoughts which we have gathered from the facts of the predictive element in the Old Testament, and from the life of Daniel, impress upon us with unquestionable force the eternal majesty of the Son of God. The systems and powers of the world rise and fall, and have their sway, and fill our minds with their seeming importance; but, notwithstanding all the fret and fume of men, it is only the kingdom of righteousness and truth that is eternal, only the city of God that hath unfading foundations, only the Son that abideth ever. The Christian view of prophecy, says Principal Cairns, not only accounts for the individual facts, but for the whole. Prophecy is systematic, progressive, all-inclusive; and these features are accounted for alone by the theory of a revelation of redemption. Christ is the centre; in Him all are connected; the Messianic part of revelation is largest, most important, most like the heart in the economy of the whole. This alone accounts for the progress which is in all directions and towards all issues, but all conditioned by the approach of Christ and by the fulness of the disclosure of His Person and work, and its consequences. . . . The world's kingdoms must go through that crisis of trial and judgment, to prepare the world as a whole for the Heavenly King. With prophecy there is a Redeemer, and with Him a philosophy of history leading upwards. Without prophecy, no redemption, but law, and sin fastened down by law; any streaks in the darkness like a prophetic glimmer, due to no rising orb, but meteoric, and born of night or chaos. Ought not the Christian, then, to give heed to this "sure word," which is attested, as it is created, by

a power above nature, just where it needs to be? May he not hope as he prays that to others this day may dawn, this morning star arise? (*Archdeacon Sinclair, D.D.*) *The Supreme Dominion of the Son of Man*.—I. THE NATURE OF THAT SUPREMACY WHICH OUR BLESSED LORD EXERCISES AS THE SON OF MAN. That this whole vision relates to the Mediatorial Person and Administration of Christ is demonstrably apparent. It is mediatorially that the designation "Son of Man" applies to the glorious Personage whom the Celestial Intelligences are represented as bringing near to the Ancient of Days. The predictions of our Lord's mediatorial government were grievously misapprehended by the Jewish nation, not excepting Christ's immediate followers. Rivetted by vivid delineations of Messiah's power and glory, they overlooked those Scriptures which foretold His profound humiliation, obedience, and sufferings. The decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem was an offence even to the apostles themselves. (Mark ix. 31, 32). Christ's supremacy is intended to command the service of His subjects. Jehovah alone is entitled to this service from all intelligent creatures. 1. It is a spiritual service. External subjection may be yielded in the absence of all those principles and affections which alone invest it with moral character and worth. Human legislation discharges its duty when it uses all competent means for ensuring obedience to positive statutes. It cannot go further. The first demand which Jehovah prefers is, My Son, give me thy heart. Love to Heaven's Lawgiver is the rudimental principle of obedience to His will. Of this love, mankind, without a solitary exception, are wholly destitute. Against Scriptural views, illustrated by the findings of experience, it is nugatory to oppose the testimony of superficial moralists, or dreamy poets. One main design of the mediatorial supremacy of Christ is to restore to the human soul that best of all affections, the love which is the fulfilling of the law. For this end, Messiah became "the Son of Man." The love of God our Saviour is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and becomes the living principle of new obedience. 2. The service which Christ requires from all people, nations, and languages is unreserved. Those who are redeemed by the blood and renewed by the Spirit of Christ, "have respect unto all God's commandments." Every requirement in the infallible directory deserves and demands our prompt and faithful observance. A genuine servant of the Son of Man is not satisfied with generalities. A common practice of false teachers in our Lord's day was the exaltation of some favourite precepts at the expense of others which are specially irksome to flesh and blood. 3. The service which the Son of Man claims is habitual service. Temporary or occasional devotedness of heart and life to Christ is not the kind of obedience which He will ever accept. Wherever living faith is implanted, it is an undying principle of obedience. In this world the servants of the Son of Man are distinguished rather by the sincerity and fervour of their aspirations than by uniform progress in holiness. II. THE UNIVERSAL EXTENT OF CHRIST'S SOVEREIGNTY. "All people . . . should serve Him." The period referred to is after His resurrection. Previously to the ascension of the Son of Man, the gospel kingdom had been, for reasons infinitely wise and good, confined almost exclusively within Palestine and its vicinity. Whilst other nations professed that measures of traditional knowledge which a primary revelation and their occasional intercourse with the seed of Abraham supplied, it was little more than sufficient to render their spiritual darkness awfully visible. III. THE STABILITY AND ENDLESS DURATION OF THE DOMINION OF THE SON OF MAN. The fluctuating and evanescent nature of all earthly power and glory is apparent to the most superficial observer. To a casual observer of human affairs, the destinies of the church may seem to be subjected to those sweeping resolutions which have overthrown the proudest dynasties of the world. When we speak of the stability and endless duration of the dominion of the Son of Man, our contemplations are carried forward "to the end of all things." Practical lessons: (1) The obligation of personal subjection to the dominion of the Son of Man. It will avail us nothing to admit the complete, universal, and everlasting supremacy of Christ "over all flesh," unless we yield, individually, submission to His authority. True religion must begin at home. (2) The duty of fervent and persevering prayer for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. (3) The duty of promoting our Redeemer's kingdom by active and beneficent exertions. (*J. Smyth, D.D.*) *The Everlasting Kingdom*.—There is no reason to doubt that the right and true and the holy shall have the victory. All dominions hostile to Christ must give way. All kingdoms incompatible with His must be dissolved. The kingdoms of this world have their symbols in the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the fourth dreadful and terrible beast: and by a law universally proved, their passions and discord shall precipitate their own destruction. But Christ's kingdom has nothing anarchical, because it has nothing sinful in it; it has not one element of decay, because into it nothing that defileth can enter. Suns shall grow pale, stars shall become dim; the crescent shall wane, the crucifix shall fall from the hands of him that holds it; and Christ's kingdom shall extend over all the earth, and all shall bless Him, and be blessed in Him. We see already tokens of that day. I take a

bright view of the coming days. What progress do knowledge, science, education, Christianity, the Bible, make everywhere throughout the world at this moment? Do we not see all languages, however diversified, becoming reducible to two, three, or four at the very most—Christians becoming less earthly, and Christianity less alloyed? What are these but the tokens of the approaching glory; voices in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord; messengers sent before to announce that the bridegroom cometh? I see flowers of paradise begin to bloom in many a desert. I see upon all sides the sea of barbarism and superstition begin to ebb, and many a dove take wing, and fly over the length and breadth of the world's chaotic flood, giving tokens that the Prince of Peace is on His way, warning us that the sound of His approach already breaks upon the ear. Let us hail the twilight; let us urge on, as far as we can, the coming day. (*J. Cummings.*)

The Son of Man Brought to the Ancient of Days:—In the words before us the Son of Man is a prominent object. The government of the Son of Man is a kingdom which shall not be destroyed. The Lord Jesus, in His humanity, is called the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. Who is the Son of Man? It may be suggested that the Son of Man means the material form which the Lord took from the Virgin Mother, and that it is called the Son of Man from its mortal derivation. But this supposition will be undoubtedly corrected if we consult the teaching of the Lord with due attention. The natural, clear, and simple view, then, of the Son is that it means the humanity which the Lord, the Eternal, assumed by the instrumentality of the Virgin, containing in it Divine qualities from God the Father, and human nature, as we have it, with all its imperfections, from the Judean Mother. There may be a son born in time, but there cannot be an Eternal Son. When we speak of the Lord's humanity, or of humanity in general, we must bear in mind that human nature is not a simple element, but a wonderful organisation of spiritual and natural forms. If the body is a wonderful congeries of organs, still more so is the soul. The portion of humanity which was fallen and in ruins, is called the natural man. . . . While from the mother human nature was received in a fallen state, from the Father within there was received the embryo of a Divine human nature. What is that in the Lord which is properly meant by the Son of Man? It is sometimes said that Divine and human are opposite. They are not so; man is a likeness of his Maker. God is an infinite Divine man. (*J. Bailey. A.M.*)

Christ's Kingdom—the Kingdom of the Saints:—This sublime prophecy carries us on to the final establishment of Christ's kingdom. Of that kingdom His ascension may be regarded as the pledge and commencement. He reigning even now; shall reign more visibly and fully hereafter. His kingdom is to supplant and supersede all earthly kingdoms. See vision of four beasts (empires) in previous verses. Their thrones to be "cast down" (v. 9), to make room for a nobler one. It shall excel all earthly kingdoms. 1. To be universal—"All people, nations, languages," etc. 2. To be everlasting—"not to pass away"; "not to be destroyed." Contrast in these respects the greatest of human kingdoms which stretch only over part of men; carry seeds of own decay; sink before superior force. It is to be the mediatorial kingdom of Christ; distinct from His empire as the everlasting God; for: I. IT IS "GIVEN TO HIM" (v. 14). By Ancient of Days, i.e., the Eternal Father. This explained in the New Testament (Phil. ii. 6—10). Given as the purchase of His blood, and recompense of His obedience (Isa. liii. 12; Ps. cx. 7). II. GIVEN TO HIM AS "SON OF MAN" (v. 13). The glory of the Ascension carries us back to humility of the Incarnation (Eph. iv. 9, 10). The one is the top stone in "the mystery of godliness," the other its foundation (I. Tim. iii. 16). It was through His death in the flesh He conquered the usurper (Heb. ii. 14). By His sacrifice for sin as our High Priest, He prepared way for His throne as our King. Hence Zech. vi. 13. First the cross, then the crown. III. SHARED WITH HIS PEOPLE. Saints of the Most High to "possess the kingdom" (v. 18). This was Christ's design (Titus ii. 14). This was His prayer (John xvii. 22—24). He would not have the kingdom apart from them. What love from Him! what honour on us! It is this which makes the subject so intensely practical. We are even now either amongst His enemies or His friends. If the former, how terrible! (Luke xix. 27). "Whither I go, ye cannot come." If the latter, how blessed! (Matt. xxiv. 34). "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." All of us by nature enemies, rebels, etc. What Christ did to bring us from this state (Colos. i. 20—22). How are we to be savingly connected with His glorious reign? By faith in Him (I. Pet. ii. 7—10); by true reception of Him into our hearts (John i. 12); by grace of His Holy Spirit (John iii. 3, etc.). Are we now the subjects of His kingdom of grace, that so we may be hereafter sharers of His reign of glory? Observe the twofold pledge of His kingdom in the Ascension and the Pentecost, and how closely they come together (next Sunday-week). Christ has taken one part of the pledge (our nature) up to Heaven; He sends down the other part (His Spirit) to us on earth. The last that the disciples saw of Him on earth was human nature carried up; the next they knew of Him was the Holy Ghost sent down. He holds a pledge from us; we hold one from Him. Both for our assurance—His kingdom

shall come. 1. Present duties resulting. Service, obedience, loyalty. He is our king, though absent; has left us work to do; talents to improve; His cause to advance; His enemies to oppose, and still heavenly-mindedness to be cultivated. (See the Collect for the day.) 2. Present comforts suggested. Such hopes for the future, and their influence (I. John iii. 1, 2). Grounds for patience and expectation (Heb. x. 36, 37). What are present sorrows in comparison with such coming joys? (Rom. viii. 18). Through the cross lies our way to the throne; so it was with Christ; so it must be with us; "He himself went not up," etc. (See Visitation of Sick.) Let "Thy kingdom come" ever indissolubly link itself to "Thy will be done." (W. P. Walsh, D.D.)

Ver. 18. **But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom.**—*The Political Character of the Good Time Coming*:—"There is a good time coming," so says the poet, so saith the Scriptures. The golden age of the world is not in the past, it is in the future, the age of immortal light, liberty, peace, virtue, religion, and blessedness are all ahead. The text indicates the political character of that golden age. I. IT WILL HAVE A GOOD GOVERNMENT. "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom." The word "saints" has become a by-word. They say, "Look at your mitred saints, using evermore their political power against freedom, justice, and the public good. Heaven deliver us from the government of saints!" Be calm! You mistake the counterfeit for the genuine coin. The man whom God calls a saint is a man whom you are made to love, in whose wisdom and goodness you would place your utmost confidence. True saintliness means honesty, brotherliness, disinterested philanthropy, and elevated piety. Sainthood means goodness. A kingdom under such rulers would: 1. Be an educated kingdom. The works of nature, the events of history, the facts and doctrines of revelation would be universally studied. "All would know the Lord," &c. It would: 2. Be a virtuous kingdom. Christ is the model and the master of the saints. By His principles they would shape all their laws, by His Spirit they would be inspired in every legislative act. They would not mould their code after Greece or Rome, but after Calvary. 3. It would be a free kingdom. Saints are lovers of freedom. 4. Be a peaceable kingdom. Every subject would do unto his fellow what his fellow would do unto him. II. IT WILL HAVE A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT. "And possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." Now the expression may not express eternity, but it undoubtedly represents an indefinitely vast period of time. Three considerations support a belief in its permanence. 1. The length of time in gaining it. The instinct of true sainthood is aggressive and imperial. The saints from Abel down have been endeavouring to sway the minds of men by their Heavenly thoughts and aims. After all this, is it not probable that when universal power comes to them, it will be a permanent possession? 2. The firm hold which the morally true takes upon human nature. The false, the unrighteous, the immoral, though recommended by imperial pageantry and enforced by the invincibility of arms, can never take a firm hold upon human nature. Hence the mutation and fleetness of all human governments. But the government of the saints being that of truth, equity, honour, love, humanity, religion, will take an unrelaxable grasp upon the intellect, heart, conscience, and soul of the people, and will endure from generation, even unto generation. 3. The mediatorial life of Jesus Christ. Why did Christ come into the world, teach, suffer, labour, pray, and die? Why did He rise from the dead, ascend to Heaven, and send down His Spirit? Why? To destroy the works of the devil, to establish rectitude on the earth, and to set up "a kingdom that shall never be moved." (*Homilist*.) *The Kingdom of the Saints*:—The first word spoken by the messenger of the Christ was this: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This, too, was the first word of Christ himself. The word "kingdom" is the keynote of the gospel story. In it is the idea of dominion, sway. It expresses an area within which are the greater or the fewer multitudes subject to that sway. It expresses a constitution, out of which comes the origin, the administration, and the enforcement of law; and it expresses further the supremacy of a single person. A kingdom supposes a king. Speak of the miracles of Jesus! He was himself the greatest of all miracles. He opened His mouth, and proclaimed a kingdom. But where is His kingdom? The King that was dead liveth, and is alive for evermore. The saints of the Most High have been taking the kingdom all down the ages, and possessing the kingdom, and they shall possess it for ever, even for ever and ever. There is no time when the saints are not possessing the kingdom. Power is in our minds chiefly when we think of a kingdom, and where power is greatest there is the ruling kingdom among men. We search for this power, and where do we find it? Knowledge, men say, is power. The knowledge which men seek to gain, and do gain, they call power, and it is so. But their knowledge, and all knowledge, is limited—limited as to the faculty by which it works; limited as to the point which it reaches, limited as to the interests which it affects. We are not come yet to the secret of the greatest power. That is the greatest power which,

when it goes forth, governs the man, his body, his mind, his spirit. Where is this? Truly in God, but not in God only. There are those of this world who are "of God." The power is theirs—in form at least, and measure, and degree—which dwells in the Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no power besides like theirs, so strong, so far-reaching, so penetrating. How is it that the members of this great body do possess the kingdom? And why is it that they shall possess it for ever? They who are spiritually destitute, who have in themselves nothing, and know it and feel it, and are ever crying to the God of their spirit for the supply of their emptiness out of His fulness—these have the kingdom. All that they are furnished with is from God, sought from Him, given by Him, known to be His gift, and used as His. These are the God-marked of the earth. These are "the children of the kingdom"; they in whose heart and purpose it is to do the will of the Father in Heaven. Why shall they possess the kingdom for ever? Because they have "overcome." By the power given to them they have overcome evil, and only good remains; and good is the final, the everlasting, the all-absorbing power of this universe. (*D. Wright, M.A.*)

Ver. 23. **And shall devour the whole earth.**—*The Character of Oppressive Power in Religion*.—A certain great power is introduced in Scripture prophecy, of large extent and long duration, and, in its nature and kind, different from all other powers and kingdoms in the world. The description of it was either intended to be a prediction of that tyrannical power which popery in its most flourishing times established in the world; or, at least, that it is as exact and complete a picture of it as could possibly have been drawn even after the event. The peculiarities wherein this great oppressive power differs from all other tyrannies which have been set up among men are principally these: 1. It is a religious tyranny; a power, sitting in the seat and temple of God. Other tyrannies have used religion; but this is a tyranny founded originally upon mere matters of religion; and carried on through its whole progress, to the utmost length of an universal arbitrary dominion, under the name and title still of a merely spiritual authority. The Church of Rome claims to be itself the whole, the universal Church of God, and to be invested with a power which indeed the real universal Church has no pretence to, even a plenitude of Divine power. It has also fenced itself in, and excluded absolutely out of communion all other Christians. 2. It has been raised and kept up, not by force only, but by sorceries and lying wonders peculiar to itself. 3. It is a tyranny set up over even remote princes, over all kindreds and tongues and nations. "Exalting itself above all that is called God." (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Ver. 25. **The Saints of the Most High.**—*Heavenly Saints*.—I. **DISCRIMINATING FAVOUR.** This is intended as a two-fold contrast—saints in contrast to those who are ungodly, and make no profession at all; and saints in contrast to those who are men-made saints, made saints by human device—not saints really. A saint is a man who is enlightened, and is led to see the way in which sin is put away. II. **THE SECOND THING IN SAINTSHIP IS TO KNOW SOMETHING OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL.** And saints are also distinguished by deep downward experiences, and conspicuous deliverances. A saint of the Most High is a man that is brought into covenant with God. (*James Wells*.) **And think to change times, and laws.**—*Unchangeable Times*.—The greatest revolution time ever underwent is that which the Saviour himself wrought when He put an end to Levitical time, and introduced His own eternal sacrificial time. I. **TIMES AND LAWS.** What were the characteristics of the times the Saviour established? 1. **Salvation.** A time in which we can be accepted of God. 2. **Christ's time** is one of vital and final ingathering. II. **THE TRIBULATION OF THE PEOPLE.** "They shall be given into His hand." What a mercy it is that, if the adversary gain dominion in some measure, yet the sovereignty of God, the hand of God, will protect the people. III. **THE OPPOSITE DESTINY OF THESE TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE—THE ENEMY AND THE FRIEND.** What will become of the man who knows nothing of these Christian times, that knows nothing of the law of faith, the law of liberty. The next verse says, the living God shall take away His dominion. Why are we brought under the law of faith, and thereby under the law of love, and life, and liberty, and righteousness? (*James Wells*.)

Ver. 27. **And the kingdom and dominion shall be given to the people of the saints.**—*The Reign of the Saints*.—Attend to some preliminary remarks. 1. The doctrine of the text does not require us to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is, at some future time, to return in person to our world and set up a visible and theocratic empire upon all these continents. His kingdom is, and is to be, a spiritual kingdom; an empire that asks and needs no visible manifestation of its Lord, no earthly metropolis, or sceptre, or throne. 2. The Scriptures do not require us to teach or to believe this doctrine even in any abso-

lute, extreme, and unexceptionable sense. The saints as persons, and their great Christian maxims as principles, shall ultimately win such an ascendancy over all nations, interests, institutions, and affairs, that this whole world shall become an orderly and well-governed Christian empire. 3. As to the way in which this great conquest is to be achieved. Are the saints of the Most High, after a series of moral victories, wrought with peaceful weapons, and by the aid of the all-conquering Spirit of God, to change their tactics and go forth, in coming times, with their armies, to dislodge the wicked, and settle as victors on all the continents? The Scriptures everywhere discourage such conclusions. We have read history to little purpose if we have not seen that the only revolutions which are permanent and deep are those which take place underneath the surface—penetrating and reconstructing a nation's thoughts. Accordingly, there are, in every community, natural processes and lawful methods by which to effect, first a moral, and then a civil revolution. It is a great law of nature, a law operating among all the orders of the animate creation, that the superior race shall win ultimate ascendancy over the inferior. The earth is covered with a vast framework of social institutions, whose present and special office it is to guard, and administer, and conserve the temporal interests of nations. Will the saints of the Most High, as they advance and take possession of the world, overturn this great edifice of social order? Will they set up in their place the one great institution, the Church, making all offices spiritual? The Papist answers "Yes." But the Scriptures hold no such language. Since civil order is as indispensable to social well-being as spiritual thrift, the State is an institution as truly Divine as the Church. The one is Christ's authoritative organisation, for the control and government of things spiritual; the other is His twin organisation, for the management and direction of things temporal. 4. According to all Scriptural intimations, the conquest of the nations for Christ will be a very gradual conquest. Looking into the future, through the prophetic symbols, is like looking over the tops of the mountains to the distant sky. As we gaze we behold one summit behind another, and beyond the farthest the blue heavens. But how far it may be from the first peak to the second, and how far from the last to the firmament beyond, we cannot determine or tell. 5. We may say that the predicted conquest and reign of the saints is to be, and in a two-fold sense, complete and universal. It will include all races, it will embrace all arts, sciences, trades, interests, governments, usages, compacts, relations. That the people of God will one day possess and govern the world might be conclusively argued: (1) From the known nature of their religion. Who are the ultimate heirs of the world's wealth? They who have, and shall continue to have, the qualities that acquire and preserve wealth. And who are these? Not the heathen. For their life is ever a life of idleness, and unthrift, and loss. Not the wicked or worldly, in Christian lands—for though a single generation of these may practice the industries, and observe the moderation, which insure an estate, they can never perpetuate these property-preserving habits. But the religion of the New Testament not only implants the qualities which acquire and retain wealth, it preserves them. (2) From the actual history of the Church, since it has had its place among the nations. When the Saviour left the world, His disciples were indigent and helpless and weak. (3) All the indications of Providence point, as with a prophetic finger, to the same grand consummation, the delivery of the world into the hands of the saints. The old religions of the heathen have become confessedly effete and decrepit. Not one of them can ever spread. What is to come when the various tottering systems reel in the tempest, and go down never again to rise? When Antichrist falls, then comes the reign of the saints. Application. 1. In this great work of possessing and governing the world, the people of God must never allow themselves to confine their endeavours to any single achievement, but must preserve a breadth and amplitude of purpose equal to their universal mission. 2. Neglect or debility in any one department of this great work of saintly conquest and control, enfeebles and endangers the whole enterprise. (*W. Clark, D.D.*) *The Church of the Future*:—Around the grand mosque of Damascus there clusters a vast accumulation of history. On the spot where it stands to-day, after a lapse of nearly 1,400 years, there was originally erected, in the first century of our era, a heathen temple. In the middle of the fourth century this temple was destroyed by the Roman general Theodosius the Great, and on its ruins, in the beginning of the fifth century, Arcadius, the elder son of Theodosius, built a Christian house of worship. This latter house, though for 300 years the Cathedral of Damascus, became in the eighth century a Moslem possession, and for some thousand years it has been used as a Mohammedan mosque. No visit to Damascus is quite complete without a sight of this historic structure. The most interesting feature, however, of this curious building is not its age, nor its history, nor its present prominence, but rather a single sentence engraved upon the vestibule. The inscription is in Greek characters and reads thus: "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." There, on this Mohammedan mosque, and after ten centuries

of Moslem occupation, cut deep in the enduring stone, the Christian record remains—a record of faith, of hope, and of confidence on the part of the Damascus Christians in the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God. Almost 2,000 years have rolled away since Jesus Christ opened in Bethiehem the marvellous scene of Divinity in humanity, and still the Church of His grace abides. Other kingdoms have perished, mowed down by the resistless scythe of time—Babylon, Media, Macedonia, Persia, Syria, Egypt, Greece, Rome—each swept away almost as though it had never flourished, while the Church founded on the rock by the humble Nazarene lives and grows. And the Church of the future will be more glorious than the Church of the past. “Let us believe and know that Christianity is advancing all the time; that, though men’s hearts may fail them through fear, the Church goes on in God-guided and irresistible movements.” To this happy conclusion of Mr. Gladstone’s must come every intelligent student of history. The world grows better from century to century, because God reigns supreme from generation to generation. The golden age of the Church is not in the yesterday of the past, nor in the to-day of the present, but in the to-morrow of the future. I. In the first place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future in relation to the PUBLIC WORSHIP? With all confidence may we not say that the Church, come what may, will never cease to worship? The worshipful impulse is as deep as it is universal, as pervasive as it is prevalent. Worshipfulness is a differentiating characteristic of the rightly-constituted soul. And this instinctive worshipful impulse will be more intelligently educated and more reverently developed in the future days of Christianity’s evolution. With the developing years shall come to the Church of God clearer visions and broader outlooks, and a deepened sense of righteousness, with profounder awe in the presence of spiritual realities; and along with this there cannot fail to be developed a more noble, God-pleasing, eternity-piercing worship in the hearts of God’s children. II. In the second place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future in relation to the BIBLE as the final and authoritative revelation of God’s will and way to men? Of all the books that fill our libraries and thrill our hearts this is the most wonderful. It is the fullest and richest thesaurus of Divine wisdom and human knowledge. All books, it has been said, are of two classes—books made from other books, and books from which other books are made—and to the latter class, in a pre-eminent degree, belongs this Word of God. And it seems to the truest and most intelligent supporters of the old Book that things are shaping themselves to-day, as never before, for unlimited victories for the Word of God. Certain facts and conditions there are which appear a sure prelude to a superb Biblical renaissance; the publication and distribution of the revised Scriptures, the profound delving and exhaustive research of historical critics, the patient investigation of modern science; the recent discovery and explorations of ancient cities by faithful archæologists, and, along with all this, the growing intelligence of the modern Christian Church, which is rejecting, as never before, man-made creeds and formulas. Fear not the controversies now raging about the Bible. The ages of theological agitation and discussion have always been the ages of progress and promise. Better the agitations of the days of Augustine and Athanasius and Luther than the tranquility of the Middle Ages. III. In the third place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future in relation to JESUS CHRIST, as God’s Son and man’s Saviour? Here we confront the great problem of Christianity to-day, than which no greater can ever arise—the Lord of Glory; His Miraculous Incarnation, His Spotless Character, His Transcendent Teaching, His Majestic Deeds, His Sacrificial Death, His Glorious Resurrection, His Radiant Ascension, His Position at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High, and His Abiding Presence in human life and history. A truer and more pregnant sentence the great Christlike never uttered than when he wrote that Christ is Christianity, as Plato was never Platonism, and Mohammed never Mohammedanism, and Buddha never Buddhism. We often speak of Christianity’s unparalleled power, and yet let us remember that, since the stream cannot rise higher than its source, Jesus Christ is the Living Personal Force because of whom all ages and races have been agitated and convulsed. Recall the splendid words of Dr. Wace in his notable controversy with Huxley: “The strength of the Christian Church is not in its creed, but in its Christ. They see Him there; they hear His voice; they listen and they believe in Him. It is not so much that they accept certain doctrines taught by Him as that they accept Himself, their Lord and their God. It is with this living personal force that Agnosticism has to deal; and as long as the Gospels present Him to human hearts, so long will the Christian faith and the Christian Church, in their main characteristics, be vital and permanent forces in the Christian world.” Here is and ever shall be Christianity’s glory, the Son of God and the Son of Mary—the Christ who on earth matched every sermon with a service and every doctrine with a doing; the Christ who in Heaven is enthroned amid native scenes and clothed with Divine authority, recognised more and more in the Church and world as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And this Exalted Christ, let us never forget, is the once Crucified Christ. More

in the Church of the future, if possible, than in the Church of the past will the Cross be emphasised and glorified. The richest theme of the Church's future will be God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Much of the preaching in our day, even in Evangelical pulpits, is struck to a lower key. IV. In the fourth place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future to the problem SOCIOLOGICAL? A most practical and important question this, also peculiarly suited to our day and generation. Ours is pre-eminently an age of practical benevolence and utilitarian tendencies. We are unlike all of our predecessors. The Roman craved the display of wondrous power and imperial sway. The Greek delighted to lose himself in the abstruse labyrinth of metaphysics. The Hebrew made it part of his religion to bow down before hoary rites and flaming sacrifice. We live in a stern age of fact; an age in which, as a scholarly master of Sociology has well said, Society is coming to itself and emphasising Sociology, Social ethics, Social politics; an age in which religion means the salvation of the soul, but also, as it meant with Jesus, the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the healing of the sick, and relief, comfort, and help for the whole being. With the deeper life and broader outlook which the coming century will bring to the children of God there will be felt, with a new power, the truth that there is nothing secular which religion cannot both touch and glorify; that God never meant His saints to have one Gospel for Sunday and another for Monday, one religion for the Church and another for the world, one conscience for Caesar and another for Jehovah. that goodness is not a little island here and there in the great ocean of life, but rather the all-permeating salt that fills every part of the bright, broad sea. V. In the fifth place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future in relation to CHRISTIAN UNITY? To this interesting question it may be answered that there never was among God's people, as to-day, such an unity of spirit in the bonds of peace. But the Church may never, should never, become organically one. Men differ too widely in birth and education for this ever to be accomplished. The universal law of God in grace, as in Nature, is unity in diversity. And yet, with absolute fidelity to the great fundamental truths of the Gospel, we shall more and more realise the prayer of the Master, "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee"; not one in organic union, but one in heart and purpose, in will and work. VI. In the sixth place, what will be the attitude of the Church of the future in relation to WORLD-WIDE EVANGELISATION? The spirit of missions, which is the Spirit of Christ, is recognised and actualised to-day as perhaps never before. The history of the sacred, self-sacrificing anointing of nineteen hundred years ago repeats itself from time to time. One hundred years ago the Church drew out of its hiding-place, where for centuries it had lain in almost absolute inutility, the glorious commission of its Lord. And to-day everywhere in Christian lands the orders of our Lord are being obeyed and appreciated with something of their far-reaching meaning and transcendent glory. To-day the Bible is within reach of 500,000,000 of the human race, and many things in connection with the missionary cause—the Word of God, the history of the past, the condition of the present, the promises of the future—appear to be hastening "that one Divine, far-off event to which the whole creation moves," the conquest of the world by the King of Glory and the Prince of Peace! (*K. B. Tupper, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—27. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns.—*The World-powers and Israel*.—A glance at the particulars in this vision is enough to satisfy us that we have to do with some of the same powers brought to view in the preceding chapter, and in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. What, at first glance, we might be disposed to regard as mere repetitions are not such in reality. There is something connected with the repetition to adapt it to some altered position, end, or intent. In the two preceding visions we behold the pictures of the powers of the world as a whole, without regard to any distinction between Jew and Gentile. It is human dominion in its broadest view, in the entirety of its history—first as outwardly considered, and then as spiritually considered, and finally superseded by the Kingdom of God. The vision now in hand is given, not in Chaldee, but in Hebrew. What Daniel is shown of these world-power manifestations he sees and hears not only as a spiritual man of God, but more particularly as a Jewish prophet, and as mainly concerning the Jewish people. Hence the dominion of Babylon is left out entirely, for it was now on the eve of its downfall, and nothing more was to come of it to the Jews. It is still the

same world-power in its various forms which constitutes the subject of this vision, but with the emphasis now on what particularly concerns the Jewish prophet, and with all else touched but lightly, or not at all. . . . To little purpose do we read the Book of Daniel not to find in it a solemn warning to the Church of our time, and for all the days yet to come, to beware of the fascinating flatteries and secularising expedients and compliances which, in the self-idolising spirit of spurious charity, specious liberality, and heartless scepticism, would tempt her to forget her Divine origin and Heavenly destiny. There is a spirit abroad which would have the Church rescind her sacred charter, cancel her authentic commission, and assimilate herself to a mere political or conventional institution. Men call it a liberalising spirit, a spirit of improvement, which would change our Christian schools and colleges into mere secular gymnasia and scientific museums or artistic studios and literary athenæums; but it is a spirit which is prone to treat holy Scriptures as mere human lucubrations of worthy men before the ages of better light, rationalise away all the definite doctrines of the authorised creed into mere scholastic or philosophical theorems, dissolve the sacraments into picturesque symbolism and visionary shadows without life or power, and dismantle the ministry and services of the Church as if they never had a solid right to be regarded as the appointment of very God for conveying and imparting to lost men the regenerating, sanctifying and only restorative gifts of Jehovah's grace. It is the spirit of Antichrist. Many of the so-called churches, and the leaders of the prevailing religious sentiment of our day, are sowing for a harvest of miseries of which they but little dream. Daniel was greatly affected by these visions, and the explanations made of them, as he well might be. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Vision of the Ram and the He-Goat*.—Learn: 1. The strength of one evil habit may overcome even the mightiest conqueror. Alexander the Great died as the victim of his own excesses at the early age of thirty-three. He could conquer the world by his armies, yet intemperance was his master and destroyer. How many there are among us who have made similar conquests, and been themselves similarly overcome. Think of Lord Byron and Robert Burns, the two poets. To no purpose shall we gain other crowns if we are ourselves the slaves of appetite. It is easier to acquire a habit than it is to break it off. 2. Conformity to the world is fraught with great danger to the people of God. If we have been right in conjecturing that the evils which came upon the Jews in the days of Antiochus were designed as chastisements for their unfaithfulness to the covenant, the history over which we have come is, in this regard, full of most salutary warning. Nor does it stand alone. The tendency of these days is to minimise the difference between the Christian and other men. So it happens that the Church of Christ is invaded by the unbelieving, and its power to resist and overcome the world is thereby sadly weakened. That which gives salt its value is its saltiness; and when that quality is lost by it, men cast it from them and trample it underfoot. Our peculiarities as Christians are the very elements of our power. By these it is that the Church has its aggressive force and purifying influence upon the world. 3. Learn, in conclusion, the limited power of the enemies of God's people. The spoliation of Jerusalem by Antiochus was to be only for a season. The world-tyrant could only go a certain length. God is stronger than the mightiest man; and so to the people of God who continue faithful unto Him there is a limit to calamity. The longest night is followed by the dawn. As the proverb has it, "Time and the hour run through the roughest day." Then be patient, be uncompromising, be courageous. (*William M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Vision of the Ram and the He-Goat*.—This second vision of Daniel came to him in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar. If the first year of Belshazzar, during which Daniel had his first vision, corresponded with the seventh year of his father Nabonidus, the year following that in which Media was conquered by Cyrus, the third year of Belshazzar would be the tenth year of Nabonidus, and so about 546 B.C. The scene of the vision was Shushan, or Susa, the capital of Elam, and afterwards one of the chief residences of the Persian kings. Shushan, which means a lily, may have been so called from the many white lilies which grew in its neighbourhood. The language of Daniel leaves it doubtful whether, when he received the vision, he was present at Shushan in the body or only in the spirit, like to Ezekiel when he was removed to Jerusalem to see the causes of his impending doom (Ezek. viii.). As Elam, which lay to the east of Babylonia, seems to have become a tributary province of the empire in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel as the prime minister would sometimes probably visit Shushan its capital; but as the history of Elam during this period is very obscure, it would be hazardous to affirm that he was actually present in Shushan when he received the vision, although it seems to me that he might. The likelihood seems to be that Cyrus would leave Elam untouched, not only until after the conquest of Media, Lydia, and Persia, but also until after he had made adequate preparations for the more formidable task of conquering the great Babylonian empire. In that case Daniel might be in Shushan in the tenth year of Nabonidus, which we have supposed to be the third year of his son Belshazzar, in con-

nection with the mustering of the forces of Elam against Cyrus; and his actual presence there for the purposes of defence would give peculiar point and significance to the vision. The first thing in the vision which met the eye of the ecstatic Daniel was a ram with two horns (v. 3, 4). The river Ulai (the Eulæus of the Greeks) before which the ram stood, apparently on the opposite side of the stream, seems to have been "a large artificial canal, some nine hundred feet broad, though it is now dry, which left the Choaspes at Pai Pul, about twenty miles north-west of Susa, passed close by the town of Susa on the north or north-east, and afterwards joined the Coprates" (Driver). In connection with the ram there is in the original, the numeral one, to bring into relief the fact that the ram had two horns. The ram is the symbol of the Medo-Persian empire, as the angel Gabriel said to Daniel: "The ram which thou sawest that had two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia." This symbol corresponds with that of the arms and breast of silver in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and with that of the bear raised up on one side in the first vision of Daniel. The two horns, which represent the kingdoms of Media and Persia, were both high or conspicuous horns, while the horn which was higher than the other, and which came up after it, represents the kingdom of Persia, which until the time of Cyrus was but a tributary of Media, but which grew and became the more powerful and conspicuous member of the united kingdom. This is seen in the fact that at the first, as in this book, the empire is spoken of as that of the Medes and Persians, but afterwards, as in the book of Esther, as that of the Persians and the Medes (Esther i. 3, 14, 18, 19). As the symbol of the ram with the two horns here represents the Medo-Persian empire, it is strange that anyone should explain the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and that of Daniel's first vision to mean the Medes alone. The idea of a Median empire succeeding the Babylonian is, as the higher critics admit, a gross historical blunder; but then they ascribe the blunder, which they themselves have created, to the ignorance of the author, and apply to their own workmanship the well-sounding name of scientific criticism. As Daniel looked at the ram with the two horns on the other side of the Ulai, he saw it pushing or butting westward, and northward and southward, and overthrowing all the beasts which came in its way, and glorying in its crushing and victorious power. This is a striking description of the conquests and spirit of the Medo-Persian empire. In the west it vanquished Babylon and Syria; in the north Lydia, Armenia, and the Scythian nations; and in the south part of Arabia, Egypt, and Ethiopia. It was more of a world-empire than Babylon, and for a time resistless in its conquering career, and became in an eminent degree a despotic and vainglorious power. The next part of the vision relates to the he-goat (v. 5, 8). This is the interpretation given by Gabriel to Daniel: "And the rough he-goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. And as for that which was broken, in the place whereof four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power." The he-goat with its one great horn at the first, and afterwards with its four notable horns, the symbol of the Græco-Macedonian empire, corresponds with the belly and thighs of brass of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and with the four-winged leopard with four heads in Daniel's first vision. There is a likeness of a he-goat with one notable horn between its eyes still to be seen in the sculptures at Persepolis. The first king of the Græco-Macedonian empire, symbolised by the one great horn between the eyes, is Alexander the Great. This remarkable man, who at thirteen became for three years the pupil of the famous Aristotle, was born in 356 B.C., and ascended the throne of Macedonia in 336 B.C., when he was twenty years of age. Within two years after his coronation he had made himself the recognised leader of the Grecian peoples; and in 334 B.C. he crossed the Hellespont to overthrow the Medo-Persian empire with not more perhaps than 30,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry, and began the struggle by completely routing the Persians in battle at the Granicus. He then overran and subdued a large part of Asia Minor, and in 333 B.C. dealt a crushing blow to the immense army of Darius at Issus in Cilicia. Instead of pursuing the beaten Darius the youthful conqueror marched southward through Syria and Palestine, taking Tyre after a siege of seven months, and Gaza after a siege of two, and entered Egypt, where he not only overthrew the Persian rule, but founded the city of Alexandria for his new kingdom. In 331 B.C. he left Egypt and hastened with all speed through Palestine and Syria to Thapsacus, where he crossed the Euphrates, and then onwards to the Tigris, below Nineveh, which he crossed without opposition. Some days after Alexander encountered the army of Darius, said to be more than a million in number, posted on a broad plain stretching from Guagamela to Arbela, and completely routed it, and thus practically ended the Medo-Persian empire, which had lasted for a period of 218 years. In the following year, 330 B.C., Darius, after he had fled to Susa, then to Persepolis (Pasargade), and then to Ecbatana, three of the royal residences of the Persian kings, made his escape into Bactria, where he was assassinated. In three years the little king of Macedonia had made himself master of the vast Medo-Persian empire. The rapidity of his movements is aptly likened

to that of a four-winged leopard in the first vision, and in this to that of a he-goat bounding along without touching the ground. His attacks on the armies of Darius were like those of the he-goat on the ram with the two horns. Darius, like the ram, had no power to resist him; and Alexander, like the he-goat, "cast him down to the ground, and trampled upon him; and there was none to deliver the ram out of his hand." Alexander, too, like the he-goat, "magnified himself exceedingly." His extraordinary successes impressed him with the idea that he must be more than human; and, to settle the matter, when he was in Egypt, he sent to enquire of the oracle of Ammon, which, knowing what would please the vainglorious conqueror, gave the answer that he was the son, not of Philip, but of Zeus. Hence, to the disgust of many of his followers, he claimed to be divine, and expected to be worshipped with divine honours. And he, like the great horn, was "broken in his strength." He was cut off at Babylon by fever, aggravated by intemperance, when in the midst of his successes, and not yet thirty-three years of age. After the breaking of the great horn the four notable horns, which came up towards the four winds of Heaven, are explained by Gabriel to be four kingdoms that would stand up out of the nation, but not with his power. The four horns of the he-goat correspond with the four heads of the leopard in the first vision. Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C.; and for twenty-two years after the empire was in a condition of conflict and confusion; but in 301 B.C. it was divided into four kingdoms, all of which were weaker than the original empire. Seleucus got what may be called the eastern kingdom of Syria, Babylonia, and the countries as far as India; Cassander, the western kingdom of Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus, the northern kingdom of Thrace and Bithynia; and Ptolemy, the southern kingdom of Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia Petrea. These four kingdoms were towards the four winds of Heaven. The little horn is admitted on all hands to be Antiochus Epiphanes, who seized the throne of Syria in 175 B.C., in the absence of his nephew Demetrius, the rightful heir. He might be called a little horn, partly from the depressed state of the kingdom of Syria at the time, and partly from his own depressed state, as he had been a hostage at Rome for the seven preceding years. In the eyes of the world such a king would be very insignificant. The period in which he would arise is said to be "in the latter time of the kingdom (the Græco-Macedonian empire), when the transgressors are come to the full," that is, when the Jewish people had filled up the cup of their iniquity. Many of the Jews with their high priest apostatised in the early days of Antiochus, and adopted the heathen customs of the Greeks. The period of the little horn is also said to belong to the time of the end. Gabriel said to Daniel, v. 17: "Understand O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end"; and again, v. 19: "Behold I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongeth to the appointed time of the end." The time of the end seems to refer to the end of the present age, as distinguished from the future age of the Messiah. The appearance of the little horn, which would be in the latter time of God's indignation against His chosen people, would show that men were living in the last stage of the old order of things, and that a new order of things was about to arise. Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn which was to arise in the time of the end, is minutely and accurately described. He was "a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences," noted for his hard-hearted cruelty and crafty dissimulation. Though a little horn at the first, "he waxed exceeding great toward the glorious land." The south refers to Egypt, against which he undertook several campaigns, and would have made a complete conquest of it, had it not been for the interference of the Romans; the east refers to his military expeditions into Armenia, Bactria, and Elymais; and the glorious land, "the glory of all lands" in Ezekiel (xx. 6), refers to Palestine which he so grievously oppressed. His success was due, not so much to inherent ability as to the favouring providence of God and the practice of dissimulation. The one cause is pointed out in the words, "And his power shall be mighty; but not by his own power"; and the other in the words, "And through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand." And in his successful career, "he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people," that is, powerful foes in the world and the chosen people of Israel. The destructive power of the little horn is especially noted in reference to the holy people. We read: "And it waxed great even to the host of heaven: and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground and trampled upon them." The host of Heaven and the stars refer to the same, and not to different persons; and the stars here symbolise, not the angels but the chosen people, partly because the seed of Abraham had been likened to the stars for multitude (Gen. xv. 5), but mainly because they are sometimes called the Lord's host (Ex. vii. 4; xii. 41). This was fulfilled in his two captures of Jerusalem, when many of the inhabitants were slain, and in his persecution of those who refused to abandon their religion (Jos. Ant. xii. 3, 4). "Yea," continues Daniel, "it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host; and it took away from him the continual burnt offering and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And the host was given over to it, together with the

continual burnt offering through transgression; and it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered." This describes the attempt of Antiochus to extinguish the religion of the Jews. The arch-persecutor was opposed not only to the host but to the prince of the host. His aim was to blast the glory, and overthrow the power of the Most High. He plundered His temple, and caused the daily sacrifice to cease, and transformed the altar of Jehovah into an altar dedicated to the worship of idols. And because of the transgressions of the host Antiochus, like Nebuchadnezzar in reference to the destruction of Solomon's temple, was permitted to do his pleasure and prosper. (*T. Kirk.*)

Ver. 9. And out of one of them came forth a little horn.—*A Little Horn*:—If we would know who he is that is signified by this horn, it is necessary that we have his characteristic features and qualities exhibited before us, that we may survey them at one view. 1. He arose out of one of the four horns which were on the he-goat, *i.e.*, one of the kingdoms into which the Grecian empire was divided. 2. He arose in the latter time of their kingdom. 3. He was little at first. 4. But he afterwards waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 5. He fights immediately against God. 6. And the host of the saints. 7. This takes place at a time when the daily sacrifice is in use, while the sanctuary is yet standing, and when transgressions in Israel have come to the full. He takes away the sacrifice, and stamps upon and profanes the sanctuary. 8. This king prospers in his enterprises against God and the saints. 9. He is impudent and cruel. 10. Crafty and deceitful. 11. His power is great, yet there is another power concealed under it. 12. He is broken without hand, *i.e.*, destroyed without the intervention of man. It is impossible for any who duly attends to these features and qualities to apply this prophecy to Mahomet, or to the kingdom of the Turks and Saracens. There does not appear to be any reason why we should depart from the ancient and commonly received interpretation, which applies this prophecy to Antiochus Epiphanes, especially as it speaks of a king, not of a kingdom, and specifies the personal qualities of this king, such as impudence, cruelty, cunning, and deceit, which are altogether inapplicable to a whole kingdom. He is a king raging with unexampled malignity against God and His people, and prefiguring an Antichrist who should not have his equal among all who had preceded him. (*Magnus F. Roos, A.M.*)

Ver. 19. At the time appointed the end shall be.—*A Safe Prospective*:—Human nature anxiously desires to know something of the future. If we were told to-night that we could repair to a certain spot, where we might lift the veil of our own history, and foresee the course of our own lives during the next few years, I am afraid very few of us could be trusted to absent ourselves from such a place, or miss such an opportunity. Be persuaded, however, that with the exception of some grand feature, some magnificent outline which God has revealed, the future is absolutely shut from human eye; and as to the details which concern your life or mine, it is utterly impossible that we should ever become acquainted with them by any manner of horoscope, or soothsaying, or bibliomancy. Why is it that the future is thus shut out from our view? Is it not because the present is enough to occupy our talents? Rightly to serve our God in this present hour will take all the strength we have, and all the strength we can obtain from God. Sufficient unto the day is not only the evil thereof, but the service thereof. Men who live too much in the past, and go beyond that which is rightly conservative, become of little service in the world; and men who are tempted to regulate their movements by forecasts of the future, will always become abstracted, speculative, empirical, full of sentiment, and void of assiduity, but certainly of no service whatever in the stern battle of to-day. God has concealed the future from us, probably, with a view to relieve our career through the world of dull monotony, and infuse into it new phases of stirring interest. Life would not wear such a lively aspect if it were all spread out in a map before us on the day of the commencement of our pilgrimage. Much of the pleasantness of a journey lies in unexpected views and scenes which burst upon the traveller as he climbs a hill or descends into a dale. If he could see all at once, one long, unvariegated avenue, it would become weary walking for him; but the very freshness and novelty of the events, adventures, and contingencies constantly occurring, help to make life exciting, if not happy. Has not God also hid the future from us that we may not labour under the sense of being like "dumb driven cattle," who have no will and no freedom, but both do and suffer what they are compelled by an agency irresistible? Moreover, is it not to be counted for a thousand mercies in one that all the future is concealed from us, since that future is of a very chequered character, casting, as one hath said, beams of hope and shadows of fear over the stage both of active and contemplative life? Some of it is bright with pleasure; much of it is dim with sorrow. What then if we knew the pleasure would come, should we not begin to reckon upon it? Surely the current of time would flow on heavily until the pleasant day arrived. Per-

haps we should be really drawing bills at a very heavy discount upon the future if we knew it sufficiently to forestall the season of prosperity. And as for the troubles, the perils, and the afflictions that await us, if we knew of them beforehand, we should be pretty sure, with our natural tendency to graceless unbelief and morbid anxiety, to begin to carry the burden before the day came for us to carry it in. No, my Lord, it would be a fatal gift if thou wouldst bestow upon any one of us the power to know his own future. I. First, then, it is well for us to remember that **EVERYTHING IN THE FUTURE IS APPOINTED**. Nothing shall happen to us which God has not foreseen. No unexpected event shall destroy His plans; no emergency shall transpire for which He has not provided; no peril shall occur against which He has not guarded. There shall come no remarkable event which shall take Him by surprise. He seeth the end from the beginning, and the things that are not, as though they were. To God's eye there is no past and no future. We may derive no small comfort from this fact; for, suppose one goes to sea under the most skilful captain; that captain cannot possibly know what may occur during the voyage, and with the greatest foresight he can never promise an absolutely safe passage. There may be dangers which he has never yet encountered. But when you come into the ship of Providence, He who is at the helm is the Master of every wind that shall blow, and of every wave that shall break its force upon that ship; and He foresees as well the events that shall happen at the harbour for which we make, as those that happen at the port from which we start. How safe are we, then, when embarked in the good ship of Providence, with such a Captain who has fore-arranged and fore-ordained all things from the beginning even unto the end. And, furthermore, how much it becomes us to put implicit confidence in His guidance! It should always be remembered in connection with this subject that we are no believers in fate—seeing that fate is a different doctrine altogether from predestination. Fate says the thing is and must be; so it is decreed. But the true doctrine is—God has appointed this and that, not because it must be, but because it is best that it should be. Fate is blind, but the destiny of Scripture is full of eyes. Fate is stern and adamant, and has no tears for human sorrow; but the arrangements of Providence are kind and good. The greatest good for the greatest number, and the glory of God above all, are the ends that are therein subserved. All the appointments of His providence, especially towards His people, are ruled in mercy, in tenderness, in love, and in wisdom, and all are conducive to their highest interest and their greatest happiness. Oh! but this is a blessed truth; oh! it is sweet, to be able to say, "From this day forth, whatever happeneth to me, be it little or be it great, I am content. Though I am altogether unaware what it shall be, I am not sorry that I am unaware of it; for this one thing I know, there shall happen nothing but what God permits; I shall be left to no demon's power; I shall not be cast away like an orphan; I shall not be beyond my Father's eye, and my Father's hand." If one could think that there was somewhere one grain of dust floating in the atmosphere that was not under Divine superintendence, one might wish to escape from it as from a plague. If one could believe that there was an hour of the night, or say a single second throughout the livelong year, in which the hand of God was withdrawn from nature, or a single event in which God was not concerned, and His will was not consulted, one might tremble till that black hour had passed, or till that dread event, like a vial full of evil, had been effectually poured out and put away. But now each hour is safe, for God has made it so. I would, with special earnestness, beg you to believe that God is in little things. It is the little troubles of life that annoy us the most. The little stones in the sandal make the traveller limp; while great stones do him little hurt, for he soon leaps over them. Believe that God arranges the littles. Take the little troubles as they come; remember them to your God, because they come from God. Believe that nothing is little to God which concerns His people. II. But now there is a **SPECIAL APPOINTMENT WITH REGARD TO CERTAIN ENDS**. I am not going to pursue the connection, but the text itself will suffice me, for it saith "at the time appointed the end shall be." Now, there are certain "ends" to which you and I are looking forward with great expectancy. There is the end of the present trouble—let us think of that. Whatever submission we may have to the Divine will, it is not natural for us to love affliction; we desire to reach the end and come forth from the trial. "At the time appointed the end shall be." You have been slandered in your character—a very frequent trial to God's servants—and you are irritated and vexed, and in a great haste to answer it, to rebut the calumny and to vindicate your reputation. Be very quiet, and patient. Bear it all. Stand still and see the salvation of God, for light is sown for the righteous, and He will bring forth your righteousness like the light, and your judgment as the noonday. "At the time appointed the end shall be." When the dogs are tired they will leave off barking, and when the Lord bids them be still, they shall not dare to move a tongue against you. You are in poverty. It is some time since you had a situation in which you could earn your daily bread. Are you a child of God? Have you learned to cast your burden upon the Lord?

Then, "At the time appointed the end shall be." There shall yet be deliverance for you. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." It may be that the end you are desiring is greater usefulness, and you have been panting after this for years. You keep to your work still, for "At the time appointed the end shall be." God will not suffer the faithful worker to work in vain; your labour of love shall not be in vain in the Lord. You are looking forward, some of you, to the end of your life's battle. Life is to the genuine Christian an incessant fight. The moment we are converted the battle begins. But, glory be to God, "in the time appointed the end of this warfare shall be." So, too, with the service of our lives. I think no servant of God is tired of serving his Master; we may be tired in the service, though not tired of it. It shall be all finished. The topstone of your life-work shall be brought out with shouting of "Grace, grace," unto it. You shall lay your crown at His feet from whom you received it, and you shall hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "In the time appointed the end shall be." With many a child of God life is not merely a warfare spiritually, and a work for God outwardly, but it is attended with much of suffering. Ah! I know many servants of God whose every breath seems to be a pang; their poor bodies are in such a condition that life is like protracted death. Well, weary sufferer, "in the time appointed the end shall be." III. All things are appointed, and especially these sacred and blessed ends; but remember that besides the ends ALL THE MEANS TO THE ENDS are also appointed—all that intervenes is appointed too. Balance this thought with the other. My trouble appointed! Yes, but there is an appointed portion of grace that shall sustain me under it—grace exactly according to the measure of my necessity while under the tribulation. Temptation appointed! Yes, but there is appointed extraordinary help to deliver the soul from going down into the pit, and to pluck the foot out of the net, lest by any means one sheep of Christ should be devoured by the lion of hell. Thou fearest sickness, because that may be appointed, but it is also appointed, "I will make all his bed in his sickness," and that appointment carries you over the other. And now, there is nothing in this truth that can give any comfort to those who are not reconciled to God. It is a great and terrible truth to those who are not God's friends. At the time appointed the end shall be. What a winding up awaits those who will encounter the doom of the impenitent, no tongue can describe. Why rebel against the King of Heaven? Why set up thy will against the Divine will? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 25. **The Prince of Princes.**—*A Good Prince.*—This text calls attention to the four ancient empires, and the circumstances connected with the people of God in the various operations and doings of these empires. I. **THE PRINCE.** Jesus Christ, as the representative of His people, hath "power with God and with man, and hath prevailed." He is an interposing Prince on behalf of a chosen people. II. **THE PRINCES.** "The Prince of princes." Jesus Christ has entire authority over the princes and kings of the earth. And His people, His companions are princes. They get their royal name after Him; the whole family in Heaven and earth are named after Him. III. **THE ADVERSARY.** "He shall be broken without hand"; by the judgment of God independent of man. (James Wells.)

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 3. **And I set my face unto the Lord God.**—*Setting the Face unto the Lord.*—Daniel, when he would seek God, "set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer." He was an eminently holy man, and far advanced in piety. His example cannot be an unfitting one to follow. 1. There must be great difficulties to the proper and effectual seeking after God. Some things we do without difficulty; our mind goes naturally and easily to their performance. Before man's fall, his mind would as naturally turn to God, rejoice in Him, and be lifted up towards Him, as he now delights in a bright and glorious day. It is not so now. It is a very difficult matter to set ourselves rightly to seek God. Man cannot seek God aright unless the power of God works in him to bring him to do it. How can any bring a broken and a contrite heart, which is the proper offering before God, unless God the Spirit break it? Do we naturally give up sin, or naturally wish to do it? Is it easy to confess our sins, to find them out, to ascertain them, whether sins of the heart or life? Try earnestly and honestly to seek God, and you will soon find the difficulty. Various hindrances indeed there are, in coming to the Mercy Seat. 2. Multitudes are

ever seeking God who do not set their faces to seek. Scripture is clear respecting waverers. There are many persons of this kind, earnest to-day, dead again to-morrow; by fits at prayer, and then prayerless again. Such obtain nothing of the Lord. Others, though seeking, will not give up every wilful sin. Who can be a Christian without a sacrifice? Who can enter the strait gate without a struggle? You seek in vain if you allow a worldly spirit; unless you come to God, and honestly and earnestly wish to have the love of the world destroyed in your heart. There is one way of approach to God, and but one; one name and one only to plead—the name of Jesus Christ. 3. Some hints on the setting of our face unto the Lord our God. You must give time for this. There must be going to work in right earnest; diligent inquiry for the sins of the life, and for the sins of the heart, and a confessing them with real sorrow before God. There must be, from the beginning of our seeking, a looking for, and a reliance upon, God's help. And we may look for His help. The first honest and sincere cry or sigh of a returning sinner is noticed by a gracious God. That cry never goes up for help in vain. 4. The importance of thus "setting our face unto the Lord God to seek." Remember that we cannot succeed without this. Think of the blessings which God bestows upon those who thus seek, what wonderful promises He has made to them. They deserve all such seeking and sacrifices as we have shown to be needful. You are commanded thus to seek God. God's commands are the most gracious and beneficent things to us that there are. 5. Special reasons which may be given to different individuals why they should at once resolutely, looking up to God for help, do this: (1) Those who have never yet thus "set their face unto the Lord God." Your eternal happiness depends upon your seeking, or your everlasting perdition. (2) Turn to some Christians. Some of you are hindered by something in your course. If you would follow Daniel's example you might be freed from this hindrance. Again, someone is in a particular strait and difficulty. Does no door open? Is the way dark? Have recourse to thus seeking to God. Go to this duty at once. It must be done now. Let there be no delay. Begin now, earnestly, resolutely, in prayer and dependence of God's merciful help, and the result shall not be an early failure or disappointment. God will help the soul at its first really sincere and honest cry to Him for help. (*J. E. Dalton, B.D.*) *Righteousness not a Position but a Direction*:—That is a good word about the young Hebrew, Daniel—it says so much. "I set my face to the Lord God." And that is the real question about life: which way are you facing; in which direction are you really looking and living? Righteousness, not a position, but a direction. Let me first make this distinction plain, and then you will see the importance of it. The common idea, then, of the difference between right and wrong is that right and wrong are two separate territories as it were, and that there is a boundary line dividing them, like the frontier line between two countries, and that anywhere on the right side of that boundary line is right. Or, people figure particular sins as if they were separate provinces in the general territory of wrong, each sin with its own boundary line, on one side of which you are in sin—but that so long as you have not actually crossed that line into sin, you are all right. And a great deal of the moral discussion of the world has been spent on trying to map out these exact lines where the right ends and the wrong begins, the line up to which you may go without sinning. Well, that seems very plausible—and yet a glance into real life, and at some of the very commonest matters of right and wrong, is sufficient to show that at any rate there is a great deal of life in which it is quite impossible to draw any such distinct lines between right and wrong! Try to draw the line between industry and idleness, and to say exactly how industrious a man ought to be in order not to be counted an idler. But you cannot do it! Or, take selfishness. Who can lay down exactly how far I ought to consider myself, and mark the point at which selfishness begins; or how far I ought to do what I like, or how far give up to others? Why it cannot be done, if you were to argue about it for a year! Or, take such constantly present questions as that of right and wrong in eating and drinking, or any kind of indulgence. Is there any clear line to be drawn between what is temperate and what is intemperate? Certainly covetousness is a sin. But where exactly does it begin to be so? So it is, palpably, with regard to a great deal of right and wrong. But really, it is so even in things which at first sight look so clear and distinct in their moral outline that you are apt to say—that there can be no haziness or uncertainty in them. Take truth, for instance, or honesty. Truth is apt to look just as exact and precise as a mathematical figure—whether a thing is true or not true, whether you are telling the truth or not—it seems as if it ought to be possible to define that anyhow. And honesty! Is anyone going to say that honesty and dishonesty shade off into one another—why it seems like sapping the very clearest distinction of morality. And yet it is so. No exact line can be drawn in either matter. If you had been sheltering a fugitive slave in the old days of slavery, would truth make it your duty to answer the question if he was with you? Or, if you are bargaining about some goods you want to sell, does honesty require you to tell everything you know to their disadvantage, or is it

enough if you answer truly every actual question that is asked you? Must truth be told to criminals when it will help them in a crime? And so I might go through every part of human conduct, and the more closely you look into it, the more you will find that there is no such thing as drawing any absolute line between right and wrong anywhere. But what does that mean? That, therefore, there is not any real difference between them, or that the distinction between them is imperceptible? Not for a moment. The difference between right and wrong is the most tremendous distinction in the world. No distinction of painful or pleasant can compare with it—only it is not of that sort. There comes in the thought—and I think it is a helpful thought, that it is not a difference of place or position, but of direction. A single illustration gives it to you at once. It is simply like the difference between east and west. Is there any dividing line between east and west? No! Who can tell where the east stops and the west begins? No one; and yet does that mean that there is no difference between east and west, or that it is a hazy, obscure difference? Not at all. Simply it is this same difference not of two places, but of two directions. You cannot possibly draw a dividing line between east and west, but you can tell in a moment whether you are going east or west, or whether your face is set towards the east or towards the west. And so, though there never was a line drawn which could divide exactly right from wrong, you can tell in a moment whether you are living in the direction of right or in the direction of wrong. There, then, is the true distinction—and now let us follow it out a little and see the importance of it. For it begins at the very beginning of life, and it lies at the root of all clear, strong righteousness. And, on the other hand, that idea that righteousness consists in not crossing some dividing line into wrong, is just the most treacherous and fertile source of wrong. As long as one fancies that sin only begins at some distinct line, one is tempted to go just as near that line as one can—while really the sin is begun, and going on all the time that one is facing that way! You can see how this works, from the cradle up. You mothers—you tell your little child, playing about you as you work, not to go out of the room! And it goes to the door—and it looks out—and if you speak it says, "I didn't go out!" And then it puts one foot just on the threshold—very likely looking at you all the while—and then ventures it a little further—and still, when you shake your head, it says, "I haven't gone out!" Do you know why it is so hard to teach children the true lesson—not merely to keep from crossing some actual line of wrong, but to keep from looking that way, or going that way at all? Because so many of those who want children to be taught that lesson have not learned it themselves! Men and women are constantly just like that little child. They do not intend to sin, or at least they feel they must not, and they think they will not. But they will look towards it, and they will go to the very edge of it, and look over, and perhaps put one foot on the very threshold—and yet if conscience brings them up with a round turn, they try to justify themselves by saying that they have not actually crossed the line! That is how nine-tenths of the world's sinning comes! Young men, don't you know how this often works in a young man's life—this trying how near one can go to the edge of sin without actually going over the edge? A young fellow comes up from school, or from some country home, to take his place in the great world, and the false glamour of it by and by begins to get hold of him. But he does not mean to sin; he has grace enough to shrink from that. No—he won't sin, he says; but he begins to go with those who do; he hears them talk and brag of the pleasures they have; he half envies them the daring with which they sin—and he will go to places where it is all about—and still when conscience comes in, in quiet hours, he tries to take some poor comfort by making believe with himself that he has not actually sinned. Sinned? Why, his whole attitude is sin. His face and his heart are set towards sin all the time. And it is the same all through life. Just look up the record of any ten men who have got into jail, and you will find that nine out of the ten were led the first steps of the way which brought them there by that mischievous idea that there was some dead-line of sin, which if they did not cross, they would be right. And not only is this the source of actual crime—and of what the world definitely labels sin—but also it is the source of all the poor, unworthy life that there is in the world. The people who are not exactly thieves—but who will take an advantage of you if they can; the people who even while they are working have not their hearts really set to work, but are facing towards idleness and amusement; that character which in business is always "sailing rather close to the wind," and, still more common in the world, that kind of life which perhaps plumes itself on never breaking a commandment or doing anything wrong, and yet that has no real love of goodness, no genuine desire for goodness—that is the kind of life which keeps the world back, and keeps the church back, and keeps the tone of society low and mean. Friends, this is God's call to us. Not just to keep from certain forbidden things, or from crossing some actual line of sin—but to set our faces clear the other way—towards right, towards all the just, pure, kind, godly life. It is Christ and all His setting forth of life that have brought this out fully for us—no

longer law, but love, no longer the mere keeping from a certain list of forbidden things, but active, forward-looking service. That is the secret of effective life and of happy life to keep righteousness before us as the whole direction of our living. There is not a day, hardly an hour, but this principle—of righteousness being not a position, but a direction—comes in. It cuts right through the moral casuistry by which the steps of duty so easily get entangled, in discussing just how far this or that way may be pursued without some actual sin! Then does righteousness, in this thought of it, become not a drag, but a motive power, not a restraint, but an inspiration, not condemnation, but glory! I do not say that it is easy; there is no way of looking at it that can make righteousness easy. One may set one's face ever so earnestly in the right direction, and still the tempting passions will allure and the weak resolution will flag and stumble. The Roman moralist confessed that while he loved the better, he sometimes followed the worse—and even Paul himself says that though he delights in the law of God after the inward man, yet he finds another law in his members bringing him into captivity to sin and death. No! There is no grand moral victory even that way, even by facing the right way—and still, it is the only really onward way at all—and with the heart and face set really towards right and God, strength must keep growing—and the sense of a Divine help that will not give us up, and the upward way becomes not quite so hard; and even through clinging weakness and sin, to keep the heart still set towards the right is itself—no! not victory, but the promise of some final victory, the prophecy of how at last we may be lifted out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God! (*Brooke Herford, D.D.*)

Daniel, the Man of Prayer:—The prophet Daniel became a great proficient both in penitential and in intercessory prayer as the years went on. And he came to that great proficiency just as a great proficiency is come to in any other science or art; that is to say, by constant, and unremitting, and enterprising practice. Lord teach us to pray, said a disciple on one occasion to our Lord. But not even our Lord, with all His willingness, and all His ability, can teach any of us to pray. Every man must teach himself this most personal, and most secret, and most experimental; this greatest and best of all the arts. Every man must find out the best ways of prayer for himself. There is no royal road; there is no short or easy road to proficiency in prayer. You must also have special and extraordinary seasons of prayer, as Daniel had, over and above his daily habit of prayer. Special and extraordinary; original and unparalleled seasons of prayer, when you literally do nothing else day nor night but pray. Now, it is plain that you cannot teach a lifetime of experiment and attainment like that to any chance man; and, especially, you cannot teach it to a man who still detests the very thought of such prayer. It was his yoke in his youth that first taught Daniel to pray. And Babylon taught Daniel and his three friends all to pray, and to pray together in their chambers as we read. To be arrested in their father's houses by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers; to have Babylonian chains put on their hands and their feet; to see the towers of Zion for the last time; to be asked to sing some of the songs of Zion to amuse their masters as they toiled over the Assyrian sands—you would have been experts yourselves in a school of prayer like that. Jeremiah, a great authority on why some men pray, and why other men never pray, has this about you in his book: "Moab hath been at his ease from his youth up; he hath settled on his lees; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel: neither hath he gone into captivity; and, therefore, his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." The ninth chapter of Daniel is dear to every old devotional hand. It is delightful with a delight that is not known to neophytes. It is positively delightful to see the old prophet sitting in his chamber and spelling out the book of the prophet Jeremiah, the first copy of which has just been smuggled across the wilderness from Jerusalem to Babylon. We sit over and spell out old authors in literature and religion, if they are sufficiently old; but it would not pay to make a contraband trade of the authors and the preachers of to-day to the authors of to-day or to the preachers either. We exploit and plagiarise the great preachers of the great past, but we do not find much to repay us in the pulpit of our day. Only Daniel studied Jeremiah as much as if Jeremiah had been Moses himself, and more. And he not only studied a prophet whom we would call his contemporary and his colleague, but, old prophet and old priest as he himself was, he took a new start in fasting, and in sackcloth, and in ashes, and in prayer of all kinds as he sat over Jeremiah's new book, and fell on the floor of his chamber holding the book to his heart. Had we been in Daniel's place, I will wager what we would have said as we read that seventy years' passage on the new parchment: "The Lord's ways—if this is indeed the Lord—His ways are not equal," we would have said. "Here am I getting on to old age in Babylon, and no intimation has come to me like this. Surely I was the man that needed it, and had earned it. Why Jeremiah? What has he done? And besides, has he not fallen away to our oppressors?" "I have a feeling that I would not have been in such a meek temper as Daniel was over that book, the ink of which was still wet. O Daniel, a man greatly beloved! and who deserved to

bel "Why," asks Pascal, "why has God established prayer?" And the first answer out of the three that Pascal gives to himself is this—"To communicate to His creatures the dignity of causality." And Daniel was of Pascal's deep, believing and original mind. For Daniel, just because he read and believed that deliverance was at the door, all the more set himself to pray as if his prayer was to be the alone and predestinated cause of the coming deliverance. Daniel put on sackcloth, and fasted, and prayed, and went back upon all his own and all his people's sins in a way that confounds us to our face. We cannot understand Daniel. We are not deep enough. He prayed, and fasted, and returned to an agony of prayer, as if he had never heard of the near deliverance; he prayed in its very presence as if he despaired of ever seeing it. He fasted and prayed as he had not done all these seventy fasting and praying years. Read, all you experts in prayer, read with all your mind, and with all your heart, and with all your experience, and with all your imagination this great causality chapter. It is written by a proficient for proficient. It is written by a great saint of God for all such. Read it and think. Read it with your Pascal open before you. Read it and sink down into the deep things of God and the soul. Read it and practise it till you know by experiment and experience that decree, and covenant, and prophecy, and promise, and all, however sure, and however near, are all only fulfilled in immediate and dependent answer to penitential and importunate prayer. Read it and pray as never before after the answer has actually begun. See the answer out to the last syllable before you begin to restrain penitence and prayer. And after the answer is all fulfilled, still read it and the still deeper chapters that follow it, till you learn new fasting, and new sackcloth, and new ashes, and new repentance, away out to your saintliest old age. Read Daniel's greatest prayer, and "Know thy dread power—a creature yet a cause." (*Alex. Whyte, D.D.*) *Daniel's Prayer*:—Acquainted as Daniel was with the word of God as delivered by the prophets who had foretold the captivity and restoration of Judah, and confiding in the unchangeable faithfulness of that word, as his whole life testified that he did, the return of his countrymen to Jerusalem was an event on which he must have assuredly reckoned, not only as certain, but as very near. Nor were there wanting other and very unequivocal intimations to give Daniel the assurance that this event was at hand. He saw, in the conqueror of Babylon, the very person who had been referred to by name in the prophecies of Isaiah, a hundred and seventy years before. If ever there was a future event which might have been reckoned on with absolute certainty, it was this restoration of the Jewish captives to the land and city of their fathers. And yet, so far from supposing that there was no place for prayer to occupy, among the various means that were employed to bring about that event, it was just his firm belief in the certainty and nearness of it that set Daniel upon fervent and persevering supplications for its accomplishment. Because he contemplated the near approach of this deliverance, he gave himself to special prayer for the fulfilment of the promise. 1. The prayer itself was just expressing or embodying in language the state of Daniel's mind as directed towards an object, in the accomplishment of which he felt a most intense interest. The believer never can, without belying his principles, deliberately desire anything that he knows to be contrary to the will, and inconsistent with the glory of God. He supplicates conditionally—so qualifying his petition as that it may be given him, if agreeable to his Maker's will, or conducive to the manifestation of his Maker's glory. But, if true to his principles, he never can cease vehemently to desire what he does know to be accordant with the will, and subservient to the glory of God. 2. With regard to the rank which Daniel's prayer occupied among the various agencies or means that were to be employed in bringing about the object of it, he had good reason to believe that it was neither without a definite place nor in itself devoid of efficacy. Daniel knew that the event for which he longed and prayed necessarily involved in it the spiritual amendment of Judah. He saw that the return of their heart to God was essential to their triumphant return to the land of their fathers; and he felt, therefore, that humiliation and confession of sin was not only a becoming exercise in him at such a moment, but, in reality, a fulfilment in part of the very promise in which he confided. The agency of prayer is indeed a less obvious and palpable thing than that outward co-operation, whereby mankind are rendered subservient to the accomplishment of the Divine purposes. But is it not an agency of an unspeakably loftier character? Is it not the co-operation of an immortal spirit, bearing the impress of the Divine image, and at the moment acting in unison with the Divine will? By some such views of prayer I would endeavour to remove the difficulties of those who may have been perplexed by subtle speculations on the place which it occupies, and the efficacy which belongs to it in the economy of grace; difficulties which, in reality, have nothing more to do with prayer than with anything else connected with human agency. (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) *Prayer for National Prosperity*:—As the prophet made the sins, the perils, and the needs of his nation his own, and confessed and supplicated as for his life, so should we. Our sins and transgressions are as great and as many as our mercies; our perils are as real and imminent and fearful

as our exaltation and opportunity and overflowing outward prosperity. I. Let us name **SOME OF OUR MERCIES, PRIVILEGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.** 1. Take into view our national heritage—its locality, extent, richness, and abounding resources—unparalleled in the history of nations. 2. Our Providential history. Our ancestral stock, Puritan, Huguenot, etc. Our wondrous growth and development. God's special interpositions, as in war. 3. The character of our institutions. A free ballot, a free Bible. II. Let us **NOT OVERLOOK OUR PERILS**, for they are many and imminent. 1. The decadence of personal integrity and public morality. 2. The rapid influx of a foreign and alien element. 3. The enormous growth and corrupting influence of our great cities. 4. The increasing prevalence of vice, pauperism, and crime throughout the land. 5. The grasping policy and overshadowing influence of combinations and monopolies. 6. The growing alienation of the great labouring class from the Church and from Christianity. 7. The audacity and strength of the Rum Power, allied with corruption in politics, to legalise the traffic in making drunkards, and in gambling on race-courses, and to keep in office disreputable and wicked men in many of our leading cities. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Prayer*:—Prayer is often misconceived in all churches and by all parties. 1. The end of prayer, offered in private, is not to inform God. Many persons pray as if they wish to tell God what God does not know. 2. Prayer is not loud speaking, or much speaking, or any one special form whatever. 3. Prayer is not prescribed in the Scripture, or offered by a true believer, in order to work any change in God. 4. We must not associate prayer with any idea of atonement or expiation. 5. Some persons give up all hope, because God does not hear them. They say, "Our prayers are so mixed with wandering and simple thoughts, and are so imperfect that we cannot pray aright." This implies a lingering notion that our prayers are expiatory, or a title to Heaven. 6. We must not pray, "to be seen of men." 7. Prayer is not to be an excuse or apology for the neglect of duties. 8. It is not an exercise suited merely to a great crisis. 9. Prayer should be addressed unto God, as our Father: and in the name and through the mediation of Christ; and in the strength and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (*John Cumming, D.D.*) *Daniel's Prayer*:—This chapter, more than any other in the Book of Daniel, lays open to us the inner life of the prophet. It shows that he who was so illustrious in his wisdom and public relations was no less noted for his wisdom and public relations, was no less noted for his deep spirituality and earnest private devotions, whilst it suggests that the former were largely the result of the latter. True faith and living piety help to make wise and great. It appears that Daniel was a student of prophecy, of unfulfilled prophecy, and especially of the numbers and dates contained in the sacred predictions. Many consider such studies and anxieties the most barren and dangerous to which we can give ourselves. There is much reason to suspect that one of the real causes of the superficiality and leanness of modern piety is that the professed people of God no longer understand or believe what the prophets have written, and refuse to study or hear about things to come as God has revealed them for our learning. There is abundant material in this prayer of Daniel on which to dwell with interest and pride. The manner of it was deliberate, reverent, humble, and self-chastening. The character and attributes which this piece of devotion ascribes to Deity are also very impressive and sublime. The grandeur and awfulness of Eternal Majesty are blended with unsearchable goodness and faithfulness, presenting to our contemplation "the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love Him and keep His commandments," whose almighty hand is in all the administrations on earth and in Heaven, and all whose ways are righteousness and truth. The prayer is also occupied with confession of sin as the cause of Israel's miseries. The expressions on this point are the most explicit, unreserved, and contrite. The great subject of the prayer was not simply that affliction might be removed, but that the house and ordinances of God might be restored, and a true, spiritual recovery wrought; for it avails but little to be released from particular punishments of sin if the inner cause of them be not healed. So the plea upon which this prayer rests is the truest and only availing one—not any merit of man, not any right or claim on the sinner's part, but alone and entirely the mercy of God and the honour of His great name. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*) *With fasting, and sackcloth and ashes.*—*Fast-Day Service*:—This is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if He were not merciful. He is merciful—as merciful as if He were not just, and in very deed more merciful than if He were too lenient, instead of blending a wise severity of justice with a gracious clemency of long suffering. We should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not to-day to bow down before the thundering Jove; you need not come before implacable deities, who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made. Our God delights in mercy, and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain; yea, when Britain shall have forgotten it, and only the page of history shall record His mercies, God

will still remember what He did for us in this day of our straits and difficulties. As to the hope that He will help us, that is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear. It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us; and if we ask Him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain's God has done, and how He has heard her cry, and answered the voice of her supplications. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Aids to Devotion*.—Calvin remarks that Daniel, though naturally alert in prayer to God, was yet conscious of the want of sufficiency in himself; and hence he adds the use of sackcloth and ashes and fasting. He observes that everyone conscious of his infirmity ought to collect all the aids he can command for the correction of his sluggishness, and thus to stimulate himself to ardour in supplicating God. *The Fast-Day*.—The necessity and practice of fasting and repentance is set forth both in the Old and New Testaments. From the text we learn that Daniel was wont to fast, and to supplicate the Majesty of Heaven for the pardon of those national sins which he knew would justly draw down the indignation of the Almighty. Notice the special duties of fasting, such as a serious inspection into our hearts, and close self-examination of ourselves. Closely connected with this is the confession of sin. How strikingly was this manifested in the prayer of the text. Again, holy resolutions of amendment should be found in the strength of Christ, and with a due regard to His glory. Intercession is also peculiarly a duty at this season of humiliation, not only in public prayer, but also in private. Mercy to others is a peculiarly suitable accompaniment to fasting and supplication. On these days of public humiliation, when we are called upon to prostrate our guilty souls before Almighty God, sure it must become us to take such a view of the ravages of sin, and its awful consequences upon the guilty sons of Adam, as shall direct our faith to that one great sacrifice which can alone be efficacious for the healing of the nations, and for the introduction of that dispensation wherein we learn something of the achievements of the Prince of Peace; which peace shall be brought about by the subjugation of sin, and the conquest of those passions which war against the soul, and prove so fatal to man's best interests, and so bedim his prospects of future happiness. Learn that the judgments of the Lord are calculated to teach the world righteousness. It ought never to be forgotten that, in the view of Omniscience, God sees the beginning and ending of all human events, from the hour of Nature's nativity to the last moment of all earthly dissolution. We may refer the darkest dealings of the Almighty to the Eternal Wisdom. (Nat. Meeres, B.D.)

Ver. 6. **Neither have we harkened unto thy servants the prophets.**—*The Prophetic Ministry*.—It was the design of Daniel, in this sentence, to look back upon the whole course of the prophetic ministry that people had enjoyed from the time of its establishment to the time of their humiliation. We now consider the period from the death of Samuel to the close of the Babylonish captivity, a period of more than five hundred years. I. SOME FACTS CONNECTED WITH THE PROPHETICAL ORDER. It was a class distinct from the priestly class. Their schools. The prophets were the founders of the seminaries of religion, learning, and philosophy, in which a class of men of cultivated minds and of holy hearts were raised up to influence their fellow-men. By the "sons of the prophets" we are to understand not children, but disciples. Samuel seems to have been the first tutor of these colleges. 2. How were the prophets called? It was not a matter of course, that because a man had been in a collegiate establishment, therefore he should be a prophet of God. God has never tied up His influence, never restricted His grace to any institutions of man, however wise and reasonable they may be. Thus Amos says—"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son." The Divine call was very discriminating. 3. The customs of the prophets. They were known by their costume. A garment of the coarsest sort—haircloth, and sometimes sackcloth. These were the signs of mourning; and they wore that attire to indicate their grief at the transgressions of the people. They were remarkable in their diet. Their deportment was very reserved and solemn. 4. The nature of their ministry. Their oral addresses were, no doubt, abundant. They addressed the multitude as popular preachers. And they sometimes acted parables. Their written predictions were a third part of their ministry. They were the historians of the church and nation of the Jews. II. SOME REASONS WHY THE MINISTRY OF THE PROPHETS WAS ORDAINED. 1. It was partly to counteract the tendencies of an established priesthood. Under priesthoods men are in great danger of losing all view of the spiritual and moral part of their office, and sinking down into that which is merely ceremonial and ritual. The prophets often arraign the priests—often charge upon them, in very plain and faithful terms, their wickedness. Morality must ever take the lead of ceremonial institutions. God regards obedience rather than sacrifice. 2. They were to enforce the authority of the Divine law. No man can achieve anything great in reference to his fellow-men who has not first achieved the conquest of himself. The prophets were men who had learned to deny themselves, and then men who had seen visions of

eternity. 3. To correct the tendency of the people to trust in heathen oracles. 4. To excite the hope of the Divine mercy in the minds of the people. III. THE SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN THE MINISTRATIONS OF THE PROPHETS. 1. They embrace the whole social condition of the Jews during five hundred years. We say that history is the key to prophecy: but prophecy amongst the Jews was the key to history. 2. They were employed to announce the judicial visitations that should come upon the heathen. 3. A third class of subjects was a description of the Christian dispensation, as it should be set up by Messiah. (*J. Blackburn.*)

Vers. 8—10. **Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.**—*Estimating our Own Character:*—We take the words of the text in their more general reference. They are such as we ought all to use. Glory is ascribed to God; a proper view and estimate of our own character is taken. I. GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US. Daniel speaks of “the voice of the Lord our God.” So Paul—“God, who spake in time past unto the fathers,” &c., “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” And he exhorts us not to “refuse Him who speaketh from heaven.” The meaning is a direct communication. Not mere intimations—as by sign, works—leaving us to collect inferences. The Scriptures are—by the inspiration by which they were given—the actual voice of God to us, on all the subjects to which they refer. Fully realise the solemn truth—The great and dreadful God hath spoken to us. II. “BY HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS, HE HATH SET HIS LAWS BEFORE US.” Here is the purpose of His voice. Man is distinguished from all other earthly creatures by his moral capacities and faculties. He is thus made in the image of God. Constituted God’s subject. Bound by the will of God; that will, expressed, is the Divine law. This is done in Scripture. Its principles, its prohibitions, its requirements; by direct precept, by larger explanation, in various examples, are there set before us—as the law of God, the sanctioned expression of His will. III. THIS VOICE “WE HAVE NOT OBEYED.” Speak not now of our natural condition—our fallen nature. We have followed our own inclinations; and the action has been as the originating principle. IV. WE ARE THUS GUILTY OF REBELLION. God is our Sovereign. We have, as to our hearts and lives, sought to dethrone Him. We have refused to His law its just supremacy. Other lords have thus had dominion over us. V. FOR THIS REASON, “CONFUSION OF FACE BELONGS TO US.” Shame one of our natural emotions. Called for by humbling sense of real impropriety and wrong. We may be hardened; we may mix ourselves with the general mass; still, rightly viewed, sin is a shameful thing. When Divine light is received and obeyed, we feel our personal guilt. We have no excuse. VI. NEVERTHELESS, “TO THE LORD OUR GOD BELONG MERCIES AND FORGIVENESS.” It is a fact—not merely good to the obedient, but long-suffering to the guilty. His words reveal it as a perfection of His nature. Describes the wisdom that has devised means for its fitting and consistent exercise. God is merciful, and it is in Christ. Pardon may be had—it is through Christ. The wickedness of sin. It is rebellion against a sovereignty of purity, wisdom, love. (*G. Cullett.*) **To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.**—*Of God’s Mercies and Forgivenesses:*—There can be no so prevalent a persuasive and inducement to repentance, no so powerful a charm to win the hearts of sinners, and melt them down into a relenting compliance with the Divine will, as the serious consideration on the one hand of God’s gracious dealings with us, and of our own ungracious returns on the other hand; of His mercies and forgivenesses, and of our rebellions and disobediences. The whole business of religion is comprised in these two heads, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. How can we better come to the knowledge of God than by studying those attributes of His which make up the perfection of His very nature? And what likelier way for us to arrive at the true knowledge and right understanding of ourselves than to contemplate the pravity and corruption of our natures, and the provoking sinfulness of our lives? There being nothing else in us that we can truly and properly call our own. Divine goodness is here recommended to us by two obliging terms, of mercy and forgiveness. 1. Mercy, the essential character of His nature. Forgiveness, the gratuitous product and expression of His gracious will. Mercy in the Father’s self, for He is the “Father of mercies.” Forgiveness for the sake of His Son, the Mediator. Mercy in the ordinary course of Providence; and forgiveness upon the terms and covenant of grace. Consider, then, what a gracious God we have to do with, whose very nature and being consists of mercies and forgivenesses. Let us fill our souls with a reciprocal love and answerable affections to the Lord our God. ‘Tis this mercy of our God that makes Him our God. and ‘tis this mercy of His that should oblige us to His service, and make Him our God. 2. What less could be expected from a merciful God than this, that He should forgive sins? This is the special instance of mercy, that He is a God forgiving sins, and pardoning iniquities. Let us assure ourselves that what mercy we find at His hands, as we are His creatures, the same forgiveness we shall obtain of Him as we are His redeemed ones.

(*Adam Littleton, D.D.*) *Forgiveness of Sins*.—Such is the utterance of prophetic lips. Daniel hero speaks, wrestling with God, and valiantly refusing a repulse. The words sparkle as a bright gem in his diadem of prayer. It is superfluous to state that this proclamation is not limited to supplicating Daniel; it pervades the book of Revelation as fragrance the sweetest garden. (Ex. xxxiv. 7.) (Isaiah lv. 7.) (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) To estimate forgiveness rightly, its need must be distinctly seen. It will be poorly prized, unless its value be weighed in balances of truth. What, then, is forgiveness as appertaining unto sin? It is remission of due penalties, the obliteration of incurred guilt, the withdrawal of just displeasure, the blotting out of accusing handwriting, the burying all offences in oblivion, the hushing of the loud thunder of the law, the cancelling of its tremendous curse, the consigning to a sheath the sword of justice. It is the frown of Jehovah softening into eternal smiles. It encounters sin, and strips it of its destroying power. Hence evidently forgiveness implies that sin has preceded. Where no offence exists, no pardon can be needed; they cannot be restored whose feet are always in right paths. Thus we reach the fundamental position that sin gives occasion for forgiveness. Sin is the need which calls for its intervention. I. Sin's essence. What constitutes its character? No unanswerable question is here asked as to the parent of its birth; here is no search into its originating cause. The simple inquiry is, Where is its sphere of work, and what is its distinctive nature? Scripture states in terms intelligible and incontrovertible, "Sin is the transgression of the law." (I. John iii. 4.) God, as supreme in all His universe, fixes His mode of government. This essence appears in frightful enormity when the purport of this law is viewed. The sum of its requirements is worthy of the great Lawgiver. In Divine simplicity it only requires love. The whole inward man must be bright in one complexion—love. Any deviation from this course constitutes sin. This sublimity brightly shows the origin of the law to be Divine. As a mirror it reflects Jehovah's excellence; it is the transcript of His glorious being; it is holiness on its highest throne; it is purity in its loveliest form; it is perfection without one alloy. How abominable, then, is that principle which hates and resists such code, and strives to crush it beneath insulting steps! It follows that the need of forgiveness is universal, for sin exercises a sway co-extensive with all human life. It grasps each mother's son in its vile arms, and stays not its assaults while time endures. II. This need becomes more apparent as advance is made from sin's essence to some of its developments. Here it appears a many-headed hydra, a fiend of various forms. Its outbreak towards God, towards the soul within, towards the world around, betray it. (1) Let diverse instances show its conduct towards God. Its feelings may be thus classed. Alienation. Whatever departs from God's rule departs from Himself. Contrariety to His law separates from His mind. Disinclination to His will moves altogether in an adverse course. Hatred. "The carnal mind"—and every mind is such in which the Spirit dwells not—"is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) Sin has strong inclinations, and they all are arrayed against His righteous ways. It has ungodly bias towards the abominable things which God hates. Contempt. With haughty look it sneers at sacred precepts. It scorns them as weak precision. It spurns the restrictions of godly walk as derogatory to man's liberty. Defiance. It raises an insulting head. It braves displeasure. It ridicules all penal consequences. Rebellion. It shivers the yoke. It breaks restraining bands. It ignores submission. Treason. It enters into conspiracy with all Heaven's foes. It joins hands with every adversary. Robbery. God, as Sovereign, has a right to exact obedience. Sin defrauds Him of this due. Such, and many more, are the developments of sin in reference to God. Thus the position is established, that vast is the need of vast forgiveness. (2) The picture darkens when the developments of sin in reference to the soul are seen. It changes this garden of the Lord into a waste howling wilderness. Fragrant flowers cease to bloom; thorns and briars usurp their place. It dims the noblest jewel of God's creation. (3) The case assumes more frightful hue when sin's inroads on the world around is added. Doubtless sin is inborn. It is an hereditary disease; the seeds of every evil are innate in each heart. Unaided by contagion it would universally exist; but yet by contact, influence, example, it multiplies, and becomes more rampant. A spark from without kindles the dry stubble; bad men wax worse by bad fellowship. To the forgiveness of sins attention now reverts. The subject justly claims large share of pious thought. Angels may gaze and marvel, but they have no experience of its joys; for none of that pure company exult in pardon. It is the heart-felt property of the redeemed. I. Sin's guilt. Guilt is that property of sin which links it to God's wrath. It constitutes its criminality, and forbids immunity. That sin has this property is clear; it stands confessedly a convict. It cannot plead that it is guiltless; therefore avowedly it merits punishment. Thus in reference to God it has been proved to be alienation, hatred, contempt, defiance, robbery, treason, rebellion. Can such be its guilty state; can it evidently work havoc throughout all creation, and shall God sit in-

different, as though He saw no evil? The very thought strips Him of the glories of His holiness. Righteousness is no more righteous, if it withholds the righteous condemnation. Truth lies low in ignominious shame, if the words be not fulfilled, "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) Thus the guilty cannot be screened as guiltless. Doubtless God is rich in His mercy; His mercy endureth for ever; His mercy reacheth unto the heavens. "To the Lord our God belong mercies." But mercy cannot annihilate the attributes which sit as conquerors on the glorious throne. It lives co-equal with them. Its delight is to exalt, to magnify, to glorify them. Who now can fail to feel that the guilty sinner needs mercies and forgivenesses? Let the page of experience be next read. It is written throughout with testimony that tremendous indications of Divine displeasure pursue guilt. Amid sweet rays of mercy striving to break forth, big drops of wrath often descend. The present aspect of earth is mournfully significant; the whole creation groans and travails together. Tears and sighs and anguish in multiform misery tell what sin has brought into this earth; sufferings and agony point to their prolific parent. Thus the wide spread of misery proves that the guilt of sin awakens just displeasure. Mark, next, the terrors of conscience when aroused from apathetic slumber by the Spirit. See the man awakened to the real perils of a guilty state. He is brought into a new world, where all is dismay. The past cannot be recalled; the present must move onward; the future cannot be escaped. In what mirror are these terrors seen? Surely in the mirror of sin's guilt. Conscience, in the Spirit's light, convicts of sin. Guilt is its inseparable companion; vengeance from Heaven closely follows. The awakened conscience knows this and quakes. Annals of the past confirm this statement; they exhibit terrific outbreaks of Divine wrath. Let the old world tell its awful tale. Its wickedness exceeded all that is denounced as wicked; its trespass grew up unto the heavens. Enormity of evil cried aloud, and enormity of vengeance slumbered not. Thus far the guilt of sin has been viewed, as exhibited in time, and as endured on the little space of this passing scene. But sin's results end not with earth's brief moment. II. Sin's final doom now meets us. Scripture abounds in warnings; their plainness is only equalled by their awe; their terrors are all faithfulness and truth. They speak loudly that men may ponder and escape. (II. Thess. i. 7—9.) (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) Such are the penalties to which its guilt is righteously amenable. Such is its sure condemnation. It will be happy if through this dreary passage a glorious prospect is attained. It will be so to all who now clasp to grateful hearts the good news: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." Let, then, the reviving truth now have free course and be glorified. A remedy is provided. A refuge is erected. Let the tidings be devoutly prized, "Christ has suffered the just for the unjust." In Him all manner of sin is forgiven to the children of men. Let men be wise to seek in an accepted time this inestimable gift. Let not the only hope be slighted. It shines in Christ and in Christ alone. He is the treasure-house in which forgiveness is stored. (*Dean Laro.*) *Views of Guilt and Views of Mercy.*—I. OUR FIRST VIEWS ARE VIEWS OF GUILT. Man is a rebellious subject, inasmuch as: 1. We have refused tribute. Tribute, as it respects human governments, is the sum raised for their support. As it respects the government of God, it implies merely the homage rendered to its validity and glory. 2. We have disobeyed the law. Both the precepts and the prohibitions. In our thoughts, in our conversation, in our behaviour. We have committed sins against ourselves, against our fellow-creatures, and against our God. 3. We have abetted the enemy. He who committeth sin is of the devil, that is, he resembles him, and serves him. II. OUR SECOND VIEWS ARE VIEWS OF MERCY. God is a merciful and forgiving Sovereign. The term mercies would be too general. In the term of forgiveness there is something specific. 1. Consider what we sometimes observe, and what we never fail to admire, among mortals. Is it not the display of compassion, forbearance, and generosity? Shall God sink in the comparison? 2. Consider the Divine precepts. 3. Consider the Divine assurances. Happy for us that they are too numerous to be recounted. 4. Consider the mediation of Jesus Christ. 5. Consider experience and fact. Believer in Jesus Christ, much more art thou a witness. (*The Evangelist.*)

Vers. 17—19. **Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate.**—*The Christian's Duty to the Church in the Present Times.*—I. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH WHEN DANIEL WROTE WAS ONE OF RUIN AND DESOLATION. Jerusalem, the city of God, was desolate and without inhabitant, and the temple, which was the dwelling-place of the mysterious glory, was desolate. The whole nation and the whole church had gone into captivity. But does God ever forsake His people, or desert His church? The promise of God, on which the church of Israel was founded, was made to Abraham, and it was an unconditional promise. This promise was strengthened and confirmed by an oath. Such being the promise of God on which the church was founded, it is evident he could not utterly forsake His church. He might, for wise reasons, withdraw His countenance for a

season from it. But the undisturbed possession of the land of Canaan, and safety from all their enemies round about them in that land—all these were no part of the original promise to Abraham. They were in a subsequent promise; a conditional promise—a promise on the condition of obedience. Wherever these temporal blessings are alluded to, it is always connected with this condition of obedience. God never suffered His truth or His faithfulness to fail. God sent His people into captivity. They had sinned; they were disobedient. God will never forsake His people, but for their sins He will suffer them to lose all their temporal prosperity. Our only remedy against such judgments is that of Daniel—going like him before God, humbling ourselves in His sight, confessing our sins, and asking forgiveness.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE PRAYER OF THE PROPHET. It is characterised by a deep sense of sin, a most humble acknowledgment of the sinfulness of the nation and of the church; and although the prayer has general reference to Israel as a nation, it is impossible to read it without feeling that the prophet is also confessing his own sins while he confesses the sins of the people. Here is a spirit of heartfelt penitence, a spirit of confession, a full and ample acknowledgment that all the captivity of the nation, and all the desolation of the church, were fully and amply deserved. He also acknowledged that God's dealings had been all foretold and forewarned, and, therefore, the sins were sins against light and knowledge and warning, and thus the judgment of God was consistent with all the justice of God and faithfulness to His own word. In the prophet's prayer there is also a spirit of deep humility, deep self-abasement, and at the same time an earnest spirit of pleading with God, that he would spare, and pity, and restore, the church of Israel. And if we plead the righteousness of God as Daniel did, we shall never plead in vain. Ask what you will, it shall be granted. . . . There is an impressive lesson to us in connection with the general history of Israel. We ought to think a little of the blessings, and consider a little the sins, of our own nation of England, and our own Church of England. (*M. Hobart Seymour, M.A.*) *Prayer for the Church*.—A true-hearted believer does not live for himself. Where there is abundance of grace, and great strength of mind in the service of God, there is sure to be a spirit of unselfishness. No presence of mighty monarch or of his festive guests could turn him aside from delivering his fateful message. Yet Daniel was not satisfied. Whatever might be his own condition, he remembered what Jerusalem was, and what the people to whom he belonged were; and, in the depths of his soul, he sorrowed notwithstanding all that God's grace had wrought within himself. I firmly believe that, the better a man's own character becomes, and the more joy in the Lord he has in his own heart, the more capable is he of sympathetic sorrow; and, probably, the more of it he will have. Daniel was also a man of many visions. With the exception of John, whom Daniel greatly resembles, it has scarcely fallen to the lot of any man, unless it be Ezekiel, to have so many wondrous visions of God; yet his visions did not make him visionary. There are many persons who could not be trusted to see the tip of an angel's wing; for they would become so proud, ever afterwards, that there would be no holding them; but he who is fully consecrated to God may see vision after vision, and he will make a practical use of what he sees, and try to find out something to be done, something to be repented of, something to be prayed for, something that shall be for the good of the Church of God. Daniel had also been studying the prophecies, and he knew, by what he had discovered, when certain predictions would be fulfilled; but he was not, like some students of prophecy in our day, utterly unpractical. They seem to be so taken up with the future that they do nothing in the present. What Daniel learned from the study of the Sacred Books he turned to practical account; and finding that a certain time was near, of which good things were foretold, he set his face toward the Lord, and began to pray—not for himself, but for his people, many of whom were at Jerusalem, hundreds of miles away from him, or scattered in various places all over the face of the earth. For them, he used that bright and sparkling eye which had looked up into the fires supernal. Let it never be said that the Church of God has no feeling of patriotism for the Holy City, for the Heavenly Land, and for her glorious King enthroned above. To us, Christian patriotism means love to the Church of God.

I. First, then, Daniel speaks of THE HOLY PLACE: "thy sanctuary." Of course, he refers to the temple at Jerusalem, which was then in utter ruin. It had been broken down and burned by the Chaldeans; and Daniel, therefore, rightly calls it desolate, but fervently prays that God would cause His face to shine even upon its ruins. My first remark is, that the temple at Jerusalem was typical of the Church of God. So we learn that, as the temple was typical, so also it was unique. There was but one temple, and there is but one Church. The temple at Jerusalem was, further, the fabric of wisdom. It could only have been built by a Solomon; and Solomon found a band of men, whom God had prepared to carry out the extraordinary work of the temple; for, from its marvellous foundations, which have been lately uncovered, even to its topmost pinnacle, it excelled all the architecture which the world had ever seen. But the Church, which God is erecting, is a far

more wonderful work of a wisdom infinitely superior to that of Solomon. When it shall be all finished, it will be the marvel of all intelligences as they see what a matchless sanctuary God, and not man, has reared, and note how, in every single detail, His infinite wisdom is manifest. The temple that Solomon built was also the result of great cost. Immense wealth was lavished upon it; and you do not need that I should try to tell you at what cost the Lord is building up His true sanctuary here among men. The cost of any one of us, if we are indeed living stones, no arithmetic can ever calculate. Again, the temple, of old, was the shrine of God's indwelling. It was the one place, under the old dispensation of types, now done away with, where God dwelt in visible manifestation amongst his ancient people. We are told that a peculiar light shone between the wings of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant, and from that pillar, which looked like a cloud by day, and flamed like a mighty beacon by night. It was there that men must go, or, at least, to that spot that they must look, if they sought the Lord; and therefore it was that Daniel worshipped and prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem. At the present time, the one place, in all the world, where God dwells, is His Church. You can find Him anywhere upon the earth as the Creator; but the glory of the Godhead comes out most brilliantly in redemption, for it is of His redeemed people that it is written, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The temple at Jerusalem was also the place of God's peculiar worship; and where is God worshipped now but in His living Church? The temple at Jerusalem was also the throne of Jehovah's power. It was out of Zion that He sent forth His rod; and from that sacred shrine that He spoke, by His ancient prophets, the Word that was full of power. Who could stand against Him when He was angry, and spoke in His fury out of His holy place? And Christ's power, through the Holy Ghost, still goes forth from His Church. II. Now, secondly, I must speak upon THE EARNEST PRAYER: "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary." And, first, I note that it is a prayer quite free from selfishness. Daniel does not even say to the Lord, "Cause thy face to shine upon me." Have not you sometimes felt that you could almost forego the light of God's countenance yourself if He would but bless His Church? Further, Daniel's prayer was the child of thought. He had thought over the condition of the temple at Jerusalem; and, thinking over it, he had become troubled in his mind. It was lying desolate, but he knew that there was a promise that it should be rebuilt. He thought over these two things; he let his soul lie a-soak in the truth about God's sanctuary, and then he prayed. It was, also, a prayer which cast itself entirely upon God: "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary." He does not say, "Lord, send more prophets"; or, "Raise up new kings"; or, "Do this or that"; but only, "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary." Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God should be the subject as well as the object of our supplications! O God, thy Church needs thee above everything else! There was also great faith in this prayer: "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary." Daniel seems to say, "Lord, it scarcely needs thy command, it only wants thee to smile upon thy sanctuary, and all shall be well." But, Daniel, the temple is all in ruins. "Ah!" saith he, "that is true; but, Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary." The face of God is as the sun when it shineth in its strength. The favour of God is not merely something to His Church, but it is everything; the revelation of His love to His people is not simply a blessing, but it is all the blessings of the covenant in one. It was, however, a very comprehensive prayer; because, wherever God's face shines upon His Church, note what happens. First, her walls are rebuilt. Desolations, when God shines upon them, glow into perfection. When the Lord shines upon a church, then its worship will be acceptable unto Him; even the humblest form of it will be acceptable in His sight. Then, too, truth will be proclaimed in all its clearness. We shall not have to complain of the cloudy preaching of which we hear so much nowadays. Then, too, we shall see the beauty of holiness in all the members of God's spiritual Church. O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy Church, that all thy people may walk in the beauty of holiness! Then, also, there will be delightful fellowship. And, then, there will be power in the testimony. With God's face shining upon His sanctuary, His Word goes forth from His servants with energy and force which none can resist. Join in this prayer. Do it for the Church's own sake. Join in this prayer also for the world's sake. If the Church has not the Lord to shine upon her, what is the poor world to do? And, then, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for the Holy Spirit's sake, for a lifeless church is a dishonour to God. III. THE CONDUCT THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PRAYER. Well, first, we shall consider the state of the Church. Some professing Christians do not seem to me as if they ever thought of the Church at all. The next thing for us to do is to lay to the evil or the good of Zion. Consider it well, and then be grieved if you see sin triumphant, or error rampant, and do not perceive that the cause of God is advancing in the world. Then, if we begin to think, and begin to care, we shall try to do what we can for God's

Church. It is all very well for a man to pray, but the value of his prayer very much depends upon its sincerity, and that sincerity will be proved by his doing something that will help to answer his own prayer. The little finger would be missed if it were cut off, and there is not a tiny valve near the heart, nor a minute vessel anywhere in the human system, which could be taken away without inflicting an injury upon the whole body. Just so is it in the Church of Christ; we cannot afford to spare any part of the mystical body of Christ. But what use are you for the well-being of your fellow-members? But when we have done all that we can, let us pray much more than we have ever done. Oh! for a praying Church! (*C. H. Spurgeon*.) *The Depressed State of the Cause of God Deplored*:—1. Observe how Daniel deplores the desolations of Zion, and confesses his sins which had caused them. Daniel felt more as a saint for the ruin of the church than as a patriot for the desolations of Judea. 2. Observe how fervently Daniel prays for the restored favour of God to his people, and for the fulfilment of His gracious promises to them. He found in prayer his resource and refuge. Every good man has a steadfast assurance of the efficacy of prayer. This conviction causes them to fly to prayer, and to persevere till they succeed. Note what a prevailing plea Daniel employed—he appeals to God's own honour, to His own interest in His Church. (*A. W. Coggeshall*.) *The Christian in Time of National Calamity*:—1. What God is here entreated to behold. "Our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name." However the developments may vary, the principles of God's administration are, like His nature, immutable. Desolations are still the punishment of iniquity, deliverance is still vouchsafed in answer to prayer. The desolations of Jerusalem, as we are expressly told, were the direct consequence of her sin. Who can deny that the prophet portrayed but too faithfully our own metropolis when he said concerning the doomed and devoted city, no longer holy to the Lord—"In thee, have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; in thee have they vexed the fatherless and widow; thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths." Happily for us, the correspondence is not complete. In Jerusalem the degeneracy was total, the delinquency was universal. But it is not so among ourselves. And if the "effectual fervent prayer of" even a single "righteous man availeth much," how can we doubt that the combined and concurrent supplications of the Church will find entrance into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth? 2. The manner in which we should entreat the Lord. Our special entreaty this day, whether in the house of prayer, in the domestic circle, or in the solitude of the inner chamber, should not only be that of contrite and lowly supplication, but of earnest intercession also. (*T. Dale, M.A.*)

Vers. 20—23. **O Lord, hear.**—*Answer to Daniel's Prayer*:—A believer might say to one who questioned the value of prayer, that God has authorised and commanded him to pray, with the express promise that the prayer of faith, offered up in the name of Christ, shall be heard and answered, and that he can safely leave it with God himself to provide for the fulfilment of His promise, in perfect consistency with the immutability of His counsels. He is warranted also to maintain that prayer is most deeply concerned in the determination of all the purposes of God concerning His people; that every believing supplication that has been, or ever will be offered up, was as much the subject of the Divine foreknowledge as any other action or event that was to take place in the moral world. The event for which Daniel had been praying, namely, the restoration of their captive brethren to their country and their privileges, had been the subject of many a prediction variously expressed, and of special promises frequently repeated . . . Every circumstance conspired to give him the assurance that the event which he longed for was infallibly secured. Yet he gave himself to prayer, obviously with the conviction that, in order to give efficiency to all the subordinate causes that were conspiring to bring about the deliverance of Judah, there was required an immediate determination of the Divine mind—an act of the will of Him who "speaks and it is done; who commandeth and all things stand fast." The prayer of the prophet formed an essential part of the plan by which God was graciously pleased to carry His purposes into execution. There was, indeed, suspended on it, so to speak, that act of the Divine will that was to give efficiency to every other agency whereby the desired event was to be brought about. Did we conceive of it as we ought to do—did we know what it is that constitutes the honour, and dignity, and blessedness of our nature, there is nothing in which we should consider ourselves more highly honoured, or more richly privileged, than in being permitted and encouraged to pray. Of the truths of these remarks, we have a very striking and instructive illustration in the passage before us. Of none was it ever more true than of Daniel, that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Yet, notwithstanding the honourable and distinguished place which had been assigned to Daniel among the servants of God, never did a soul breathe its desires under a deeper sense of its own unworthiness than

when he "set his face unto the Lord God." And does not the experience of believers still bear witness to the same truth? Such is the honour which God vouchsafes to put upon His people when He gives them permission to pray; and such is the tendency of that honour to generate a spirit of humility and dependence on the part of those who enjoy it. Whether, therefore, we view prayer as glorifying God, by recognising His supremacy, and resolving our will into His; or whether we regard it as bringing us into that state which is the most salutary for ourselves, we are not without abundant encouragement to avail ourselves of this distinguished privilege. Our text furnishes other considerations calculated to excite us to frequent and earnest and persevering prayer. But the point to which I specially direct attention is the fact here stated by the angel, that at the beginning of Daniel's supplication the commandment went forth, a fact which places in a very striking light the important place which the prayer of the prophet occupied, among the various means which God was pleased to employ, in effecting the deliverance of Judah. In as far as concerns the condescension of God, and the encouragement which He has given us to pray, our text virtually tells us that the blessing was in readiness—that it waited, so to speak, only to be applied for—and that its actual communication was suspended on the supplication of the prophet. Nor was this a privilege confined to particular individuals as Daniel, or to special times like those in which he lived. It appears, from the whole tenor of the preceding context, that the immediate object of the prophet's anxiety and concern was the redemption of his brethren from the bondage of Babylon; that he felt as if it were possible that there might still attach to them so much of their former impotence and forgetfulness of God as would provoke Him to protract the period of their captivity; and that it would have been, in the prophet's own estimation, a full and satisfying answer to his prayer had he simply received the assurance that God's "thoughts toward Judah were still thoughts of peace." But how exceedingly abundant, above all that he asked or had conceived, was the communication which was made to him in answer to his prayer! We cannot suppose that when he "set his face unto the Lord God" he anticipated the extent of the answer which was vouchsafed to him. If such, then, be the encouragements whereby we are excited to prayer, how shall we think, without humiliation and shame, of the disinclination which we may frequently have felt towards engaging in that holy exercise, and of the formality with which we have so often observed it? The habit of mind—preparedness for prayer—will not be cultivated from a mere sense of duty alone. Prayer is in truth the protection, the safeguard, of the Christian. (*R. Gordon, D.D.*) *The Power of Prayer*:—From this remarkable scene we learn several lessons in reference to prayer. I. THAT PRAYER IS A LEGITIMATE AND EFFECTUAL METHOD OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MAN UPON EARTH AND THE WORLD OF SPIRITS. II. THE RECEPTION AND RECOGNITION OF TRUE PRAYER ARE IMMEDIATE, ALTHOUGH THE ANSWER MAY BE DELAYED. "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth." III. THAT PRAYER SECURES FOR ITS OFFERER THE SERVICE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST EXALTED OF GOD'S SERVANTS. IV. THAT PRAYER IS A VALUABLE AID IN THE STUDY OF DIVINE THINGS. "I am now come forth to give thee knowledge and understanding." V. THAT THE SUCCESS OF PRAYER DEPENDS UPON THE MORAL POSITION THE OFFERER OCCUPIES BEFORE GOD. "For thou art greatly beloved." (*J. H. Morgan.*) *Daniel's Devotions*:—Daniel was a man of high birth, of extraordinary talents, of singular tact in the affairs of government, of strong magnanimity, of great generosity, and of singular sympathy. Three things respecting him are worthy of notice. He was a close theological student. He was remarkable for his disinterestedness and public spirit. And he was distinguished by a spirit of prayer. I. THE PROPHET'S OCCUPATION AT THIS TIME. He was secluded from the bustle of business and the turmoil of Society, and engaged in meditation on the things of God, and in communion with his own heart. While retirement is necessary on occasions for all men, it is especially necessary for those who are busily employed in the concerns of public life. There are two extremes into which it is possible for us to fall on this subject. There are two devotional employments in which Daniel was occupied. 1. Penitential confession of sin. This was both personal and relative. 2. Intercessory supplication. II. THE SEASON AT WHICH DANIEL WAS THUS ENGAGED. 1. It was the evening hour. 2. It was a time when he was desiring and expecting a revival of the Church, and the return of the people of God. III. THE SUCCESS WHICH FOLLOWED DANIEL'S DEVOTIONAL EMPLOYMENT. 1. The promptitude of the bestowment. 2. The messenger who conveyed the intelligence. 3. The nature of the communication which Daniel received through the instrumentality of this Heavenly messenger. Partly it respected his own personal character. And partly he obtained clearer and much more copious views of the designs of God in reference to a fallen and ruined world. Learn, then, that humble and devotional prayer to God is one of the best means of ensuring clear views as to the prophecies of God, and clear views as to the prosperity of the Church in the latter days. (*John Clayton, A.M.*)

Vers. 21—27. **Even the man Gabriel.**—*Words of the Angel:*—Daniel's history is in every way profoundly interesting, and stands in connection with spiritual phenomena most startling and sublime. These verses are the words of an angel, whose name was Gabriel (the strength of God). Gabriel furnishes this intelligence in obedience to the command of another intelligence of the celestial order, one perhaps of a still higher rank in the angelic hierarchy. Daniel had seen this angel before (ch. viii. 15—27). The object of the present visit was to answer Daniel's prayer, and that answer we have in the words before us. The following thoughts are suggested by this angelic language in relation to human prayer. I. THAT THE GREAT GOD OF THE UNIVERSE IS ATTENTIVE TO THE GENUINE PRAYER OF GOOD MEN. We say genuine prayer, for such is the prayer before us. How intensely earnest it is! How profoundly humble! How thoroughly vicarious! God is never inattentive to such prayer; it always touches His great heart, He never fails to answer it. II. GOD SOMETIMES ANSWERS TRUE PRAYER BY THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS. When Christ said to Peter, "Thinkest thou not that I could pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels," the doctrine is implied that angels are employed to render Divine relief to the earnest suppliant. Note: 1. This angel dealt with promptitude to the suppliant. 2. This angel dealt with the mind of the suppliant. He assured him of the Divine regard; and he threw light on the subject that pressed on his heart. Three epochs are discovered by interpreters in this passage. (1) The return of the Jews to their own country. (2) The advent of Messiah. At the close of this period we are told two things would take place. The departure of the world's Deliverer; and the advent of the Jew's destroyer. (3) The establishment of Messiah's system upon earth, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Evidently, then, God answers prayer by acting on the mind of the suppliant. This is the true and effective answer to prayer. (*Homilist.*) *Ministry of Angels in Individual Life:*—"Some time ago I visited a furniture dealer's shop in West London. The man was a Jew, and, noticing my clerical dress, he began to talk on religious matters. We had an interesting conversation, and, as I mounted my bicycle and said 'Good-bye,' the man called out in Hebrew, 'Peace be unto thee,' using the pronoun in plural number. 'Why did you not use the singular?' I asked. 'Who was the other one to whom you were wishing peace?' 'Do you not know,' replied the Jew, 'I said, Peace be to you, and to the angel over your shoulder.' All poetry has not gone out of old London—no, not yet!" (*G. A. Johnston Ross.*) *The Great Spirit-World:*—"We are taken into a world of visions, and trances, and mystical imagery. The East has touched us with its brooding dreams, with its vast symbolism. We move amid exaltations and hear strange voices. There is a world within a world; there is a life beyond life, and with this we hold communion. It is sketched in shadowy outlines, and peopled by figures that can be known and named. It is not simply gathered up into the all-sufficient name of the Eternal God, but there are mediating presences. There is organisation and rule, there are levels and degrees. This mysterious realm half discloses itself in glimpses that come and go. There is effort and patient purpose slowly worked out to ordained conclusions. There are activities, and principalities, and dominions. It is a host. It is a kingdom. It moves according to law. It has issues far away out of our reach: "The Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one-and-twenty days, but lo! Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the Kings of Persia." What are we talking about? Who can say? Who can tell what is symbolic and what is real? But in the Book of Daniel these rare presences pass under the control of the sole directive will of the Most High. They are not multiplied indefinitely. They do not fasten the imagination and interest and curiosity upon themselves. They are absorbed in moral acts. They are bent and treated as solemn instruments of spiritual destiny. And it is noticeable how close these presences are kept to man. They are no formless genii, but like unto a son of man. That is the shape that the vision receives. All excess, all exuberance is pruned. There is no fantastic fancy at work letting itself loose in airy and arbitrary imagination. They are not even winged. "One like unto a man touched me," so runs the text. All through the book we have the insistence on human nature as the typical organ of the Divine manifestation. Man supplies the form through which God can be revealed. So, on this eve of St. Michael and All Angels, we may well reassure ourselves by noting how in our own later days this environing and mysterious life of mediating spirit, into which the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel introduce us, has once again been brought near to us. We are being made aware again how little conscious and reflective knowledge has covered of the possibilities within which we move. We know how we have tried so hard and so long to isolate the field of known experience, to cut it absolutely off from disturbing elements that have been unexamined. We had set ourselves to secure complete and certain control over that which we have made our own, and to purge thoroughly out of it anything that traversed or perplexed our certified scheme of things. We were to be positive about whatever we did know, however much might be outside which we did not know. That was our old agnostic

programme. What we did not know was to be left out of account in dealing with what we did know. And that is the programme which has been broken down. The facts have been too much for it. No such isolation is conceivable. In and out of the life that we can cover with our rationalised experience, there are influences, forces, powers, which are for ever playing and passing, which belong to a world beyond our scientific methods. We float in a mysterious ether to which no physical limitations apply. Sounds, motions transmit themselves through this medium, under conditions which transform our whole idea of what space or time may mean. Again and again through and beyond this semi-physical mystery, a world of spiritual activity opens upon us. It has capacities of which we have never dreamed; it allows of apparent contact of spirit with spirit, in spite of material distance and physical obstruction. Communications pass between those who are separated, without visible or tangible mediation. There are modes of communion which are utterly unintelligible to our ordinary scientific assumptions, yet which actual experience tends more and more to verify. If we would see the vision of the prophet we must be able to pray the prophet's prayer. And what a prayer it is! It is one of the greatest of those prayers which gave the final form to the Jewish ideal of supplication, and which has passed for ever in type into the Christian liturgy. As in some of the Psalms, as in the great prayer attributed to Solomon at the opening of the temple, so here it would seem as if it was impossible for man's outpourings to take a finer or purer form. The whole secret of the Jew speaks in that prayer; his constant sense that God's good purpose for him never fails, even when the darkest evil falls upon him, for still it is that judgment, a judgment that leads on to forgiveness and to restoration. Nothing will break his belief in the faithful fatherhood which smites only in order that men may seek Him afresh. "Therefore," he cries, "hath the Lord watched over the evil and brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works." Yet may it be not our prayer unto Him that we might turn from our iniquities and understand the truth? So he confesses. And still, he says, the old covenant stands, the pledge given to the fathers. Back to that, as to an unfailing assurance. He turns to appeal. "And now, O Lord our God Thou hast brought Thy people forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has gotten them renown, as at this day. We have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness I beseech Thee let Thy anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, from Thy holy mountain. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear. Open Thine eyes and behold our desolation, and the city which is called by Thy name, for we did not present our supplications before Thee for our own righteousness, but out of Thy great mercy. O Lord hear; O Lord forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God, for Thy city and Thy people that are called by Thy name." There is the prayer, a prayer in which there is highest and purest intensity, and to such a prayer as that in its passionate pleading the vision comes, the Presence is felt, the mystery discloses itself. The man Gabriel flies swiftly and touches him at the hour of the evening oblation. I repeat, in order to know what those visions meant, we must be first found so praying. And you will note that it is not for himself, but for his people, the prophet raised that prayer. He had understood, he tells us what was meant by the old prophecy of Jeremiah over the desolations of Jerusalem. It is the public sin for which he sets himself, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, to pray unto his God. It is the national restoration of the Holy Mount for which he lifts his supplications. In view of that terrible desolation he can but turn to prayer. Can we look out over our Jerusalem as he looked out over it of old, and not turn with something of his poignant grief, with something of his burning shame, to do as he did when he set his face unto the Lord God and made his confession, saying, "O my God, incline Thy ear and hear; open Thine eyes and behold our desolation; O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for Thine own sake, O my God, for Thy city and for Thy people who are called by Thy name." Pray as he prayed. Pray as he did, in the spirit of contrition and patience, for the indignities which are brought upon the Church of God. Pray in the heart of a great hope, as he did in the prophetic fashion of a victory which shall yet be won. Pray long, and hard, and humbly; it is our power of intercession and supplication that is now so weak. (*H. S. Holland.*)

Ver. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth.—*The Dawn of Revival, or Prayer Speedily Answered:*—Prayer is useful in a thousand ways. It is spiritually what the old physicians sought after naturally, namely, a catholicon—a remedy of universal application. There is no case of need, distress, or dilemma, in which prayer will not be found to be a very present help. In the case before us Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah, and had learned that God would accomplish seventy weeks in the desolation of Jerusalem, but he felt that there was still more to be learned, and he set his face to learn it. His was a noble and acute mind, and with all its energies he sought to pry into the prophetic meaning; but he did not rely upon his own judgment; he

betook himself at once to prayer. Prayer is that great key which opens mysteries. To whom should we go for an explanation if we cannot understand a writing, but to the author of the book? Daniel appealed at once to the Great Author, in whose hand Jeremiah had been the pen. In lonely retirement the prophet knelt upon his knees, and cried unto God that he would open up to him the mystery of the prophecy, that he might know the full meaning of the seventy weeks, and what God intended to do at the end thereof, and how He would have His people behave themselves to obtain deliverance from their captivity. Daniel made his suit unto the Lord to unloose the seals and open the volume of the book, and he was heard and favoured with the knowledge which he might have sought for in vain by any other means. The particular point in the text to which I would direct your attention is that Daniel's prayer was answered at once, while he was yet speaking, ay, and at the beginning of his supplication. It is not always so. Prayer sometimes tarrieth like a petitioner at the gate until the king cometh forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeketh. The Lord when He hath given great faith, has been known to try it by long delayings. If it pleases Him to bid our patience exercise itself, shall He not do as He wills with His own? Beggars must not be choosers either as to time, place, or form. We must not take delays in prayer for denial; God's long-dated bills will be punctually honoured; we must not suffer Satan to shake our confidence in the God of truth by pointing to our unanswered prayers. However, in the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved, there was no waiting at all. In Daniel's case the promise was true, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The man Gabriel was made to fly very swiftly, as though even the flight of an angel was hardly swift enough for God's mercy. Oh, how fast the mercy of God travels, and how long his anger lingers! "Fly," said He, "bright spirit, try thine utmost power of wing! Descend to my waiting servant and fulfil his desire." I. First, have we any REASONS TO EXPECT THAT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SUPPLICATIONS THE COMMANDMENT OF MERCY WILL COME FORTH? Rest assured that we have, if we are found in the same posture as Daniel, for God acts towards His servants by a fixed rule. Let self-examination be now in vigilant exercise while we compare ourselves with the successful prophet. God will hear His people at the commencement of their prayers if the condition of the suppliant be fitted for it. The nature of such fitness we may gather from the state of Daniel's mind and the mode of his procedure. Upon this our first noteworthy observation is, that Daniel was determined to obtain the blessing which he was seeking. Note carefully the expression which he has used in the third verse—"I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication." That setting of the face is expressive of resolute purpose, firm determination, undivided attention, fixed resolute perseverance. "I set my face towards the Lord." We never do anything in this world until we set our faces thoroughly to it. The warriors who win battles are those who are resolved to conquer or die. The merchants who prosper in this world are those who do their business with all their hearts, and watch for wealth with eagerness. The half-hearted man is nowhere in the race of life; he is usually contemptible in the sight of others, and a misery to himself. If a thing be worth doing, it is worth doing well; and if it be not worth doing thoroughly, wise men let it alone. Especially is this a truth in the spiritual life. Wonders are not done for God and for the truth by men upon their beds asleep, or out of their beds, but still asleep. A man if he would do anything for God, for the truth, for the cross of Christ, must set his face and with the whole force of his will resolve to serve his God. The soldier of Christ must set his face like a flint against all opposition, and at the same moment set his face towards the Lord with the attentive eye of the handmaiden looking towards her mistress. This was the first proof that God might safely give Daniel the blessing at once, for the prophet's heart was fixed in immutable resolve, and there was no turning him from the point. Next, Daniel felt deeply the misery of the people for whom he pleaded. Read that expression, "under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem." The condition of that city, lying in ruins, her inhabitants captive, her choicest sons banished to the ends of the earth, afflicted him very sorely. He had not a light superficial acquaintance with the sorrows of his people, but his inmost heart was embittered with the wormwood and the gall of their cup. If God intends to give us souls he will prepare us for the honour by causing us to feel the deep ruin of our fellow-creatures. In the next place, Daniel was ready to receive the blessing, because he felt deeply his own unworthiness of it. I do not know that even the fifty-first Psalm is more penitential than the chapter which contains our text. Read the chapter, and note how he humbly acknowledges sins of commission, sins of omission, and especially sins against the warnings of God's word and the entreaties of God's servants. Let us confess our unworthiness, our coldness, and deadness, and lethargy, and wanderings of heart, and the backsliding of many among us, and then, having confessed our faults, we may expect that at the very commencement God will visit us. When the vessel is empty, Heaven's fountain will fill it; when the ground is dried and

chapped, and begins to open her mouth with thirst, down shall come the rain to make fat the soil. But again, we have not exhausted the points in Daniel which deserve our imitation; you will notice that Daniel had a clear conviction of God's power to help his people in their distress, his lively sense of Divine power being based upon what God had done in the olden time. One is interested to note in the history of the Jews, how in every dark and stormy hour their minds reverted to one particular point in their history! Just as the Greek would remember Thermopylæ and Marathon, and feel his eyes sparkle and every sinew grow strong at the thought of the heroic day when his fathers slew the Persians, and broke the yoke of the great king, so with nobler emotions, because more Heavenly, the Israelite always thought of the Red Sea, and what the Lord did to Egypt when He divided the waters, and they stood upright as a heap, that His people might pass through. Daniel in the prayer says, "Thou hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day." He lays hold upon that deed of ancient prowess, and pleads in effect after this fashion: "Thou canst do the like, O God, and glorify thy name anew, and send deliverance to thy people." We worship the God who loves His chosen now even as He did of old. But once more, the most apparent point about Daniel's prayer is his peculiar earnestness. To multiply expressions such as "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" may not always be right. There may be much sin in such repetitions, amounting to taking God's name in vain. But it is not so with Daniel. His repetitions are forced from the depths of his soul, "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do!" These are the fiery volcanic eruptions of a soul on fire, heaving terribly. It is just the man's soul wanting vent. No prayer is at all likely to bring down an immediate answer if it be not a fervent prayer. We must get rid of the icicles that hang about our lips. We must ask the Lord to thaw the ice-caves of our soul and to make our hearts like a furnace of fire heated seven times hotter. Thus much upon that first reason. We may expect a speedy answer to prayer when the condition of the suppliant is as God would have it. Secondly, I believe we have every reason to expect a blessing when we consider the mercy itself. That which we as a church are seeking is, if I understand your hearts and my own, just this: we want to see our own personal piety deepened and revived, and we want to see sinners saved. Well, is not that in itself so good a thing that we may expect the giver of every good and perfect gift to give it to us? What we ask is for God's glory. We are not seeking a boon which may glorify us or may exalt some one of our fellow-men. We crave not victory for the arms of a warrior; we ask not success for the researches of a philosopher. Thirdly, there is another thing which encourages me, namely, the nature of the relations which exist between God and us. Is not that a choice word, "O man greatly beloved"? "Yes," you will perhaps say, "it is easy to understand why God should send so swift an answer to Daniel, because he was a man greatly beloved." Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that you are greatly beloved too? Who will refuse to ask when such encouragements are suggested to our minds?

II. If we are to gain the blessing at the commencement, IN WHAT FORM SHOULD WE PREFER TO HAVE IT? Could I have my heart's desire, I would crave a blessing for every one of you. I was turning over in my mind how early and sweet a blessing it would be if the Lord would give us to-day some conversions. But make no tarrying, O our God! Make haste our Beloved. "Be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether," for Thy name's sake. Amen. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

For thou art greatly beloved.—*A Man Greatly Beloved*.—Daniel was alike eminent as a prophet of the Lord and as a man of piety and goodness. His piety was enlightened, decided, and persevering. He had, doubtless, his infirmities; but nothing is alleged against him.

I. THE EXALTED CHARACTER OF DANIEL. 1. The inflexible constancy with which he adhered to the service of Jehovah. No honours could win him from his allegiance to the true God; no dangers could deter him from openly maintaining and professing the true religion. 2. He was a man of prayer. Such firm and determined adherence to true religion as his could be kept alive only by regular and intimate intercourse with Heaven. He prayed frequently. He prayed in a right spirit—this is seen in his just views of God; in his deep humiliation before God; and in the earnestness of his pleadings. 3. He was eminently faithful in discharging the duties of his exalted station. The insidious acts of designing men could not impeach his integrity, or darken the lustre of his character. This fidelity and honesty in his office were indeed the natural effects of his eminent piety. Religion is the only sure foundation for the regular and faithful performance of the duties of our office and station in society. Principles of honour, and prudence, and self-interest properly understood, will often go far in leading to fidelity in secular trusts; but religious principles will enable men to resist greater temptations, and be more uniformly and perfectly upright than any inferior motive. If our religion has not a similar influence upon us, to that his religion exerted on Daniel, it is vain and insincere. Faith in God necessarily leads to right conduct towards mankind. 4. Daniel was distinguished by the pious and patriotic interest which

he took in the welfare of his countrymen. Every Jew, indeed, had something of this feeling. In a particular manner, however, were these the sentiments and feelings of Daniel. His views on national matters were of a more enlightened and spiritual character than those of his countrymen in general. He saw that the glory of God and the interests of true religion were intimately connected with the re-establishment of Israel. This made him so peculiarly ardent in the cause of his people, and led him to use all the influence of his exalted station, and all the might or power which he possessed with God, that Zion might no longer be a desolation. Patriotism is a feeling honourable to the character. But how is that feeling hallowed and exalted when we feel that, with the prosperity of our country, the glory of God and the everlasting interests of mankind are most intimately connected. II. **THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF DANIEL.** 1. He was greatly beloved of God. All the people of God, indeed, are the subjects of His affection. But, in addition to this, He bears to everyone of them a love of complacency founded on the amiable and holy qualities with which they are endowed by the Spirit of grace. No privilege is more amazing than that with which Daniel was favoured. Gabriel was despatched from Heaven with an ample answer to his prayer, and a pointed assurance that he was a special favourite of Heaven. 2. Daniel was greatly beloved of men. It is natural to us to desire the esteem and friendship of men, and the gratification of that desire is, in no slight degree, conducive both to our usefulness and our happiness. And this did Daniel enjoy in no ordinary measure. Then (1) *Imitate the conduct and character of Daniel.* Like him, be steadfast in the faith. Like him, be men of prayer. Like him, discharge with fidelity the duties of your station. Like him, be solicitous for the good of the Israel of God. (2) *Remember that, if you resemble Daniel in character, you shall also be like him in privilege.* You shall be in favour with God and man. (*James Kirkwood.*)

Ver. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people.—*Shutting, Sealing, and Covering; or, Messiah's Glorious Work:*—The Lord God appointed a set time for the coming of His Son into the world; nothing was left to chance. Infinite wisdom dictated the hour at which the Messiah should be born, and the moment at which he should be cut off. Note, again, that the Lord told His people somewhat darkly, but still with a fair measure of clearness, when the Christ would come. Thus he cheered them when the heavy cloud of woe hung over their path. This prophecy shone like a star in the midst of the sorrows of Israel; so bright was it that at the period when Christ came there was a general expectation of Him. The first advent of our Lord is spoken of in our text as ordained to be ere the seventy weeks were finished, and the city should be destroyed; and so it was even as the prophet had spoken. I. **FIRST, LET US SURVEY THE MESSIAH'S WORK.** The first work of our Lord Jesus Christ is the overthrow of evil, and it is thus described—"To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity." But our Lord's labour is not all spent upon down-pulling work; He comes to build up, and His second work is the setting up of righteousness in the world, described again by three sentences: "To bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." The first work of the Messiah is the overthrow of evil. This overthrow of evil is described by three words. If I were to give you a literal translation from the Hebrew I might read the passage thus: "To shut up the transgression, to seal up sin, and to cover up iniquity." According to learned men, those are the words which are here used, and the three put together are a singularly complete description of the putting away of sin. First, it is "shut up"; it is, as it were, taken prisoner, and confined in a cell; the door is fastened, and it is held in durance; it is out of sight; held to a narrow range; unable to exercise the power it once possessed. In a word, it is "restrained"—so the margin of our Bibles reads it. The Hebrew word signifies to hold back, to hold in, to arrest, to keep in prison, to shut in or shut up. Its dominion is finished, for sin itself is bound. Christ has led captivity captive. But it is not enough to shut up the vanquished tyrant, unless he be shut up for ever; and, therefore, lest there should be any possibility of his breaking loose again, the next sentence is, "To seal up." The uses of the seal are many, but here it is employed for certainty of custody. Thus is sin placed doubly out of sight; it is shut up and sealed up, as a document put into a case and then sealed down. "Finished" and "made an end of" are the two words used in our authorised version, and they give the essence of the meaning. To borrow a figure—Arabi, the Egyptian rebel, is shut up as our prisoner, and his defeat is sealed, therefore his rebellion is finished and an end is made of it. Even thus is it with transgression; our Lord has vanquished evil, and certified the same under the hand and seal of the Omnipotent, and therefore we may with rapture hear Him say, "It is finished," and also behold Him rise from the dead to seal our justification. Yet, as if this might not suffice, the next term in the Hebrew is "to cover up"; for the word to make reconciliation or expiation is usually in the Hebrew to cover over. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose

sin is covered." Christ has come to cover sin, to atone for it, and so to hide it. The two former sentences speak of finishing transgression and making an end of sin, and these expressions are full and complete, while this third one explains the means by which the work is done, namely, by an expiation which covers up every trace of sin. Thus in the three together we have a picture of the utter extinction of sin both as to its guilt and its power, ay, and its very existence; it is put into the dungeon and the door is shut upon it; after this the door is sealed and then it is covered up, so that the place of sin's sepulchre cannot be seen any more for ever. Observe that the terms for sin are left in an absolute form. It is said, "to finish transgression," "to make an end of sins," "to make reconciliation for iniquity." Whose transgression is this? Whose sins are these? It is not said. There is no word employed to set out the persons for whom atonement is made, as is done in verses like these—"Christ loved the church and gave himself for it"; "I lay down my life for the sheep." The mass of evil is left unlabelled, that any penitent sinner may look to the Messiah and find in Him the remover of sin. What transgression is finished? Transgression of every kind. The Messiah came to wipe out and utterly destroy sin, and this is, and will be, the effect of His work. Put all the three sentences into one and this is the sum of them. I take the sentences separately and press each cluster by itself. And first notice that it is said He came to finish the transgression. As some understand it, our Lord came that in His death transgression might reach its highest development, and sign its own condemnation. Sin reached its finis, its ultimatum, its climax, in the murder of the Son of God. It could not proceed further; the course of malice could no further go. Now hath sin finished itself, and now hath Jesus come to finish it. "Thus far," saith He, "thou shalt go, but no further; here in my wounds and death shall thy proud waves be stayed." The huge leviathan of evil has met its match, and is placed under the power of the Avenger. Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I will put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee by the way by which thou camest." The Lord hath set bounds to the transgression which aforesaid broke all bounds. Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Sin is shut up that grace may have liberty. Now take the second sentence, which in our version is, "To make an end of sin." Messiah has come to proclaim so free, so rich, so gracious a pardon to the sons of men that when they receive it sin virtually ceases to be; it is made an end of. But the Hebrew has it "to seal up sins." Now I take it to mean just this. There are certain handwritings which are against us, and they would be produced against us in court, but by the order of the judge all these handwritings are sealed up, and regarded as out of sight; no man dare break the seal, and no man can read them unless the seal be broken; therefore they will never be brought against us. They have become virtually null and void. Everything that can be brought as an accusation against God's people is now sealed up and put out of the way once for all, never to be opened and laid to their charge before the living God. Or, if you regard sin as a captive prisoner, you must now see that by Christ's death the prison wherein sin lies is so sealed that the enemy can never come forth again in its ancient power. But now, the last expression is in English. He hath come "to make reconciliation for iniquity"; that is, to end the strife between God and man by a glorious reconciliation, a making again of peace between these twain; so that God loveth man, and, as a consequence, man loveth God. In the blessed atonement of Christ, God and man meet at a chosen meeting-place. Now, take the Hebrew for it, and read the sentence thus—to cover iniquity. Oh, what bliss this is; to think that sin is now once for all covered! I fail to describe this triumphant overthrow of sin and Satan. I have neither wisdom nor language answerable to such a theme. I invite you now to consider the second work, namely, the setting up of righteousness. This is set before us in three expressions; first, in the words "to bring in everlasting righteousness." And what is that? Why, his own righteousness which is from everlasting to everlasting. Happy are those spirits to whom Christ gives an everlasting righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom and in it they shall shine forth as the sun. Next, in order to the setting up of a kingdom of righteousness He is come that He may "seal up vision and prophecy." That is, by fulfilling all the visions and the prophecies of the Old Testament in Himself, He ends both prophecy and vision. He seals up visions and prophecies so that they shall no more be seen or spoken; they are closed, and no man can add to them; and therefore—and that is the point to note—the gospel is for ever settled, to remain eternally the same. Christ has set up a kingdom that shall never be moved. His truth can never be changed by any novel revelation. There always was something better yet to come in all times till Christ arrived; but after the best there cometh none. This, then, is an essential part of the setting up of that which is good—namely, to settle truth on a fixed basis, whereon we may stand steadfast, immovable. The candles are snuffed out because the day itself looks out from the windows of Heaven. Then, as if this were not enough, He is also come to anoint the Most Holy, or the Holy of holies, as you may read it. And what means this? Nothing material, for the Holy of holies, the place into

which the High Priest went of old is demolished, and the veil is rent. The most holy place is now the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; He was anointed that God might dwell in Him. Together with Christ the Holy of holies is now His Church, and that Church was anointed or dedicated when the Holy Ghost fell at Pentecost, to be with us, and to abide in us for ever. That was a noble part of the setting up of the great kingdom of righteousness, when tongues of fire descended and sat upon each of the disciples, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Heaven rings with the praises of the Messiah who came to destroy the work of sin, and to set up the kingdom of righteousness in the midst of the world. II. LET US NOW ENQUIRE AS TO OUR PARTICIPATION IN THESE TWO WORKS. First, Christ has come into the world to do all this good work, but has He done it for us? There is a general aspect to the atonement, but there is quite as surely a special object in it. The first question that is to help you to answer that enquiry is this—Is your sin shut up as to its power? "Sin shall not have dominion over you" if Christ is in you. How is it between your soul and evil? Is there war or peace? The next question arising out of the text is, Is your sin sealed up as to its condemning power? Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit in your soul, saying to you, "Go in peace; thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee"? "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." There is no peace to any of us till Christ hath made an end of our sin. How is it with your hearts? And next, is your sin covered as to its appearance before God? Has the Lord Jesus Christ made such an expiation for your sin that it no longer glares in the presence of the Most High, but you can come unto God without dread? Further, let me question you about the next point. Has the Lord Jesus Christ made you righteous? Do you glory in His blood and righteousness, and do you now seek after that which is pure and holy? Furthermore, are the prophecies and visions sealed up as to you? Are they fulfilled in you? When God declares that He will wash us and make us whiter than snow, is it so with you? When He declares that He will cleanse our blood, which has not yet been cleansed, is it so with you? Nor is this all; are you anointed to be most holy to the Lord? Are you set apart that you may serve Him? III. Lastly, THE RESULTS OF PARTICIPATING IN ALL THIS. The results! They are, first of all, security. How can that man be lost whose transgression is finished, and whose sin has ceased to be? What is there for him to dread on earth, in Heaven, or in hell? And now, inasmuch as you are secure, you are also reconciled to God, and made to delight in Him. God is your friend, and you are one of the friends of God. Rejoice in that hallowed friendship, and live in the assurance of it. But now, suppose when I put the question, you had to shake your head and say, "No, it is not so with me." Then hear these few sentences. If the Messiah has not done this for you, then your sin will be finished in another way—sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. An awful death awaits you—death unto God, and purity and joy. If Christ has never made an end of your sin, then mark this, your sin will soon make an end of you, and all your hopes, your pleasures, your boasting, your peace will perish. Has not Christ reconciled you? Then mark this, your enmity will increase. Have you never had the righteousness of Christ brought in? Then mark this, your unrighteousness will last for ever. One of these days God will say, "He that is unholy, let him be unholy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Are not the prophecies fulfilled in you, the prophecies of mercy? Then listen. The prophecies of woe will be written large across your history. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." Lastly, will you never be anointed to be most holy? Then remember, holiness and you will stand at a distance for ever, and to be far off from holiness must necessarily be to be far off from Heaven and happiness. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The Seventy-Sevens:—A general summary of what those seventy-sevens are to see accomplished is the first thing explained by the angel. If we ask for what these periods are thus divided out, we here get the answer. 1. "To consummate transgression"—finish it, bring it to its final stopping-point, after which there will be no more of it. 2. "To make an end of sins"—seal them up, shut them in prison, so as never to break forth again. 3. "To cover iniquity"—expiate it by adequate satisfaction, blot it out, hide it for ever. 4. "To bring in everlasting righteousness"—put man in normal relations with God, set human life into thorough accord with Jehovah's will and law, induce a condition of moral rectitude, which thenceforward shall never again be interrupted, but endure for all the ages. 5. "To seal vision and prophet"—authenticate and vindicate by fulfilment, make good and finish out in fact and deed all that God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 6. "To anoint"—consecrate, put into place and effectiveness—a "holiness of holinesses," which is the literal sense of the words in this last clause. It can refer to nothing less than the completed outcome of the redemptive administrations as a whole—the ultimate result and crown of grace and providence, of which all the prophets speak. Everything promised, prophesied, or ever to be hoped for Israel is thus summed up in what these seventy-seven years are to bring. (Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.)

God's Set Times.—This text was an answer to a prayer—one of the warmest, humblest, and most earnest prayers that was ever offered up. In answer, the angel told Daniel of the time when the Son of God was to come down, and of all the blessed things He was to do for man's salvation. 1. As to the time. Seventy weeks. Punctually the Lord came. 2. See the description of what He was to do. His name is expressive, "Most holy." His qualification is "anointed and consecrated." What was His undertaking? Something He came to do away with. "Finish the transgression, and make an end of sin." "And to make reconciliation for iniquity." Jesus not only does away with the guilt of the sins which men have committed, but He breaks sin's power in them for the time to come. See what He comes to do. "To bring everlasting righteousness." He "sealed up the vision and the prophecy" by bringing it to pass. Reflections. (1) What a respect does the Lord show to a humble and a contrite supplicant. (2) How punctual is the Lord; how faithful to His own set time! (3) What a glorious event for man was the first coming of the Lord Jesus. (A. Roberts, M.A.) **And to bring in everlasting righteousness.**—*An Everlasting Righteousness*.—1. What we are to understand by the word "righteousness." Some would say "moral honesty," doing justice between man and man. It likewise signifies inward holiness, wrought in us by the Spirit of God. I think the word here used means "imputed righteousness." When Christ's righteousness is spoken of, we are to understand Christ's obedience and death; all that Christ has done and suffered for an elect world—for all that will believe on Him. It might be called a blessed righteousness, a glorious righteousness, an invaluable righteousness; the angel here calls it an "everlasting righteousness." 2. On what account is it called an "everlasting righteousness"? (1) Because it was intended by God to extend to mankind even from eternity. From all the ages of eternity God had thoughts of us. (2) Because the efficacy of Christ's death took place immediately upon Adam's fall. Christianity in one sense is as old as the creation. (3) Because the efficacy of it is to continue till time shall be no more. (4) Because the benefit of it is to endure to everlasting life. Those whom God justifies, them He also glorifies. 3. What are we to understand by Christ's bringing this righteousness in? (1) Our Lord's promulgating and proclaiming it to the world. It was brought in under the law, but then under types and shadows. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. (2) Jesus brought in this righteousness, as He wrought it out for sinners upon the cross. (3) The expression also implies Christ's bringing it, by His blessed Spirit, into poor believers' hearts. "An unapplied Christ is no Christ at all." Are there any here that can go along with me on this doctrine? (G. Whitefield, A.M.)

Ver. 25. Even in troublous times.—*The Wall Built in Troublous Times*.—Jerusalem was a type of the Church of God; and as the former was built "in troublous times," so is the latter. I. THIS IS TRUE OF INDIVIDUALS. This world is the house of discipline in which Christians are broken to the Divine service by severe management. There are seasons which in a peculiar sense are "troublous times." And it is in such seasons more than any other that they grow in grace, and thus prepare to carry up the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem, or to enlarge the Church triumphant. Their choicest experiences are obtained, and their selected graces are acquired, in times of trouble. Afflictions are the rod which chastises them to duty—the furnace in which the gold is purified from the dross. II. THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM GENERALLY ARE BUILT UP IN TROUBLOUS TIMES. In such times the greatest advances have been made in the interests of the Church. Illustrate from the history of the Church from the time when the foundation was laid in the promise of the woman's seed. To the civilised world at large these are troublous times. While the enemy are vapouring and raging; while, leagued against all morality and religion, they are bearing away the ancient landmarks of society; while the apostles of infidelity are fast proselyting the world, and a third part of men are gone after Baal—even in such times the walls of Jerusalem are rising. Things are likely to continue the same in our day. Let not troublous times stagger the faith of Christians. Let us not be terrified "as though some strange thing happened to us." We have company enough in these matters. From the days of Adam all the saints have had to encounter similar trials. (E. D. Griffin, D.D.) *The Church Built up in Trouble*.—It was a feeble and a broken remnant which wound its weary way out of Babylon to rebuild the city of their fathers and the Temple of their God. Long captivity had wrought its sure work upon the people. They had been "mingled with the heathen, and learned their ways." They were so slow to build the Temple that the threatening voices of Haggai and Zechariah hardly stirred them to the work by every entreaty and menace and judgment. With such mingled materials, the Tirshatha and the priest had a great work to do. Though the king's edict was clear, and his favour undoubted, the Jews had many enemies, and they fierce, strong, unscrupulous, Slander, falsehood, and violence, open attacks and secret wiles, must all be repelled. Yet all difficulties were overcome. "The street was built again, and the wall," though the

times were troublous. The Temple of God did arise out of its ashes. Why was this result only to be attained through these difficulties? These are some of the reasons. By their being thus tried a provision was made by which, amongst those who undertook his work, the true-hearted might be sifted from the false and hollow. For though at last the will of God must be done by all, by good and bad, the obedient and the disobedient, by saints and reprobates, by angels and devils; yet to do consciously and rejoicingly His will, this is the blessing only of the faithful. And not only were the good severed from the bad, by the difficulties with which they had to struggle, but in the several hearts of the faithful, this same work was being wrought. A sifting was going on in their moral nature; a parting of the precious from the vile. And this trial of their faith drove them to God in their work. What is all this which we have traced out, but the universal law under which the Church of Christ is placed. From first to last this is its history. It is built up, but in troublous times. How plain is this feature in its earliest history! What was the earthly life of our blessed Master but a service under trial? With what tribulation and suffering were the foundations of the Church laid. Since the apostles' time this has been the law of the Church. They who at any time have done great things in it have been trained and exercised in manifold sufferings, inward and outward. Thus only can the Church be purged. Thus only can the work be done within God's servants. The counter-sign of sanctified affliction should be on the Church; the patient waiting, the burnished arms, the earnest prayer, the united hearts, the untiring watchfulness, the deep humility, the prevailing intercessions, the unwearied labours, the godly jealousy, of those who hold fast to God amidst a self-choosing, and, therefore, a gainsaying generation. There is for each one of us, as separate members of Christ, the self-same voice. Here is the secret of our inmost life. To hold on amidst discouragements—to lift up to God a face often wet by tears, and soiled by mourning—to know outward trials and inward—to be tempted, buffeted, yea, above all, betrayed! This is our life. Hardly, and after many a struggle, does the evil depart from us. The building goes on slowly—with arms in our hands—amidst reproaches—with watching unto prayer. Let us seek to know this for ourselves in very deed. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*)

Ver. 26. Shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.—"Cut off, but not for Himself":—The Messiah here mentioned is the great and only God, who, in reference to His office as the anointed Saviour, was called Messiah, and also Christ. He is said to be "cut off, but not for Himself." His being "cut off" denotes His being made a sacrifice. His being "cut off," but "not for Himself," implies His being made a sacrifice for us—that is, as our substitute. In no other way can justice be appeased; in no other way can sins be forgiven. The expression implies that He died as a sacrifice for the general good, and as a vicarious sacrifice. Christ died to make an atonement for our sins; and without that atonement we could never have been saved. (*W. Durham.*) *For the Sake of Others:*—On the side of some mighty tower you may see often a fragile rod. The rod saves the tower. It directs the vague, all-destroying electric flame of which the stormy air is full harmlessly into the earth. Such a lightning-rod is every righteous man to the city or class in which he lives. His one desire is to win some wondrous good for his fellow-men. That is what Christ did for all the world, and we are true Christians in as far as we are consciously trying to do for others the work of Christ. We cannot at the best do much, we have only one life, one second that is in God's eternity to do it in, but that becomes majestic when it is regarded as part of one mighty whole. (*Dean Farrar.*)

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—21. In the third year of Cyrus.—*The Vision on the Banks of the Hiddekel:*—The law of gradual development seems to pervade the government of God, and may be treated alike in the material and spiritual departments of his administration. The revelation which God has given to men has grown into its completeness. The primal promise to our common parents in paradise, was the first faint ray that emanated from the common sun of righteousness; but as the morning of the race wore on, that solitary beam expanded, through the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic economy and the prophetic writings, until at length, forerhanded by the Baptist as the morning star, the Divine luminary arose "with healing in his wings." What was thus characteristic of revelation as a whole is equally apparent in the communications made to individual prophets. Daniel, in this wonderful series of predictions, goes on from

the general to the particular, and brings in at every step new details by which his accuracy may be tested, and by which, if his writings stand the ordeal which they have themselves prepared, his inspiration may be abundantly established. The date of the present revelation was the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia. This, therefore, is the last communication which he gave to his people, and the last glimpse which we got of himself. He had not set out, probably on account of his extreme old age, with the exiles who returned to Jerusalem after the issuing of the edict of Cyrus. The testimony of tradition is that Daniel died at Susa. . . . This description of the conflicts in the spirit-world between the rival angels foreshadows the opposition encountered by Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and their compatriots during the reigns of the Persian kings, Darius, Hystaspis, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, and also that which, at a later time, the descendants of the restorers of Jerusalem met with at the hands of the Syrian representatives of the Greek Empire. The prophecy in the eleventh chapter may be divided into three parts, increasing in circumstantiality as they advance. There is first, a brief description of the Persian and the Greek Empires; then a sketch of the more important events in the struggles between the kings of Syria and Egypt; and third, a detailed and minute account of the character and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes.

It remains that I should look for a moment at the opinion of those who believe that we have in this prediction a reference to the Antichrist of the New Testament as well as to Antiochus. For such an idea we can find no sure foundation. There is nothing in the chapter to indicate that a transition from one subject to another has been made. Some refer the prophecy to the Papacy; but it is a question not yet settled whether the papacy really is the Antichrist of the New Testament. Learn from this portion, 1. That God prepares his people for special trial by special grace. His assistance is ever beforehand with our emergency. The relation of this portion of God's word to the circumstances of the people under Antiochus is precisely that of all his promises to our trials, temptations, and necessities. Every promise of God is a prophecy. 2. That faith in the Invisible is essential to our getting the full benefit of Scripture. Much may be gained from it in history and in morals, even if we should repudiate everything that is supernatural in its pages. To obtain the utmost benefit from its words, we must accept its revelation of that which is hidden from mortal sight. The promises of Jesus are not to us like the legacies of one long dead. They are the assurances of a living and present, though unseen friend, and when so accepted they are full of power. The Bible will be to us no better than the moral maxims of Antoninus or Epictetus, unless we receive its revelation of the unseen in connection with its forecasts of prophecy and promise. (*William M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. I ate not pleasant bread.—*Intense religion*:—About a hundred years ago, a man of God thus wrote in his diary: "I was enabled to persevere in prayer till I saw so much need of Divine help, that I knew not how to leave off, and had forgot I needed food.—D. Brainerd." Strange intensity of desire! He who felt it must have been far above most Christians of our age. Who of us could thus record the longings of his soul? We feel that this is reality. There is no insobriety or wild excitement here. All is calm and deep. We are listening to the utterances of a soul that has got into conscious contact and vital fellowship with God; and who, in the profound enjoyment thus entered on, has lost the consciousness of this outer world in which he is still a dweller. Happy saint! Who would not tread thy footsteps, and thus get as completely within the veil as thou! All thy religion was amid realities and certainties. There was no distance, no dimness, no vagueness in thy intercourse with the Father of Spirits. How much of our religion is made up of shadows and incoherencies! how much of our intercourse with God is vague and distant; a groping after something which we seem never to reach, instead of being living, personal, conscious intercourse between our souls and God! (*The Study.*)

Ver. 7. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision.—*Visions for one's self alone*:—Many and many of these men whom we see plodding on in their dusty ways are travelling with visions in their souls. Nobody knew it but themselves and God. Once years ago they saw a light. They knew it, only for a moment, what companionships, what attainments, they were made for! That light has never faded. It is the soul of good things which they are doing in the world to-day. It makes them sure when other men think their faith is gone. It will be with them to the end, until they come to all its prophecies. (*Phillips Brooke.*) *The Divine Fellowship of Loneliness*:—The events here recorded are among the more advanced and elevated experiences of this man of God. The Lord is showing him things which are to take place; and in order to prepare him as the exponent of the divine purposes, he is raised into a supra-mundane

state of soul. I. THE SCENE: "the vision." We have no positive data for speaking dogmatically as to what may be the composition of the visible nature of angels. We associate them with spiritual orders of God's creatures; but as to man, he has a dual nature; within, spirit; without, a material body. In the wise and gracious purposes of our God, He has seen fit to take man into His counsels, and to make known to him His purposes. Taking, as we must, a broad view of this interesting fact, the Almighty uses a variety of means for communicating His mind and intentions to the children of men. The colours and forms, the harmonies and utilities of nature of imaging and voicing through the senses the wisdom, power and beneficence of God. The potent impact of the Spirit's influence upon the mind of prophet and apostle has furnished us with the inimitable truths of this great book, the Bible, which infinitely surpasses the best productions of the human intellect. In dreams, when deep sleep has fallen upon men, hath the Lord made Himself known to and encouraged His faithful servants. Visions too, have their place among the methods of revealing. Dreams and visions evidently belong to the same class of phenomena; and yet are there not shades of difference? Dreams are what come to us when we are asleep; visions come oftentimes in moments of waking. In dreams men have had the symbols of things; in visions, the things themselves. Visions evidently belong to a higher and more direct order of celestial manifestation. Visions seem to hold in mysterious suspension the ordinary processes of thought and feeling, unfolding to the mind new worlds of knowledge. We have all read those marvellous visions of Old Testament history: Isaiah standing with speechless awe before the vision of God; Ezekiel encircled in the vast and wondrous region of visionary mystery, now looking into hidden chambers of abomination, then with seer-like eye peering among apparently conflicting wheels. Daniel sees in vision things which are to be. In this supreme fact we have the significance and symbol of life. Situated as we are in the midst of vast circles and orders of beings and ideas, all true life, which is essentially progressive, is made up of "visions"; and by these we attain the true "ascent of man," passing up from shadows into light, and from the unknown to the known. A life of progress is one of constant waking. So far as the things of to-morrow and the knowledge of the future are concerned, we are now asleep. The hopes of future good which we now cherish are foreshadowing dreams, the dawning of these hoped for events are visions brightening things up to blessed realities. Thus we live and grow. Men are somewhat in the habit of pooh-poohing dreams, and of relegating visions to the region of superstitious fancies or even imbecile hopes. All the truth, however, is not with such men, nor all wisdom either. I say, dream on, only see to it that your dreams are pure and true, and be careful that your visions take their light from above. The purest ascent of life is often adumbrated by visions of hope and longing; and as we exercise faith and put forth effort, they crystallize into shape and become real possessions. God gives us visions of what we may be; by them we are roused to search and make inquiry, and then to believe; and so visions of a free spirit and a clean heart which the Lord gave us yesterday become our normal character and life to-day. Note a few points in Daniel's vision. It appears he was reduced to a very low state so far as enjoyment was concerned. Luxurious food, and exhilarating drinks were put away (ver. 3). Visions do not generally come in fulness of body. It is when the physical is chastened that the spiritual ascends. It was when Peter was hungry that he had the vision which prepared the way for his visit to the Gentiles. Daniel saw a certain man (ver. 5). This could be none other than the Christ, as we may gather from Revelation i. 13, 15, where he appears in similar form to John at Patmos. He was "clothed in fine linen," as the high priest was on the day of Atonement, thus showing that He is the High Priest of our Profession. "Whose loins are girded with fine gold." "Girded" ready for work. "With fine gold," proof that everything of Christ is best, and that the best of everything is all too unworthy of Him. We have also a description of His form. "Body like the beryl," a precious stone of an azure colour. "His face as the appearance of lightning," a terror to evil-doers. "Eyes as lamps," seeing all things. "His arms and His feet like in colour to polished brass," prophetic of the brightness and power of the message of His gospel. "The voice of His words like the voice of a multitude." The words of this new life are destined to overcome and supersede all other systems. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES: "alone." In this remarkable experience and wondrous manifestation Daniel was alone. No other eye could follow this brilliant unfolding of God. Looking at this fact superficially there may occur a feeling of sadness; but looked at more deeply, it is seen to be inevitable. As every man has his personality and individuality, so has he his loneliness. While there are affinities or connecting links between man and man, there are dividing lines between all the individuals composing the human family. Science teaches that between every two

particles of matter, even in the hardest substance there is space; in like manner between men there are bridgeless gulfs, so that the one cannot pass over to the other. While this is true of the general mass of men, it is more strikingly manifest in the higher forms and better conditions of mind and spirit. Best men and men at their best must needs be alone. He who progresses rapidly and sons loftily must be alone, inasmuch as he leaves the multitude behind. How true this is in the growth of intellect and the enlargement of heart, in the constraints of love and the sublimities of faith! He who waits on others will find progress slow work. In the larger commonwealth of intellectual and moral life God deals with the man, not with the mass. The individual stands directly related, and personally responsible, to his Maker; and in proportion to his realization of the possibilities of his own being will he be alone. The thinking man climbs heights and reaches lofty peaks at the far down foot of which lie panting the mass of puny men. The man of close communion with God and self and truth basks in a light that would dazzle to blindness men of weaker vision. Much of best life must be lived in "splendid isolation." The world's great reformers and deep thinkers have lived alone, because they have been far in advance of their own age. While there may be the lonesomeness of weakness and eccentricity, still, in the main, lone souls are rendered such by their superiority and by the revelations they receive from the "Father of lights." The Bible furnishes us with striking examples. Mark the happy oblivion and lofty lonesomeness of Enoch who "walked with God, and he was not; for God took him." Note the elevation of Joseph in those prophetic dreams which excited the jealous ire of his brethren. Alone Elijah stood on Mount Carmel, and discomfited the prophets of Baal. Alone Paul was caught up into the third heaven. Alone John witnessed the prophetic visions of Patmos. Alone, aye, alone! down in the depths of His great soul Christ sorrowed and suffered, wept and sighed, bled and died. Alone He trod the winepress of the wrath of God. Thus "alone" are wrought out and made manifest the highest intents of the holiest purposes of our supreme moral Ruler. Have we not here, by implication at least, a word of caution? We are so prone to censure if not condemn all who do not conform to our pattern of thought. Christianity, brotherliness, and forbearance will prompt a tender consideration for such persons. As Daniel was left "alone" when the "vision came," I gather that in the ordinary routine of life he had companionship; but in the supremely extraordinary, when he stood in the midst of the splendour of vision, he was "alone." So men in the ordinary littlenesses and the common superficialities of small living may find plenty of fellows, but when they step up into the light of God and see "visions," they are left "alone." It may be that you are exercised in mind from similar considerations, and you wonder why God has made you so much unlike the rest of mankind. You wish you could be as others are. Foolish desire! As wise for the eagle to wish it were an ostrich, or the lark to covet the blinking sombreness of the owl! Take your apportionment and even your peculiarity from God, and be not discontented nor discouraged with yourself. I observe here that the soul's light, purity and power, consist in communion with God. Daniel lived in intimate fellowship with the Almighty. Hence he was conditioned for receiving a vision; and while less devout and less noble souls were unfitted for a new revelation and unprepared for a new truth, and terrified at a brighter light, he had a mind and heart adapted to the improved conditions which came with the "vision," and stood unflinchingly amid this unearthly brightness. Thank God! heaven is not far removed into the dim distances of remotest space, but is nigh, even here, to the devout and reverent believer. Oh! had we pure hearts, spiritual minds, single eyes, and right spirits, we should find ourselves in the midst of heavenly surroundings. Be it ours to seek a loftier place, a fuller life, and "a closer walk"; then shall we have "visions" and experience days of heaven upon earth. (*M. Brokenshire.*)

Ver. 11. **O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.**—*Character of Daniel:*—Of those whose characters are recorded for our imitation, few, if any, will be found superior to Daniel. He is almost the only eminent saint in Scripture of whom no fault is recorded. Nor was his character for goodness merely of the negative kind. We find him once and again addressed as a man peculiarly dear to God. Nothing is more indispensable to the welfare of all creatures, than the favour of their Creator. Hence it becomes a matter of infinite importance for us to know how this privilege is to be attained. The first thing in Daniel's character which deserves our attention is his early piety. Another is the caution, zeal, and resolution he displayed, in keeping himself unspotted from the world. This, the apostle informs us, is an essential part of pure and undefiled religion. A third trait is the holy indifference and contempt with which he looked down on worldly honour, wealth, and applause. It is true he obtained both riches and

honours; but it is no less true that he never sought them. Observe also, his exemplary piety and devotion. He was emphatically a man of prayer. He never pleaded as an excuse for neglecting this duty, that his body was too much wearied, and his mind too much perplexed by constant care and fatigue, to perform it. In addition to his daily prayer, he frequently set apart seasons for more special attention to this duty. Another trait in the character of this eminent saint, was his strong faith, and confidence in God. None truly pray, but those whose faith is strong and lively. Profound humility, and a consequent disposition to give the glory to God, is another trait. This appears in his confessions and praises. And further, his religion was habitual, uniform, consistent and lasting. He was always the same. He inflexibly followed the path of duty. Improvement; learn 1. How religion dignifies and ennoble's our nature, when it is entertained in its power and purity. Compare Daniel with the nobles, princes, and great ones of Babylon. 2. Do you possess a similar character? Let me urge you to imitate the conduct of Daniel. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Daniel's Band*:—It did not do Daniel any harm to know that he was greatly beloved of God; or else he would not have received that information from heaven. Some people are always afraid that, if Christian people obtain full assurance, and receive a sweet sense of divine love, they will grow proud, and be carried away with conceit. Do not you have any such fear for other people, and especially do not be afraid of it for yourselves. I know of no greater blessing that can happen to any man and woman, than to be assured by the Spirit of God that they are greatly beloved of the Lord. The knowledge that we are greatly beloved of God, instead of doing us harm, will be a means of blessing in many ways. If you know of a surety, that you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will become very humble. You will say, "How could God ever love me?" A sense of God's love will also excite in you great gratitude. "Oh!" you will say, "how can I repay the Lord for such an amazing favour?" When we feel how much we owe, then we seek to know the will of God, and take a delight in doing it. This will also consecrate us. I believe that, to know certainly that you are greatly beloved of God, will make you feel that you cannot live as others do. You cannot trifle with sin. He who lives in the heart of the king must be faithful to him. A sense of divine love will also strengthen us. What is there that a man cannot do when he is in love even with one of his own race; but when he gets to be in love with God, and knows of a certainty that he is greatly beloved of God, he would cut his way through a lane of devils, he would face an army of angels, and defeat them all; for love is a conquering grace. Moreover, this assurance of God's love will make us very courageous. If thou art a man greatly beloved, and thou knowest it, thou wilt be a brave man. This will make a man glad. If we are greatly beloved of God, how can we be miserable and discontented? Oh, no! If you are a man greatly beloved, you will trip with light feet over the hills of sorrow. Some seem to think that a state of doubt is a state of discretion. It is a state of folly. Full assurance of the faithfulness and truthfulness of God is nothing but common-sense spiritualized. 1. First, then, let us consider THE CASE OF DANIEL, who was "a man greatly beloved." Because Daniel was greatly beloved of God, he was early tried, and enabled to stand. While he was yet a youth, he was carried into Babylon, and there he refused to eat the king's meat, or to drink the king's wine. "I must stand fast, even in the smallest matter, in keeping to the law of the Lord my God." If thou art enabled to do that, thou art a man greatly beloved. Afterwards, Daniel was greatly envied, but found faultless. He was surrounded by envious enemies, who could not bear that he should be promoted over them, though he deserved all the honour he received. If, when they sift you through and through, their eager, evil eyes cannot detect a fault; and they are obliged to fall back upon abusing you for your godliness, calling it hypocrisy, or some other ugly name, you are a man greatly beloved. Further, Daniel was delivered from great peril. He was cast into the lions' den because he was a man greatly beloved of God. If your trial should be like going into a den of lions, if you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will come out again. No lion shall destroy you; you are perfectly safe. The love of God is like a wall of fire round about you. Once more, Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and therefore he had revelations from God. Do not open your eyes with wonder, and say, "I wish that I had all the revelations that Daniel had." Listen to what he says: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me;" and again: "As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart." The revelations he received actually made him ill: "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." He whom God loves will see things that will astound him; he will see that which will almost kill him; he will see that

which will make him faint and sick well nigh unto death. "Let me see visions of God whatever it may cost me. Let me have communion with him even though it should break my heart, and crush me in the dust." I will make only one more remark upon Daniel's case, and that is this, he stood in his lot. Because he was a man greatly beloved, he had this promise with which to close his marvellous book, "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." He is a man greatly beloved, but he does not understand all that God has revealed. The next time you get studying some prophecy of Scripture, which you cannot make out, do not be troubled; but hear the voice of God saying, "Go thy way. Wait awhile. It will all be plain by-and-by. God is with thee." II. In the second place. I am going to speak of THE CASE OF EVERY BELIEVER who is also greatly beloved of God. Every believer has been called out from others. Look at the hole of the pit whence thou wast digged. Who but God, the Giver of all grace, has made thee to differ from the ungodly around thee? Therefore, adore him for his matchless mercy, his distinguishing grace. Remember, too, that if thou hast been called out from a sinful world, and transformed into a child of God, this is the token that thou hast been chosen from the beginning. Remember, too, that in the fulness of time, thou wast redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Thou hast been also pardoned, and put among the Lord's children. I feel sure that your heart is speaking now, even if your tongue is silent, and it says, "Indeed, as a pardoned man, I am greatly beloved." Since the Lord forgave your sin, you have been a praying man, and God has heard your prayers. We have the entrée of the King's palace at will. Are we not men greatly beloved? Beside that, remember that the Lord has upheld you until now. In your pilgrim path, how many times your feet have almost gone! When I think of all our experiences in the way in which the Lord hath led us, I can truly say of all his people that they are men and women greatly beloved. As surely as we are in Christ to-night, we shall be with Christ by-and-by. Oh, men greatly beloved, to have such a future as this before you, ought to make your heaven begun below! III. THE CASE OF SPECIAL SAINTS, those who are in a special sense men greatly beloved. There are some men who are, as I said at the beginning of my discourse, elect out of the elect. Remember, that Christ had seventy choice men, his disciples; but then he had twelve choicer men, his apostles; and he had three of these, who were with him when the others were not; and out of these three he had one John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." His love is so sweet, that, while I would be grateful to be even outside the seventy, so long as I might be among the five hundred brethren who saw him after he rose from the dead, yet I would then have the ambition to get in among the seventy; and not for the honour of it, but for the love it would bring, I would like to be one of the eleven; and for the same reason I would fain to be one of the three, and I would, above measure, be thankful if I might be that one whom Jesus loved. Have you not the same holy inspiration? Well, now, let me tell you that, if you would be among the choicer spirits, greatly beloved of God, you must be men of spotless character. The next point is, that men who are greatly beloved are men of decision. When Daniel had the lions' den in prospect, because of his faithfulness to God, "he went into his house; and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Next, if you would be men greatly beloved of God, beyond all the rest of his people, on whom special shininings of his face shall come, you must be much in communion with him. If a man is to be greatly beloved of God, he must live above the world, as Daniel did. Daniel became a prince, a governor, a man of substance and position; but when Belshazzar promised to clothe him with scarlet, and to put a gold chain about his neck, if he could read and interpret the writing on the wall, he said to the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." Daniel did not want them. Once more, men who are greatly beloved by the Lord live wholly for God and for God's people. You see nothing of selfishness about Daniel. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Daniel* :- We associate him in our minds with the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Both alike are spoken of in the Church as much for wisdom as for love. In both too there was the love of man as conspicuous as the love of God. For "greatly beloved" the margin of our Bibles has "a man of desires," that is desire for God. It was this desire after God that made Daniel so earnest in seeking him by humiliation and fasting, and prayer. It was in thus seeking that he was answered; in this steadfast unswerving purpose he continued until he was heard. We may compare Daniel with Joseph for purity and with Solomon for wisdom. St. Augustine observes that, though so approved of for holiness and wisdom, Daniel makes the most earnest confession of sin. He is not a prophet only, but an intercessor with God. From the desolations of Israel he looked

forward and prepared for their restoration. He passes, as it were, from the prophet into the saint and martyr: and herein it is given him to resemble, not in character only, but in history also, the disciple of divine love; both were martyrs in will, but not in deed. . . . What was the one great secret of Daniel? It was desire, a soul full of desire, it was to keep his desire alive, nay to increase and intensify this desire that his whole life was spent. Other things followed, as his love for man, the love and honour of all; but these were not what he sought, but the love of God. In that he found all. The flame of his soul ever burned upward, and all human events did but stir and fan that flame. Therefore it was that earthly events, however grievous, troublous and perplexing, did not shake his confidence in God, because he was a man of desires. (*Isaac Williams.*) *Daniel, the Model of Decision.* Daniel was one of the best and wisest men of whom we read in the Bible. He began to serve God when he was quite young; and this, no doubt, was one thing that helped to make him so good a man. He was a very decided man. He always did what he knew was right, no matter what the consequence might be. We may speak of him as the model of decision. Three great benefits followed from his decision. 1. It kept him from doing wrong. Illus. from his refusal to eat the King's meat, and to cease from praying. With us there should be decision in telling the truth; in keeping the Sabbath, about stealing, etc. 2. It helped him to be good. How Daniel influenced Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 3. It made him successful. He went to Babylon a poor boy, about sixteen or seventeen years old, but God blessed him for the decided way in which he always did what he believed to be right. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The Character of Daniel:*—His distinctive prophetic mission grew out of, or was grafted upon, his position in public life; but that again, was the result of his personal character; and so we are led most naturally to the consideration of his individual peculiarities. 1. His early piety. He could not have been more than fourteen years of age when, with his three companions, he was sent to be educated at the college of the Chaldeans. Yet even then he had learned to love Jehovah, and to make the divine law the rule of his life. It has come to be believed in our day that early piety is a simpering, sentimental thing, betokening the existence in its subject both of physical and mental weakness. Daniel's piety did not interfere with his pre-eminence. You will make a terrible mistake if you suppose that piety unfits you for life, or imagine that its existence in youth is an abnormal thing, that indicates the presence of disease. There is nothing so healthy, or so wholesome, as to give yourselves early to the world. The case of Daniel is not exceptional. In all such as Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and Daniel, and in some degree also in Timothy, there is a full rounded completeness of character, a well-balanced equilibrium of disposition, which you look for in vain in those who have been converted in late life. 2. His devoutness in prayer. This comes out first in connection with the recovery and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream. But it was the habit of his life to wait at stated times on God. This helps to explain much of his conduct. We cease to wonder at his boldness before Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, when we learn that he maintained such constant communion with his God. Alas! the recreative influence of devotional retirement is now neither sought nor valued as it ought to be. 3. Decision of character. This habit of decision grew up in him, and was fed in him, by the communion of prayer. He learned to look at things as in the sight of God, and he carried that test with him through life. God was more to him than all else. 4. His diligence in business. His prosperity was not the result of any accident, but was the consequence of the perseverance and integrity by which he was distinguished. What is religion? Is it not the process of self-formation, according to the purest model, and from the loftiest motives? And if that be so, does not public life give the noblest opportunities for its practice? Consider what religion does for a man. It brings him under the influence of the most powerful motives. It opens his eyes to the sight of the invisible God; and so it sends him to work for him. But is there anything in that to paralyse industry or to overlay diligence? Do not you believe that your allegiance to God will ultimately interfere with your commercial success. Even if it did, it would still be your duty to be true to him. But it does not. Let us pray for Daniel's faith, and let us cultivate his devotional spirit. Then we shall be able to manifest his firmness in the face of temptation, and to practice his diligence in the details of common life. Let us carry his business energy into our religious duties, and his devout spirit into our business transactions. (*William M. Taylor, D.D.*) Oh, Daniel understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent.—*Stand and understand:*—We usually regard the book of Daniel as the book for the student of prophecy only. If we are seeking counsel and consolation we turn to the Psalms or the Gospels or the Epistles, not often to Daniel's prophecy. But while the book is prophetic, it is also practical.

Interspersed with the mention of images and kingdoms are words for the guidance and uplift of men in all ages, such as those of the description in our text. Let us regard the words as a parable. "Understand—stand upright," that is, "Look away from thyself to Me, the Almighty One. Prostration before me is unreadiness to serve Me." The attitude commanded indicates a condition of I. REVERENCE.—Daniel thought he was showing a deeper reverence in bowing himself to the earth, but while prostration may signify reverence and humility it may also indicate craven fear, and such prostration is not a fitting attitude for the servant of God. What father wishes his child to crawl at his feet? It would be a poor tribute to one's fatherhood. In the awful presence of the Most High, man cannot be too reverent, but he can be too fearful. Dread of God hinders approach to God. He who is sincerely obedient is truly reverent. Reverence is a question of temper; it is a condition of heart, rather than a posture of the body. II. RECEPTIVITY.—This signifies that the heart and mind are alert, that the face is toward the light. In earthly courts, servants stand to receive their orders; the posture indicates watchfulness, "hearingness," and should the privileged servants of the Almighty be less ready, less responsive? But this receptivity suggests an absence of fear and dread. Should not men dread God? Yes, and no. They who know the right and do the wrong, they do well to fear. When we remember our darkness and our guilt, we do well to be filled with fear. But can the fear be removed? As we learn of the Son Who is the Way, and rely upon His mediation and sacrifice: so are we brought to know the Father, and the soul finds its home in Him. III. RESPONSIVENESS.—Daniel knew that in all the mystery about him there was a purpose, and, as the terror caused by his strange surroundings passes, his confidence returns. Faith must precede following. As Daniel's faith increased, so was the purpose revealed. Our faith prepares the way for the unfolding of the Divine will. Daniel was caused to stand before Jehovah's messenger, for the one exalted purpose of service. "O Daniel," the man of heaven seemed to say, "fear not, thy prayer has been heard; stand and hearken, and I will cause thee to become My interpreter, My prophet." And service holy and exalted is the purpose of the Divine calling to-day. Nationally, the call comes to us. To the nation the God of nations says, "Give heed to my voice. Let my word be in the front of your national life. Remember Me in all your laws and statutes. Honour Me, and I will honour thee." Personally, the call comes to us, "Understand—stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent." Are we obedient? The three foundation words of our text are the foundation words of character: Reverence—for the deep things of the Kingdom of God; Receptivity—that is, the open ear, the open heart and the alert spirit; and Responsiveness—that is, joyful obedience to His will, and to that we are called. (*F. Burnett*).

Ver. 12. **And to chasten thyself before thy God.**—*Soul Discipline*:—I. Its action on SELF. It is concentration of soul. "Set thy heart" is setting the whole soul to the work. 1. Concentration to spiritual study. "Set thy heart to understand." To understand what? Thyself, thy capabilities, thy moral obligations, thy spiritual condition. 2. Concentration to correction. "To chasten thyself." Quench corrupt lusts, conquer wrong prejudices, expel pernicious errors, etc. 3. Concentrated to devotion. "Before thy God," doing the whole as under the eye of God. Truthful, earnest, solemn. II. Its action on GOD. God observes all this soul work. He is interested in it and He is represented as being influenced by it. God here says to Daniel, "Thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." The idea is, because thou hast been disciplining thy soul, I am come to answer thy prayers. True soul discipline is essential to successful prayer. "If thou prepare thine heart and stretch out thine hands towards him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles, for there shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear. Because thou shalt forget thy misery and remember it as waters that pass away; and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning." (*Homilist*.) **Thy words were heard.**—*A Gracious Answer from Heaven*:—Our text is part of the angel's address to Daniel. I. THE OCCASION WAS ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND PERPLEXITY. High were the expectations raised by the decree of Cyrus. But year after year passed and no deliverance came. Then Daniel spent three weeks in retirement, self-denial, and prayer. Mysterious dispensations of providence are permitted to thwart our fair expectations. Adverse changes take place which disappoint our hopes. Wise ends are answered by these trials of our faith and patience. Whenever God tries us, and by whatsoever means, he gives an opportunity for the exercise of graces and virtues, which are thus not only proved but also improved. II.

THE COURSE DANIEL PURSUED UNDER THE TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. Three things are specified in our text. 1. Inquiry. He did set his heart to understand, that he might find out the path of duty; what to do and what to recommend. If in similar circumstances we search, we shall probably find some errors to be corrected, some negligences and sins to be repented of, some feelings to be humbled for, or some attainments to be pursued, which might have been overlooked or forgotten had not the Almighty arrested us in our career. 2. Humiliation. He chastened himself before his God. His fasting was an outward sign of inward humiliation, and also calculated to promote it. A voluntary devotedness to extraordinary exercises of piety in his judgment was called for by the extraordinary circumstances of the times. And God was pleased to honour his servant by a gracious regard to his offerings. 3. Prayer. "Thy words are heard." No doubt, words of prayer. In the day of trouble there is a peculiar need and call for prayer. In such seasons we feel most dependent upon God; and then there is often a more than ordinary disposition to pray. III. THE SUCCESSFUL RESULT. This is described in our text. 1. He is bidden not to fear. No doubt his fears had been strong concerning the execution of the monarch's decree. In this present world, so full of uncertainty, it is not to be expected that we shall be altogether without our fears as to what may befall us. The best way of soothing the mind is to do as Daniel did, refer the case to God, with humility, prayer, and holy trust. 2. Daniel was assured that his prayers were heard. And this is the privilege of all the devout. His promise to hear their prayers not only denotes attention to them, but acceptance of them. 3. Daniel received divine manifestations in answer to his prayers. He was honoured by the heavenly visitant. Reviewing the whole we find in this subject an instructive comment on the gracious assurance that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Daniel's strength was renewed, his courage was revived, his hopes were brightened, when he had waited upon his God. (*W. Chaplin.*)

Ver. 13. *Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.—The Festival of Michael and all Angels:*—It has been shown that Daniel's doctrine of the angels is to be found, much of it, in both the Old Testament and the New. The existence of the angels, their number, their nature and occupation, are all amply *revealed* in the Word of God. The text describes a mysterious contention; and the arrival of an invaluable ally. I. THE CONTENTION. 1. It has been a common belief that every man has an unseen attendant, a guardian angel. This guardianship appertains to man in his natural order. 2. This lesson appears to teach that not only individuals, but nations and kingdoms, have their angelic guardians. We see, behind the curtain, how spiritual beings are interested in, and seek to direct, the movements of nations. 3. The angel of the Persians, having their good first in view, would have detained the Jews in captivity, so that by their longer residence the heathen might gain some knowledge of the true God. 4. The angel of the Hebrews, on the other hand, urged their release and restoration to their own land, lest through long delay, they should be drawn aside from the worship of God to idolatry. 5. Some have gone further than this, and have thought that the angels are God's ministers which supply the motive force to the natural world. II. THE ALLY. "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." 1. There is a limit to angelic knowledge of what is God's will. 2. Michael is the guardian of the church. (see Jude, ver. 9; I. Mess. iv.-16: Rev. xii.-7). 3. Michael appears to have been the guardian angel of the Hebrews. Lessons, 1. The subject reminds us of the existence of an invisible world, which is interested in mankind. 2. There may be divergence of opinion and judgment upon matters about which the will of God has not yet been revealed, without sin or loss of charity. 3. As soon as the will of God is known, angelic contention at once ceases. 4. The thought of the presence of these spiritual beings, especially in our churches, may aid us to worship God, and quicken our perceptions of a supra-sensuous world, and of the majesty of Him, whose name is "The Lord of Hosts."—(*The Thinker.*)

Ver. 18. *And He strengthened me.—Our Lord's humanity a source of comfort:*—We are not able, as yet, to bear the full revelation of divine things. We ought to be thankful that our God has revealed no more. It appears that, when weighed down under a sense of the divine presence, the readiest method of consolation is found in the touch of a certain sublime, mysterious, human hand. Surely this glorious being was that uncreated messenger of the covenant who, though not born into our nature in Daniel's day, yet took upon Himself the similitude of man for a time, as He had done before when on special occasions He appeared to others of the saints before His actual incarnation. The Son of God is also the Son of Man. He is as truly man as if He were not God, and as truly God as if He had never assumed the nature of man. Show how

the touch of the hand of Jesus, the man, strengthens us. I. IT OVERTHROWS US WHEN WE LABOUR UNDER A SENSE OF LONELINESS. Some feel alone because they are the only ones of their house who serve the Lord. Well, there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The child of God as he grows in grace becomes more lonely. But there are no heights of attainment which Jesus has not surpassed. It falls to the lot of some Christians to stand alone in their contention for the faith. In all our work He is our companion. II. IT IS SWEET TO FEEL THE TOUCH OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST WHEN WE ARE HUMBLING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. A blessed extinction of self makes room for infinite love. There is not one covenant blessing but what, if we understood it, would have a humbling effect upon us. At such times of self-annihilation it is strengthening to the mind to feel the touch of that hand, and to perceive that He who is our God is also very near to us. III. IN SORROW, HOW BLESSED IT IS TO FEEL THE TOUCH OF THE MAN'S HAND! Pain of body is the portion of many of God's people. They are seldom long without it. Others endure the affliction of poverty. Some true Christians are naturally of a sombre temperament. There is no abyss of grief into which Jesus has not descended. IV. THE FACT THAT JESUS IS A MAN, SUCH AS WE ARE, SHOULD GREATLY COMFORT US IN ALL OUR STRUGGLES. It seems hard, this battle of life, this fighting against sin, this contention against inbred corruption. We are apt to think sometimes, "Can we ever win? Is not the battle too difficult?" In such moments look at yonder man who sits upon the throne of God. He is the typical man. "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." V. WHAT A BLESSED THING IT IS TO LOOK AT THE MANHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST AT TIMES WHEN WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED BY OUR BRETHREN. Our natural tendency to idolatry leads us to confide in man. Sometimes there have come the discovery that man is only man, and that some men are not saints, though they talk in a saintly manner. At such times it is most cheering to remember that there is one man who will never deceive us. There is one who has not uttered a promise which He will not fulfil, nor won from us a confidence which He will not justify. VI. THE SAME IS TRUE IN SEASONS OF DOUBT. There is a class of disciples like Thomas, who think much, and are apt to doubt much. They do not love doubts, they hate them, yet their doubts often go very deep, and undermine the most precious doctrines. A sight of my Lord is the sheet-anchor which has held me fast in times of scepticism and doubt. I cannot doubt when I see him. VII. THE TOUCH OF OUR REDEEMER'S HUMAN HAND COMFORTS US IN THE HOUR OF DEATH. One man has broken from the prison of the grave, and therefore all will who are like him. VIII. THE MANHOOD OF CHRIST OUGHT TO BE A GREAT COMFORT TO YOU WHEN YOU ARE SEEKING TO DO GOOD AMONG YOUR FELLOW-MEN. This is an awful world, this world of human beings. But Jesus took human nature on Him, and thereby did it the highest honour. He thought it worth while to suffer and die for sinners. Let us think none so bad as to be beyond hope of benefit. Jesus Christ stoops low; so let us do. (*C. H. Spurgeon*.) *The Vision of Daniel*.—This is a record of the manner in which God reveals Himself to men, and it especially tells us how God strengthens them to hear His Word and do His Will. 1. God's strengthening comes through what is divine becoming human. It comes into human relations and human measures. Daniel is represented here as overwhelmed by what he had seen and heard. We cannot take in too much at a time even of the highest and noblest things. They require strength of mind, clearness of intellect, to grasp and to carry them. It is so with knowledge. It is true even of our affections. Just so it is with the presence of God. We cannot dwell too long among the coruscations and flashings of the divine glory. Our weak faculties reel and collapse beneath the strain. Too much was unveiled to Daniel. He became strengthless. How was he restored? How did he gather strength again? One having the form of a man comes to him and touches him. That human touch gives him strength once more. The gentle touch of love, how it darts right through to our heart's core, and makes our blood tingle. The soothing touch of pity is more eloquent than ten thousand words. It is full of comfort, and gives patience and mighty peace. Daniel was no longer alone. He had a companion—a human companion—with him, and found heartfelt and infinite relief. Who was this human form? We do not know. We are not told that it was an angel. We are not told that it was Christ. In one sense it certainly was Christ, for all living manifestations of God are utterances or syllables, so to speak, of that eternal Word of God, of which Christ is the full and perfect embodiment. Better ask, "What does He mean?" than to press the question, "Who is He?" His appearance means this blessed, consoling, universal fact, that God is not far from men, and that He gives us power both to endure what He lays upon us, and to do His commandments, by coming to us, as Himself in a sense human, as full of human love and sympathy. There is something in God which is very near to us and very dear. He is the light by which we under-

stand. He is the pulse that beats in the centre of our life. He is the soul of our best and purest joy. When God shows us this side of His character—what I may call the human side of it—then we grow strong, and our poverty and weakness pass at once, and pass utterly away. That is true every way. It is true in regard to our sins; and in regards to our temptations. The knowledge that Christ has overcome is there before us. That alone helps me. . . . That perfect man is here, the head and crown of humanity, and He will breathe peace and faith, hope and courage, harmony and victory, into you and into me. (*J. F. Stevenson, L.L.D.*)

Ver. 19. **O Man greatly beloved.**—*Daniel*:—Daniel is the servant of God seen in the haunts of the wicked world. No place is essentially unfit for the child of God. It is not of necessity in seclusion from the world that the saintly character is formed; holiness may exist, and the most perfect man be brought out in haunts which are peculiarly the dwellings of Satan. But there are certain safeguards and tendencies which are necessary to such a position. All the circumstances connected with Daniel's position, character, and writings, tend to give him an important and prominent position in the history of the Church of God. He is a highly interesting type of the position which the servant of God may lawfully occupy in the midst of scenes of dazzling temptation. We must simply go out of the world, if we are to avoid its temptations and allurements. Daniel's safeguards concerned his food. He prepared himself by thoroughly mastering the learning of the people amongst whom he sojourned. He preserved most rigidly his habits of attention to the hours of devotion ordered by the Jewish church. He entered the world with a resolute determination to speak the truth before God conscientiously. With these four weapons every one who enters or lives in the world must war against it and protect himself. (*E. Munro.*) **A man greatly beloved**:—I. THE NAME GIVEN TO DANIEL. "Greatly beloved." Compare John xxi. 20. We too are each of us the objects of God's love. (Eph. ii. 4, 5). II. THE PEACE WISHED UNTO DANIEL. It is that which St. Paul speaks about. (Rom. v. 1; iv. 25.) If you don't feel that you have the peace, trust God, and he will give you consciousness of it. III. THE THREEFOLD CHARGE. Fear not. Why should you fear? Your sins are washed away. Christ's righteousness is yours. Be strong. In thy testimony before men. In faith, giving glory to God. Believe. Faith is to be exercised in temporal matters. (*J. Duncan Craig, D.D.*) *The Man Greatly Beloved*.—The weakest babes in grace are as truly loved as those who have come to the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. There are delicious spots where the sun's light seems to rest most constantly, yet the sun of God's love shines on all the field which he hath chosen. The goodly land owned the superior excellency of its Carmel and Sharon; yet from Dan to Beersheba, every acre was blessed of the Lord. Every heir of heaven is purchased with the same blood, written in the same roll of life, called by the same Spirit, preserved by the same divine power, and is ripened under the same spiritual influences for the eternal glory: surely then every believer is "beloved," and "greatly beloved" too. Great love has been shown in the salvation of each one of us, and in our preservation to this day. I. The text glitters with a CHOICE TITLE. Daniel is said to be a "man greatly beloved," or as some read it, "a man of desires"—a desirable man towards God, whom God desired to commune with, in whose society the Lord delighted. He was a "man greatly beloved." Now the great love of God to Daniel is very conspicuously seen in his character. I shall not describe his character as the reason why God loved him, far from it, but I shall mention his character as being the effect of God's great love to him. God loved him greatly, and therefore he made him this and that. The first token of the Lord's great love to Daniel which we shall consider was this, God gave him early piety. No one can ever over-estimate the great privilege of being brought to God in childhood or youth. If it were only to be saved from the injury which a course of sin brings upon the mind, if it were only to escape from the regrets for the past which will arise even when the conscience is in after days purged from sin, if it were only to have saved those precious hours of the early morning of life and to have used them in the Master's cause, if it were only for those three reasons, and they are but part of a great cluster, they are something for which eternally to bless the special love of God. "O man, greatly beloved, when thou wast a child the Lord delighted in thee." But, secondly, the great love of God to Daniel appeared in his early and thorough nonconformity to the world. Everything was done that could be done to make the young Hebrew forget the God of his fathers. His very name was changed as well as those of the three right worthy companions of his captivity. Everywhere around them they saw idolatry, lust, and crime. There was nothing when they went abroad or when they stayed at home but what would suggest to them the abominations of the heathen. It is always safest if you are at war with a

deadly enemy to have a very high wall between you and him. There will be no fault in its being too high if he aims at destroying you. Any division which we establish between us and sin, will never be too broad or too deep. Gentle manners are a fit robe for firm principles. We read, therefore, that Daniel "requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself." If you are not at the outset thorough for God, I fear you never will be. Christians ought to grow in grace, but I am sorry to say that with many of them they go from weakness to weakness, and all I fear because there is not a sound beginning. Every builder will tell you the necessity of having the foundation laid well. Daniel was a man greatly beloved, because even early he was distinguished for his nonconformity to the world. In after life we find another sweet result of God's love, in his courageous trust in God. He was a man greatly beloved to be such a lion as he was in the midst of all his foes. Coupled with this as another evidence of God's love to him, was his wonderful endurance of prosperity. A further instance of God's great love to him comes out in his firmness under trial. Let me add, that here we ought not to forget that God's grace and love shone conspicuously in making Daniel a man of such continuous devotion. Every day witnessed his constant regularity in prayer. I think that I have shewn you that the outward signs of God's love to Daniel were such as many of us have enjoyed in a measure and may enjoy still more, for there are some here who were saved in youth, some who early began to be decided for God, some who have been brave for Christ, and have not denied the faith, who have sustained prosperity, and have endured trial too, and who have by grace been taught to plead with God. Perhaps they will not recognize themselves, but we may be able to recognize them, and call them men greatly beloved. In one word, there was one crowning token of God's love to Daniel, and that is the perfect consistency of his life all through. It is a special mark of a man greatly beloved, when he is consistent from the beginning to the end through the grace of God. II. I must hasten in the second place, to notice that Daniel became the subject of a COMMON INFIRMITY. He was full of fear on one occasion, and therefore, an angel said to him, "Fear not." I am glad of this, because it teaches us that even the best of men may be subject to very great fears. He was nothing in himself, and owed all his greatness to the grace of God. Those fears on the part of Daniel were not the result of personal trial just then, they came to him indeed, when he had been highly honoured by revelations from God; but his fears sprang from a sight of his Lord, and from a sense of his own unworthiness. You may be a man greatly beloved, and, therefore you may have a clearer sight of the Lord Jesus than other men have; and for that very reason you may feel a greater shame and confusion of face whenever you think of yourself. Recollect how Daniel says concerning himself, "There remained no strength in me, my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." O if the Lord ever favours you with much love, and with nearness of access to himself, you must expect the other side of it—that is to say, you must feel your own nothingness, baseness, unworthiness—feel as if you were unfit to do anything for God's people, unfit even to bear Christ's name, and yet all the while you may be a man greatly beloved, and may be eminently blessed. Perhaps, too, Daniel's great fears had been awakened by the disclosures that had been made to him of the history of the nations, and especially of his own people. He had a peculiar anxiety for his own people. Did you ever get into that state, and begin to look upon the world, and upon the country, and upon the church, and then fall into a fit of trembling? I do assure you it is wonderfully easy to put on the garb of Jeremy, the weeping prophet. Yes, Daniel had seen the history of the world for a long period to come, therefore he was full of fear. And are you full of fear too? Well, it is a part of the lot of men whom God greatly loves that they should bear the troubles of the times. I think too that Daniel's sorrow was occasioned partly by the repetition of those words to him: "The vision is true, but the time appointed is long." It seemed to come over and over to Daniel. "The time is long." I do not know any trouble that presses more heavily on my heart than that. It seems to be a dreadful long while since God has wrought a miracle—such a while since the church has had any great thing done in the midst of her. And if any here have been favoured to be beloved of God, I am sure this will weigh upon them, "How long, Lord, how long? Why tarriest thou?" III. THE CONSOLATIONS which the angel brought to Daniel, and which, in proportion as we are greatly beloved and the subject of like fears, he brings to us. He said to him first, "Peace be unto thee." So he says to every one of the beloved here,—“Peace be unto thee. Why art thou fretting, worrying, tossed up and down in thy mind? Peace be unto thee.” Let peace be thine first, because thou art “greatly beloved.” Whatever is happening or not happening, thou art greatly beloved. So, be still, be calm, thou art beloved of heaven. And next, fear not, peace be unto thee, God is still ruling—he ruled the world before thou wast

born, and accomplished all his will; he will rule it when thou art dead, and fulfil his own decrees. Why dost thou worry thyself? What use can thy fretting serve? And whereas thou art disturbed about the length of time,—with what dost thou measure? With thine own age of seventy years, or with days and weeks—dost thou measure so? Hast thou ever seen the measuring line of the Eternal, and dost thou know, that if this world were to last through millions of millions of years, yet it would be but a speck between the two eternities that should precede and follow? God's life is not made up of tickings of the clock! He can wait, he can wait. Then he adds "be strong," as if these fears of Daniel made him weak, and as if it was important that he should be strong. Now, if there is any importance in us at all, and there is not much, certainly anything that we can do in our present place will require of us all our strength. And since our fears decidedly weaken us for all practical purposes they should be shaken off. Hence the angel says twice, "Be strong, yea, be strong;" and, beloved, we ought to be strong in faith, for God deserves it. Fall before the Lord in earnest prayer, and ask him to take away thy fretfulness, and make thee, as thou art greatly beloved, to be strong. (*C. H. Spurgeon*).

The Exemplary Conduct of Daniel.—I. DANIEL'S PECULIAR SITUATION. Exposed to great temptations. 2. Deprived of religious privileges. 3. Exposed to great sufferings for conscience sake. II. DANIEL'S EXALTED PIETY. Piety will ensure divine, if it does not receive human, approbation. How was Daniel's piety seen? 1. In his conscientious regard to the exercise of devotion. The man who is much with God in secret is likely to be an eminent witness for God in public. Principles produced and strengthened at a throne of grace give stability and firmness of character, that no external opposition can destroy. 2. In his unbending firmness. Decision of character is a great Christian excellence. 3. An unblemished reputation. What lamentable blots disfigure—we might almost say—disgrace the portraits of many, whose moral features are delineated by the faithful pencil of Divine revelation. But no prominent defects in Daniel's character require the aid of the veil of charity. See Dan. vi. 4. III. HIS DISTINGUISHED HONOUR. His piety was no barrier to his preferment. 1. He was the special object of the divine care. As to his body, and as to his soul. 2. Daniel was an eminent witness for God. 3. He was remarkably useful; and 4. He was favoured with extraordinary revelations from the great Head of the Church. (*J. R. Cooper*.)

Ver. 21. In the scripture of truth.—*The Teaching of Scripture*.—The Scriptures not only demand our submission, but invite our investigation. Whatever men in the pride of their heart may urge against them, they describe the moral condition of man, and contain truths that suit him through every stage of weakness and sorrow. I. SOME SOLEMN FACTS NOTED IN THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH. 1. The moral ruin of man. The universal and dreadful character of man's apostasy from God. The fact is everywhere assumed. 2. The Gospel remedy. Scriptures introduce Jesus Christ—born of a woman—made under the law—agonies—death—priestly character—intercession. 3. The means of application. How shall I become a partaker of this salvation? By faith. Then man is a new creature. His conceptions of God are new—his desires are new—pleasures new—pains new—principles and practices new—prospects new—he is an heir of glory. 4. The doom of the impenitent and unbelieving. (Ps. ix.-17; Matt. xxiii.-33; Rev. xxi.-8.) II. PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT. To five classes of hearers. 1. The Self-ignorant. A man may have much knowledge and yet be totally ignorant of himself. There are some of this class everywhere. 2. The Presumptuous. Those whom the Scriptures call "ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness." The men who dream of salvation without the "washing and regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." 3. The Self-righteous. The persons who intend, if it is possible, to go to heaven without the merits of the Saviour. A large class. 4. The Anxious. You need consolation, and it is provided. (Matt. xiv.-30, 31.) The all sufficiency of Christ reaches to you. 5. The Believer. The sacred Scriptures congratulate you. They describe your mercy—they proclaim your obligations—they point you to your final home. (*Anon.*) *The Highest Literature and the Highest Ministry*.—I. The highest LITERATURE on earth. "The Scripture of truth." There are many scriptures, or writings, in the world. They abound and are multiplying. There are the scriptures of fiction, sensuality, romance; but there is only one book out of the millions concerning which you can say "the Scripture of truth," and that is the Bible. The truth is in this book, if anywhere. The truth in relation to man, Christ, God, etc., is here. The truth here is soul-converting, soul-cleansing, soul-strengthening, soul-comforting, soul-ennobling truth. II. The highest MINISTRY on earth. What is that? Expounding this truth in its relation to men individually. "I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth," says the heavenly messenger. On this earth no man occupies such a sublime office as he

who is the enlightened, faithful, and practical expounder of God's truth to men. "I will show thee." The truth of the Scriptures has a relation to all classes of men—the careless, the carnal, the anxious, the self-righteous, the sceptical, the believing, etc. Heaven multiply such expositors! (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER XI.

Vers. 1—2. Also I in the first year of Darius.—*The Vision by the Hiddekel*.—The prophet here tells of a long and devout season of fasting and prayer to which he had given himself. It lasted "three full weeks." At the end of this time, he was by the side of the great river Hiddekel, now known as the Tigris, far away from the scenes of court life. Lifting up his eyes, he was greeted with an overpowering vision. Before him stood a being in man's form, clothed in linen and girded with gold. His body was like the beryl—like the bluish-green, prismatic light. His face was as the appearance of lightning, insufferably bright. His eyes were as burning flame. His arms and his feet were like burnished brass, and the voice of his words had the volume and majesty of the shoutings of a multitude. Compare the vision in Revelation, ch. i. Daniel was completely overwhelmed by the suddenness and transcendent glory of the vision. This shows how merciful it is in God to veil over the spiritual world from our fleshly sight. Were he to lift that veil, it would be impossible for flesh and blood to sustain itself under the "weight of glory." The object of this vision was to reveal to Daniel a still fuller account of the fortunes of his people "in the latter days"; that is, in the mysterious future, extending down to the end of this present world. To this revelation the whole remaining portion of this book is devoted. It was in answer to Daniel's anxieties concerning the Jewish people that this glorious apparition came. It is ever true that the histories of this world always have a background of spiritual agencies. Scripture everywhere represents the angels as largely participating in the divine government of the world, and in the whole ongoing of earthly affairs. Among the active unseen potencies there are both good and bad, often in conflict with each other. We are wont to speak in a spiritualizing way of a struggle between the good and evil principles in man, but Holy Scripture teaches us to regard the matter as a substantial reality. The glorious angel who appeared to Daniel had a struggle of three weeks with the evil angel at the head of the Persian monarchy, and only by Michael's help overcame him, and gained superior influence over the Persian king. After that he was to encounter the prince-angel of Grecia, in which no great success, even with Michael's help, was to be gained. The angel then proceeds (in ch. xi., 2-4) to state the course of things in its outward manifestations. . . . But with all the tribulations thus to come upon the prophet's people in those evil times, God was to be at the helm, neither suffering them to be overwhelmed, nor allowing their afflictions to be without profit. For their sins, apostasies, and infidelities the hand of judgment was to be lifted up against them. When God lets the wicked have their way, it is that he may destroy them utterly; but when he chastises his people, it is to purify and redeem them. Nor are God's chosen ones alone in their conflicts with the ills and trials of time. The Eternal Father makes angels his ministers to the heirs of salvation. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. But he shall not be strengthened by it.—*The Secret of Strength*.—There are five principal ways of coming to a clear perception of God. 1. We may know God by vision; that is, by the inner sense of the Spirit. This is the manner in which the Lord made known his mind and nature to the Old Testament saints. They saw the object which the divine being presented to their interior eye. Every sincerely spiritual man lays tacit claims to spiritual intercourse with God; to communications, directions, assurances, and inward voices and revelations from the Lord. It is a part of our spiritual nature, of our divine equipment, to enjoy immaterial contact with the heavenly world, and to hold personal fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This spiritual insight is the beginning of the knowledge of God. The people happy enough to know God in this sense will become strong, will have their feet upon the rock of ages. 2. God communicates Himself for our knowledge by His Word. The Word must be read, remembered, and searched out daily. The Bible needs digging, and patient, devout, sympathetic and determined digging. 3. God will reveal Himself for our knowledge in our experience. The history of the world is largely the account of the modes in which God has been making Himself known in it.

Long, tedious, and interwoven has been the method of the revelation of the Father to us in our trial. But in the glass of our life we look back to see what God is. In that experimental commentary we find our best explanations of His darkest enigmas. Whatever we know of His providence has come from our own deliverances, guidances, and escapes from danger. 4. We may know God in history. The people that have learned to read history do therein know their God. They can see the tendency and destination of all things. 5. We may also know the Lord in nature. Can you know nature unless you know nature's God? "The world in its sophistry knew not God!" (T. R. H. Sturges.)

Ver. 32. **But the people that do know their God shall be strong.**—*Strength in God*:—The follies and vices which disfigure human life, do not always proceed from a principle of depravity. The indiscretions and vices into which men fall, proceed often from weakness of mind rather than from a badness of heart. There is a certain feebleness in the springs of actions, a facility of disposition, a silliness of soul which marks the characters, and runs through the life of many men, as pernicious to them in the conduct of life, as the principle of actual depravity could be. This weakness of mind is not only pernicious but criminal. There are mental defects that are inconsistent with a state of virtue. In the Scriptures a sound mind, as well as a good heart, is mentioned as an ingredient in the character of a saint. Religion and virtue go under the name of wisdom; vice and wickedness under the name of folly. In opposition to the feeble-minded, it is said in the text, that they who know their God, or are truly religious, are strong. Religion, when rightly understood, and virtue, when properly practised, give nerves and vigour to the mind, and infuse into the soul a secret strength. This strength 1. Makes us superior to the opinion and fashion of the world. In certain companies, men are ashamed of their religion. They lend a pleased ear to arguments that shake the foundations of their faith. The truly religious man performs his duty through evil report and through good report. The applause of such fools as make a mock of sin he despises. His standard of moral conduct is his own conscience well informed by the word of God. 2. Makes us superior to the difficulties and dangers we meet with in the world. The feeble-minded man is intimidated on the slightest occasion. Happy to catch at any subterfuge, he finds or makes a thousand obstacles to the discharge of his duty. What infinite mischief has this pusillanimity done in the world! Very different is the character of him who is strong in the Lord. When he is assured he is in the right path, he sees no obstacles in the way. Nothing is difficult to a determined mind. Through Christ strengthening him, the man of God can do all things. Through the divine aid, resolution is omnipotent. See St. Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus. This was not the vain boast of men who are brave when the day of battle is distant, and who, in the midst of tranquility, talk of despising danger. It was the speech of one who acted what he spoke. (J. Logan, F.R.S.E.) *Aspect of the Times*:—The universal consciousness of humanity acquiesces in the admission of the divine existence. God is as much a necessity of the intellect in these advanced days of enlightenment as in the world's early childhood. The great thought forms, as Mr. Morell calls them, have as much necessity for God as for space and time. Sometimes men assume the air of dictatorship, and venture to say if there be a God, he should have revealed himself thus and thus, assuming that they know the best methods of divine manifestation, and can calculate how much light the human mind can bear. We cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. It takes lifetime after lifetime to find out the history of the rocks; it takes weary years to know enough of astronomy to trace the very footprints of Creatorship; and yet men expect to know him who is from everlasting to everlasting, in the space of a few brief years. He, then, who aspires to know God, must begin with humility. The main faculties for apprehending God are not intellectual, but moral. When it pleases God to reveal himself to men, it is mainly to the conscience and the heart. Such a revelation, Paul tells us, has been made in the universal conscience; in the great moral laws of Hebrew revelation, but mainly in the Son who came forth from the Father to give life to the world. See the revelations between this knowledge and the well-being of man. 1. This was the strength of the early Church. In the days of the Church's strong faith and martyr-like devotion, what was it that made the Christians the men they were? I boldly answer:—"The knowledge of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 2. This was the strength of the Reformation age. It was giving back to the world the truth concerning God. The people that do not know God, their god shall be weak, puerile, enslaved. True knowledge of God makes men strong, makes nations strong. 3. This is our strength in the present era of time. We cannot reach large enough generalisations of facts to know exactly what is our state compared with past eras. We may exalt political economy

into a science; and when relations between man and man are out of order we may shrug our shoulders, and talk of the philosophy of things, and the inevitableness of injustice in the present day. We may point to great empires, and say success is with the mightiest armies; but who that troubles to think but must know that if nations are to be great and honourable, it must be, as Mr. Piossoudé says, by a return to the uninviting virtues of simpler times; yes to a purer and more practical faith in the living God who is the Saviour of all men. (*W. M. Statham.*)

The Sources of Courage.—What is called courage is sometimes a blind folly that cannot see danger, or a lack of sense to see it as it is. Or it is a mere love of encounter, of distinction, or of destroying. You have the picture of it in Job (xxxix. 19-25), where the war-horse is described. That is courage, but a thing to be checked as much as to be cheered, as much a mischief as a virtue, and it is perhaps hard to say to which it most inclines. The sublimest courage, the loftiest heroism is an inspiration. How can you measure the courage? By the measure of the love. The highest courage is sacred to love. A definition of courage may be this—the life held for another's good. And this is Christianity. Its source, its strength, its life, its all, is love. Everything that can create and sustain the truest love is found in the religion of Jesus Christ, and there only. Why then have we so many so-called Christians who do not exhibit much love or courage either, but are just as selfish and fearful as other people? Because we have come to make religion an appeal to selfishness, instead of appealing to the generous appreciation of that which is love-worthy. They that do "know their God" shall do exploits. This is the source of courage as it is the source of love; and more—this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Think of the different motives that prompt men to endurance and valour, and see how they meet in Jesus Christ. 1. I can think that soldiers find some courage in the greatness of their nation, they have a pride in the vastness of the dominion. But what king can vie with our King? Well may the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Does the antiquity of the kingdom add to the stateliness and renown? The ancient kings are all in the dust, but our King—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Think, too, of the blessedness of His way; and of the victories He hath won. Lift up your head, walk with firm step. Better not be His at all than be His without a courage worthy of His greatness and renown. 2. Do men find courage in Him whom they serve? Is the Spirit of the Leader able to kindle enthusiastic devotion, and daring unto death? Then how shall we speak of our glorious Lord and Saviour? I wonder with shame and grief at myself that I can know Him at all, and yet be half-hearted in His service; that we can call Him Lord without finding an enthusiasm that fills and fires the whole heart. For such a King and Captain shall we have a timid, faltering service? It cannot be. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*)

The Influence of Religion on Military Courage.—These words are part of a prophecy which relates, as some think, to a very important period of the history of the Jews, when the Maccabees, at the head of handfuls of men, destroyed great armies of aliens, and were the happy instruments, in the hands of Divine Providence, of saving their church and nation from destruction, and of raising it to a degree of consideration and renown, equal to what they had enjoyed under the administration of some of those good kings that sprung from David. Concerning this glorious period the prophet Zechariah speaks, when the Lord says by his mouth, "I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion! against thy sons, O Greece! and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. The Lord of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour and subdue with sling-stones, and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar; and the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land." Others refer this prophecy to the Christian church, and to the courage displayed by the followers of Christ in holding fast his name, and spreading the favour of it all around, in defiance of those Roman tyrants who endeavoured to extirpate Christianity out of the world. I.

WHO THEY ARE THAT KNOW THEIR GOD. In the language of scripture, no wicked man knows the Lord: "The sons of Eli," it is said, were "sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." But the Lord is known by all the upright; for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." Those who know the Lord know something concerning the perfections of his nature. It is but a "little portion that they hear of him, and the thunder of his power who can understand?" But they know at least, that he is the Most High over all the earth, glorious in holiness, invariable in justice, irresistible in power. They know him to be excellent and amiable in all his perfections, and would abhor themselves

if they felt a latent wish that he were anything else than he is. They who know their God know that, although there is but one God, yet there are three persons to whom the glory of deity equally belongs. This knowledge of God is attended with suitable dispositions of heart. All who know God to salvation, trust in him as their God. They rejoice in his kindness, and count it their glory and joy to call him their God. They that know their God keep his commandment. Disobedience to his voice they count the worst of all evils. 11. **HOW THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FITS MEN FOR DOING EXPLOITS, IS NOW TO BE CONSIDERED.** The word *exploits* is a supplement of our translation. But the words plainly signify, that those who know their God "shall be strong," and do such things as could not be expected from persons not under the influence of a religious principle. The exploits done by those that know their God must be undoubtedly consistent with justice. Heroical actions have been performed for the gratification of ambition, or other corrupt dispositions of the human heart. But those who know their God would not, for the world, do an unjust action, or to risk the loss of their souls, by disobeying God. The noble army of martyrs laid down their lives, not only for their heavenly Father, but for their brethren, when they sealed the truth with their blood. But how does the knowledge of our God prepare us for doing what we may be called to do, in the defence of our country, and of ourselves? 1. They that know their God, know his will, and are disposed to do it. And this is one article of the revealed will of God, that we should be ready, when we are called by providence, to defend our king and country, our liberties, and our religion. "Honour the king." "Be subject to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." The difference between those who know their God and other men, is, that most other men will do some things that God requires, but they are not ready for every good work. Where their life, their interest, their credit, may suffer by obeying the will of God, they must be excused; but the lovers of God delight to show their obedience, where self-denial must be practised. 2. They that know their God are strengthened to do exploits, by their confidence in God as their God. "They that know his name will put their trust in him"; and "through him they will do valiantly." Our confidence in God is founded on the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He is the way: no man cometh to the Father but by him." Now, when we believe in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and life everlasting, what have we to fear? God. We may die, but we cannot be hurt. It is a consciousness of guilt that disqualifies us for dangerous duties. 3. The people that do know God, have learned patiently to do his will. None can hope to do exploits that is unqualified to bear those things that are unpleasant to the flesh. Hardness must be endured by every good soldier of Jesus Christ. "If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is but small." 4. The people that do know their God, are prepared for extraordinary services, by the ordinary course of their service to God. When men are daily adding sin to sin by obstinate impenitence, they prepare thorns and briars to tear their consciences, when an evil day comes. How can such men be unappalled, when they find themselves placed in a situation that exposes them to a premature death? All that know their God, have learned to keep up an intercourse with him by prayer; and in the time of distress and danger, they pray more earnestly. Great are the victories which prayer hath obtained. 5. That the people who do know their God are strong to do exploits, because God is their helper. The Lord is good unto all, but he loves all that walk in his ways. "He is their arm every morning, their salvation in the day of trouble." How were all the heroes of Israel, in ancient times, enabled to do those mighty works for which they are held in everlasting remembrance? The Lord was with them. They were strong in his strength. He protected them by the shield of his salvation. What shall we say at the conclusion of the whole matter? 1. Seek the knowledge of God. Let those who yet know not God seek the knowledge of his excellency, of his grace, of his will. Use the means of knowledge with which God hath furnished you in great plenty. Pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation. 2. If any of you say that you know God, consider by what course of actions you ought to verify their pretensions; for if you say that you know God, and keep not his commandments, you are liars. Great exploits were done by the heroes of God's people. You must cut off right hands and right feet, when they make you to offend. You must crucify the flesh, with the afflictions and lusts. 3. To animate us to such exploits we may be called to perform, let us call to remembrance the exploits performed by believers in ancient times. Paul put us in mind of the many mighty works done through faith, that we may be ready, when we are called by divine providence, to follow their example. Are you called to practise virtue and holiness, admit the opposition to be expected from a crooked and perverse generation? Are you called to risk your lives in battle? Remember Abraham, who, with a little army, fought bravely and successfully against four victorious kings, to rescue his beloved nephew.

4. Those who are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of God ought to consider their ways. You cannot go as missionaries to spread the light of the gospel amongst the heathen; but you may be fellow-helps to them by your contributions and prayers. You are not called to the field of battle; but you may assist the defenders of your country by your cheerful payment of those taxes that are necessary for their support, and by your prayers to God that he may cover their heads in the day of battle. All that know the Lord love him. All that love him will desire to approve their love by those works that are pleasing in his sight. Exploits in the service of Satan indicate not only ignorance of God, but enmity against him. You must not imagine that the best means will give you the saving and sanctifying knowledge of God, without divine illumination. "There are some," says Paul, "that have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame." There are some of the military order, as well as men of other descriptions, that have not the knowledge of God. None know God who dare to profane his name by needless oaths and execrations. (*G. Lawson.*)

And do exploits.—*Great exploits*:—An exploit I would define to be a heroic act, a brave feat, a great achievement. There are three opportunities open to us that are grand, thrilling, far-reaching, stupendous and overwhelming. In these you may do exploits. The three greatest things on earth to do are to save a man, or save a woman, or save a child. During the course of his life, almost every man gets into an exigency, is caught between two fires, is ground between two millstones, sits on the edge of some precipice, or in some other way comes near demolition. There are exigencies in the life of a woman. The embarrassed and humiliated woman seems to cheer up in Christian confidence. And there is another exploit you may do. You may not only save a man, and a woman, you may save a child. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Untold possibilities of a man of faith:—During one of Mr. Moody's early visits to England, as he was about to return, a friend said to him: "The world has yet to see what God could do with a man who would let Him use him." This made such a deep impression upon Mr. Moody that he was led to put himself in the hands of the Lord for service as never before, and the blessing which attended the great evangelist's teaching, in some measure, let the world see how much God could use a man who is willing to be used. A life given to Jesus Christ as Saviour, and that life consecrated to him for service, with a realisation of the mighty power of prayer, will certainly accomplish great things for God.

The Christian Hero:—I. SOME ACCOUNT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE WHICH CHRISTIANS POSSESS OF THEIR GOD. 1. By his word and spirit they know him as a God of infinite perfection. The idols of the heathen are far inferior to their makers. The Christian knows, that the God whose he is, and whom he worships and serves, is possessed of every perfection, and that in its highest degree. 2. As a reconciled God in Christ. Christ gave himself for his people. God devised the plan of our reconciliation and peace with him. 3. They know him as their own God in Christ. He hath made himself over to them, and they have accepted him, and they live in the sure possession, and in the sweet enjoyment of him. 4. They know him as their God, with whom they live in the closest correspondence. He commands, and they obey. II. SOME OF THOSE EXPLOITS WHICH CHRISTIANS SHALL PERFORM, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR KNOWING GOD. 1. They shall be strong, and perform the most difficult pieces of duty. 2. They shall subdue strong corruptions. 3. They shall be strong in resisting strong temptations. 4. In patiently bearing heavy burdens. 5. In suspending the divine judgments, and holding back the arm of omnipotence itself. III. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE OF THEIR GOD HATH UPON THEIR BEING STRONG, AND DOING EXPLOITS. 1. By their knowledge, that the command of God is their warrant for doing these exploits. 2. That they have Jehovah Jesus for their commander. 3. They have the whole armour of God, as their military accoutrements, in the day of battle. 4. They know that they have the fulness of God, and of Christ, for their supplies. 5. They know that they are assured of complete victory over their enemies. 6. They know they shall receive a glorious reward. Admonish such (1) To make no peace with their spiritual enemies. (2) Abhor their ways. (3) Defy their force. (*John Jardine*). *The Heroism and Achievements of those who know and confide in God*:—These words are found in a prophecy respecting Antiochus Epiphanes, the bitter enemy and persecutor of the Jews. I am not going to harrow up your feelings by a recital of his cruelties. Persecution has always served to enable us to "discern the righteous from the wicked, and him who serveth God from him who serveth him not." And so we find it here. The faithless Jews, by the promise of place and wealth and power, would be led to sacrifice their consciences; "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries." Not so those who are "upright in heart." Their principles shall be unyielding and triumphant, "but the people that do know their God

shall be strong and do exploits." Consider three things with regard to the persons here spoken of. I. **THEIR KNOWLEDGE.** Knowledge is the prerogative—the distinction—of humanity. The principal object of this knowledge must be God himself, whether we consider the perfections of his nature, or the various relations in which he stands to us. God in nature is God above us; God in providence is God beyond us; God in law is God against us; but God in Christ is God for us, and God with us, and God in us. We must know him in the person of his dear Son. This knowledge is not merely speculative, it is experimental. There is a great difference between knowing a thing only in theory, and knowing it in experience, by the confidence of the heart, the bias of the will, and the glowing of the affections. "Tasting" is very distinguishable from reading, and hearing, and talking about a thing. The true knowledge is ever accompanied with three things, confidence, affection and obedience. This knowledge is also appropriating. Where this appropriation is not actually realised, it is always desired.

II. **THEIR STRENGTH.** "Shall be strong." Their strength is not natural. The fall has left us as much without strength as without righteousness. It is much easier to convince men of their guilt than of their weakness. Even Christians themselves acquire the knowledge of this weakness slowly and gradually. At first, they are found to rely much upon their convictions, purposes, and resolutions, and, perhaps, vows too; but their iniquities, like the wind, after all, carry them away. By their failings and falls, they are taught that they only are safe, "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Christians, by experience, learn more and more where alone their strength lies, and they are led to trust in the Lord only. Two things with regard to this strength you must remember. The supplies of it are communicated seasonably. And it is obtained by the use of means. Some have a stupid notion that we should not engage in the exercises of religion, unless we feel in a suitable and lively frame for them. If we are in a bad frame, we need to come to God by prayer, and in the use of the means he has appointed, that we may get into a good and lively frame.

III. **THEIR EXPLOITS.** Exploits are rare, difficult, curious, marvellous, illustrious acts and achievements. There are many important things belonging to real religion, which are not deemed worthy of the name by the men of the world. A man who "walks by faith, not by sight," will be led to the conclusion that there is nothing really great but what relates to the soul, or eternity, or God. We are not to confine these exploits to particular ranks and conditions of men. View Christians under six characteristics, (1) as scholars. (2) As merchants. (3) As helpers. (4) As travellers. (5) As sufferers. (6) As Soldiers. Christians are no ordinary characters. They are a "peculiar people," they are men "wondered at." They profess, and they do, more than others, and you should glory in their characters. (*William Jay.*)

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many.—*Knowledge Commended*:—The uninspired book of the Maccabees is perhaps the best interpreter of this passage in Daniel. The prophet, we think, refers to the great persecution under Antiochus, when the followers of Judas Maccabeus, knowing their God and keeping close to Him amidst general defection, refused to bow before the idols of Syria; these were strong by God's grace, and did great exploits; wonders of valour we read of in the history of Judas and his brethren, and wonders of heroic suffering never surpassed are recounted of the mother and sons and those other martyrs who, under tortures of the most amazing character, held fast their faith even to the end. In that age there were some who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who felt the violence of fire, and yet were not separated from their God by all that the foe could do. Those by whom the exploits were performed were not ignorant, but a people who did know their God; and those who helped to keep up the light of Israel in the midst of the thick darkness were not uninstructed themselves, but they were a people who did understand. Our subject this morning is knowledge, especially knowledge of the things of God. The question is very often put to us in a very general and vague manner, "Is knowledge a good thing or not?" We are expected to give an answer promptly and without reserve; and if we do we shall very likely be caught in a trap. "Knowledge: is it a good thing in itself or not?" That depends upon several things. You might as well ask me whether air is a good thing. Why, of course, speaking loosely, it is; but then there is much bad air in old wells and cellars, and so on, which will destroy life, and therefore you cannot expect me to say at once, if I know you are on the catch, either "Yes," or "No." Air is a good thing, as a general rule; the lungs require it, man must have it; it is a good thing. So is knowledge. Knowledge heaves the intellectual lungs: it is a good thing; but then there is noxious knowledge, which it were infinitely better for us never to receive, just as there is pestilential air. Is water a good thing? Again I answer, "Yes," in the abstract. So many watery particles are absolutely necessary to the building up and sustenance of the

human frame, that every thirsty man knows that water is good. Yet there is bad water; there have been poisoned wells; water stagnates and becomes putrid and injurious to life; water is good take it abstractedly. But yet there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in Paradise, mark that—but it ruined Paradise, mark that, too! A man may know much, and he may still stand in his integrity; but the chamees are, that while men are what they are, there will be a serpent in the tree of knowledge, seeking the ruin of souls. If you want to judge concerning the good or evil of knowledge, you must ask yourself, *What is its source?* To have one's lips touched with a live coal is a choice blessing if the seraph bring that coal from off the altar; but there are tongues which are set on fire of hell—and who desires to feel such accursed flame? You must know whence cometh the coal before you may consent that it shall touch your lips. Knowledge may be tested by considering its character. Some knowledge is like the light of the moon—clear, cold, barren, if not deleterious to health; but heavenly knowledge is fructifying, healthful, and genial, chasing away disease like the warm rays of the sun. You may make knowledge good or evil, by the way in which you use it. If it be a torch, you may carry it with you to kindle the flame of Tophet's fire; or, on the other hand, by that heaven-lit torch you may, through grace, find your way to the gates of Paradise. Judge of knowledge, therefore, ever with discretion, and while you seek it as in the abstract an eminently good thing, yet be not in haste to plunge yourself into every abyss to find its bottom, nor into every burning crater to fathom its depth. I know enough of poison without drinking it, and enough of sin without running into it. I. First, then, there is a SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO, "the people who do know their God." To know God is the highest and best form of knowledge. But what can we know of God? Nothing but what He has been pleased to reveal to us. He hath revealed something of Himself in the Book of Nature, and much more in the Book of Revelation; and He hath been pleased to cast a vivid light upon the Book of Revelation by manifesting Himself unto His people as He doth not unto the world. Those who know the Lord should believe in the unity of His essence and subsistence. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." We should know the Lord in the plurality of His persons. God said, "Let us make man in our own image." Let not man be content until he knows something of the "us" from whom his being was derived. Endeavour to know the Father. Seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes. Forget not the Holy Spirit: endeavour to get as clear a view as you can of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Let us study to be well instructed in the divine attributes, and ask for grace to know them all. Be not like those who dream of a God who is all love, and nothing else. Do not be content with a maimed and distorted view of God's attributes; feel Him to be omnipresent: let it be your delight to know that you have not to call upon Him as one who is afar off, but ever near at hand. Recognise Him as omnipotent; know that there is nothing which He cannot do, and therefore doubt Him not. Whatever else you do not know do know the character of your God. "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Then labour to know God in His actions; study well the past. Do not be ignorant of the great work of creation; if you have the skill, look at that creation in the light of modern science so far as that light is really derived from facts and not from conjectures. Pry into God's great works in providence; begin your pilgrimage of study at the gates of Eden and travel onward to the present time; float safely in your meditations with Noah in the ark; study the wonderful justice of God in thus sweeping away the race of men. If you have mastered all this, seek to know something of the teaching of the Spirit of God concerning the plan of salvation. Do not be content to be saved in the dark; try to find out how it is that you are saved. I have thus brought out what I think is the idea of the text about the people knowing their God; but we must not overlook that little word *their*—"They that know their God." It is not "they that know God," but "their God." To know anything of Him aright, you must get a firm hold of God; He must be your God. "There is no praying," said one old man who used to be much in prayer, "till you come to a close grip." II. THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF THIS KIND OF KNOWLEDGE next requires our notice. The text shows that it strengthens, gives courage, energy, vigour, resolution daring, success. They who know their God are strong, and do exploits. Knowledge strengthens the spiritual man, because, in the first place, it is that on which faith has to feed. Where there is faith, knowledge is a great gain. This will be clear to all of you who read attentively your Bible, because the words "to know" and "to believe" are frequently used in Scripture almost synonymously. If you turn to the tenth chapter of St. John's gospel, you will find there at the thirty-

eighth verse, that the Saviour said, "But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." And then in the first epistle of St. John, in the second chapter, at the third verse, we have an expression which is tantamount to the one I have already referred to. "And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." We are sure of our faith and of our knowledge by walking in obedience to Him. The source from which Christian faith comes proves the importance of knowledge. How does faith come to the Christian? "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." There is the whole history of faith—the Word of God gives the teaching which blesses us with knowledge, and then comes faith. You see, then, that if knowledge be under God the Holy Ghost truly the food of faith, then, in order to be strong, since faith is the very sinew of human strength, we must get much knowledge of the things of God. The people who do know their God shall be strong in faith, and shall do great exploits. Think again, of the influence of faith upon all the other graces. Love is the sweetest of all; but how can I love till knowledge gives me a view of Christ? Knowledge opens the door, and then through that door I see my Saviour. Look at hope again. How can I hope for a thing if I do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but then till I get knowledge there is something in front of the glass, I can see nothing whatever; but knowledge takes away the impediment, and then when I look through the optic glass I can see the glory to be revealed; but I cannot hope for that of which I know nothing whatever. I must know there is a heaven, or I cannot hope for it. Then, take patience. How shall I have patience unless I have heard, as James says, of the patience of Job; unless I know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which my heavenly Father gives me? Knowledge gives me reasons for patience. Again, from the connection of the text, it appears that many were led astray in the days of Antiochus. "Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong," and so on. It seems, then, that to know God is a means of steadfastness. Who are the people that are greatly troubled by new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up? Why, the people who do not know their God. Knowledge will clearly be seen by you to be a great means for enabling you to do great exploits, if you think of its bearing upon usefulness. A Christian without knowledge, for instance, is an admirable man in the holiness of his life; but to what other end, to what other purpose can you put him? He must not enter the pulpit—if he be already there, he had better retire. Do not be content to be always children—you will never be men unless you are children first; do not be content to be stunted in your understanding, but ask to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the sake of your own usefulness. III. We come, in the third place, TO NOTICE HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE MAY BE OBTAINED. Time has fled, and therefore we will not enlarge, but just give the outline. Search the Scriptures. Do not merely read them—search them; look out the parallel passages; collate them; try to get the meaning of the Spirit upon any one truth by looking to all the texts which refer to it. Read the Bible consecutively; do not merely read a verse here and there—that is not fair. Pray after you have read it as much as you like, but do not make a penance of what ought to be a pleasure. Next, use good helps to your Bible. Next, be sure to attend a teaching ministry. Do not be always after sweets. Then I should say, if you want to understand much, be much in prayer. IV. And now I want to say ONE WORD BY WAY OF CAUTION. Remember that knowledge of itself—with all its excellencies and virtues when God blesses it—has a danger in it to you. "Knowledge," says the apostle, "puffeth up." So it does. You may get proud of what you know, and then God forgive you, and deliver you from it! And, moreover, you may get so positive about what you know, that you may have made up your mind never to know any more. Do not get into that state. Your knowledge may even make you supercilious to the people of God. You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you, and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God. V. THE DUTY OF SPREADING THIS KNOWLEDGE WHEN WE HAVE IT. "They that understand among the people shall instruct many." It is a prophecy which is fulfilled, but it is also a suggestion of a duty which we have to carry out. Are we instructing many, those of us who know the Lord? If God has lighted your candle, try to shine and let other candles be lit by you. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 36—45. **And the King shall do according to his will.**—*The Reign of the Antichrist*:—We Christians look for an Antichrist yet to come. Apart from revelation, it is, in itself, in conformity with human nature, and the laws of things, that, as good

intensifies to a grand consummation of good, so will evil also intensify to a grand consummation of evil. The world is made up of light and shadow, the one always accompanying the other; and as the light increases the shadows deepen; till, when the king of glory comes to crown and establish the good, he will be confronted with the king and head of all wickedness, wrought up to the summit of lawlessness and blasphemy at which its doom shall come. In the Old Testament, wherever we look we find some image and fore-intimation of this great evil power, running parallel with the predictions and promises concerning the seed of the Woman, and the Messiah of the chosen people. It was the firm belief of all the Christian Fathers that there is yet to come a development and impersonation of Antichristianism more dreadful than has ever yet been seen on Earth, and which shall be destroyed only in the great day of God Almighty. This Antichrist is described in the passage of Daniel now before us. Whoever this King may be, or from whatever quarter he may come, he is the last representative of the bestial world power that ever bears rule upon earth. Whoever he is, he is some individual person. Antichrist indeed exists at all times, but only as a working spirit which has not yet come to its final development and concentrated embodiment. Wilfulness will be his characteristic; and magnifying himself, and irreligion. We everywhere and in all circles and teachings, hear about the 'Coming Man.' He is the man of sin, the lawless one, the Antichrist. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*).

CHAPTER XII.

Vers. 1—13. **And at that time shall Michael stand up.**—*The Great Consummation*:—It is a little unfortunate that this chapter has been severed from what immediately precedes it. Here we learn: 1. That the time of the Antichrist will be a time of unexampled distress. The trouble will be more or less upon all people then living upon the earth. 2. The time of the Antichrist is the time when Michael, the great prince over the children of the prophet's people, shall stand up in their behalf. Some think this is the Lord Jesus himself. 3. The time of the Antichrist is also a time of blessed resurrection. 4. Then shall men receive their eternal rewards. (*Joseph A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 1. **Every one that shall be found written in the book.**—*Divine Registration, the Pledge of Deliverance in Times of Trouble*:—The whole history of the Church of God bears one unbroken testimony to the fact that her distinction from the world is essential to her real prosperity; and the more tenaciously that distinction has been maintained the more conspicuous has been her glory, and the more her experimental joys have abounded. Four things in the text. I. A DISTINGUISHED PEOPLE. Two distinct families are uniformly set forth in the sacred oracles, from the very opening to the closing of the book of God. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Inquire into the origin and descent of the family of God, the distinguished people. Their origin is in the eternal counsel. They were chosen in Christ as their covenant head. Note some of the family peculiarities of this distinguished people, especially that royal dignity which characterises them all. The Christian is born of God, with a nature capable of enjoying God. II. THE REGISTER OF DANIEL'S FAMILY. They are said to be written in a book. The book of covenant decrees, entitled "The Lamb's Book of Life." Every child of God, every heir of glory, is found written in that book, as an object of everlasting life. Daniel's people are like himself in four particulars. 1. As the children of a covenant head, the true circumcision. 2. As praying souls. 3. As characterised by integrity. 4. As in high favour with God. III. THE ORDEALS THROUGH WHICH THIS PEOPLE HAVE TO PASS. They are a tried people—in family experience and outward persecutions. (*Joseph Irons.*)

Ver. 2. **Some to everlasting life, and some to shame.**—*Unto Life or Death—Which?*:—Death is not annihilation; the grave is not the end of man. Two facts are indisputable among those who receive the Scriptures. 1. The fact of a general resurrection anterior to the Judgment Day. 2. The righteous will be raised to life eternal; the wicked to "damnation." The point in the lesson we would enforce—and it is a tremendous point in the matter of personal interest—is embraced in one word—"which?" One or the other of these experiences lie before each and every child of Adam. Do what we will, and neglect what we will, we shall have a part in this resurrection; we shall "hear the voice of the Son of God" then, whether we hear it now or not; and we "shall live," and "come forth," either to be caught up into Heaven, or be banished to hell! In that hour of

infinite power and display there will be no place of retreat, no possible concealment or evasion. In the dazzling light of the resurrection day it will be made clear as the noonday sun that there are but two characters, two ways, two destinies in God's universe, and that an eternal "gulf" divides them, and on whichever side of that abyss we find ourselves then and there, there we shall remain as long as the throne of the Almighty endures. "Which?" O my soul! "Which?" (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The Resurrection and its Consequences*.—I. THE GENERAL RESURRECTION. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." The word "many," in view of other Scriptures, must be understood as meaning "all," or "the many," the whole collective body of mankind. Our corrupted bodies may, to all human appearance, be lost among their kindred dust; but God hath declared that "those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." The churchyard that surrounds us is filled with earth that once had breath and life. It seems, when you walk among the graves, as if eternal night had closed over them; as if they would never be seen or heard of again. But wait awhile. Their night will have an end. Death itself must at last be swallowed up in victory. If we should inquire no further, this grand promise of the resurrection might seem to be a doctrine of unmixed comfort and satisfaction. But consider: II. THE CERTAIN AND IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GENERAL RESURRECTION. The final issue is, everlasting life to some; shame and everlasting contempt to others. 1. Some shall awake to everlasting life. What is that life? Does it merely mean that their bodies will revive, and never die again? That cannot be the exclusive meaning of the word Life. It is the life of which St. Paul speaks, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Everlasting life is not first begun when the Christian awakes from the grave; it begins here upon earth. The Holy Ghost, who is "the Lord and Giver of life," implants it in the heart of every believer at his conversion. Heaven is but a completion of that state into which a Christian is first brought while here below. All mankind are by nature dead—"dead in trespasses and sins." When the heart is softened and humbled, the spirit becomes broken and contrite, and the will subdued and compliant, you are passing from death unto life. You become, by faith, united to Jesus Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, and in consequence of this blessed union you partake of the nature of the tree on which you are engrafted. Being a branch in Him, bring forth good fruit. 2. Some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. These words describe the end of the wicked and ungodly. But this description does not give, by any means, a full account of their future misery. The wicked man rises from the grave, and the first objects which he meets are shame and everlasting contempt. These are the consequences of the resurrection to him. Even in this life, sinners are extremely anxious to escape the shame which naturally attends upon transgression. In this, by the help of Satan, they partly succeed. But, how will they appear when, at the resurrection, they awake up from their long sleep? Then the secrets of all hearts will be revealed, and that by One who has seen your life from the beginning to the end. The shame of the wicked will be still further increased by a clear discovery of the mercies which they might have obtained by a penitent faith in Christ. Men pretend that true piety could have no effect but to make them miserable. But when that eternal day shall dawn, the truth will burst upon them at once, and they will learn that "godliness is great again; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And he will awake to "everlasting contempt." Nothing but an assurance of God's favour and love can fully reconcile a man to the contempt and sneers of the world. Is the contempt of an avenging Judge the whole of what sinners must look for in that day? No; the saints of God will also unite with Him in condemning His enemies. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Eternal Life*.—Describe the familiar picture of St. Augustine and his mother Monica. It depicts two beings aspiring in heart and soul after eternal life, and thinking for a moment that they have hold upon it. These two human beings—outward bound, as they say; bent on a voyage, preparing to cross the sea, to reach an earthly home, and, meanwhile, preparing for another voyage, across that other sea, whose further shore no living human being has ever seen—how does this illustrate our own position on the road to eternal life? We all are preparing to cross the sea. All who have realised the voyage that is to be, begin to ask themselves what there is on the other side. Treat these two points of Scripture. 1. There is eternal life. There is no distinction between the two words, eternal and everlasting; the original word that each of them translates is exactly the same. The text in Daniel is the first in the Bible in which the words "everlasting life" occur. There are only three other passages in the Old Testament where the same meaning, if not quite the same words, is to be found. (Psalms cxxxiii; xvi; and xxi.) That is all, so far as I can find, that the Old Testament contains about everlasting life. In the New Testament, everlasting life is everywhere. It is the whole purport of the Gospel to make it possible for human beings to reach "life eternal." That was the good news for them. 2. What is eternal life? "To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Christ is the life eternal, the spring and source of it to others, the essence and substance of it in Himself. How is it obtained? "He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal." The gift is spoken of in the present tense. As soon as the water that Christ gives reaches a human heart, in it the spring of living water bursts forth and flows. Eternal life begins here. It consists in the union of the soul through Christ with God. A life in union with God—the selfish will submitted to His will—loving the things that He loves—hating the things that He hates—this wrought by faith in Christ, and the spirit that He has sent—this is what I imagine to be eternal life according to the Scripture idea. (*Canon Rowstorne, M.A.*) *Moral Distinctions Emphasised at the Resurrection*:—Men will be sorted yonder. Gravitation will come into play undisturbed; and the pebbles will be ranged according to their weights on the great shore where the sea has cast them up, as they are upon Chesil beach down there in the English Channel, and many another coast besides; all the big ones together and sized off to the smaller ones, regularly and steadily laid out. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Resurrection—the Embodiment of Mind*:—There be two principles at work in the resurrection of the dead. The glorified body is not the physical outcome of the material body here; but is the issue and manifestation, in visible form, of the perfect and Christ-like spirit. Some shall rise to glory and immortality, some to shame and everlasting contempt. If we are to stand at the last, with the body of our humiliation changed into a body of glory, we must begin by being changed in the spirit of our mind. As the mind is, so will the body be one day. *Future Permanence of Character*:—You and I write out our lives as if on one of those manifold writers which you use. A thin, filmy sheet here, a bit of black paper below it; but the writing goes through upon the next page. And when the blackness that divides the two worlds is swept away there the history of each life, written by ourselves, remains legible in eternity. (*A. Maclaren.*)

Ver. 3. **And they that be wise.**—*Shining as the Stars*:—The word prudent or wise means endued with intellect. Some take it transitively, and in this passage their opinion is probably correct, because the office of justifying will soon be assigned to these prudent ones. It is better, however, to take it as meaning those who are endued with understanding. The angel says that the "teachers," or those who excel in understanding, "shall shine forth as the light of Heaven." The angel contrasts the profane who proudly and contemptuously rage against God, and the faithful whose whole wisdom it is to submit themselves to God, and to worship Him with the purest affection of their minds. Those who retained sincere piety should be like "the light of the firmament"; meaning, they shall be heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, where they shall enjoy that glory which surpasses all the splendour of the world. . . . It is the common duty of the children of God to promote the salvation of their brethren. By this word "justifying," the angel means, not that it is in the power of one man to justify another, but the property of God is here transferred to His ministers. Meanwhile, we are as clearly justified by any teaching which brings faith within our reach as we are justified by the faith that springs from the teaching. Why is our justification ever ascribed to faith? Because our faith directs us to Christ, in whom is the complete perfection of justification, and thus our justification may be ascribed equally to the faith taught and to the doctrine which teaches it. And those who bring before us this teaching are the ministers of our justification. The assertion of the angel is this—The sons of God, who, being devoted entirely to God, and ruled by the spirit of prudence, point out the way of life to others, shall not only be saved themselves, but shall possess surpassing glory far beyond anything which exists in this world. This is the complete explanation. (*John Calvin.*) *Wise Workers*:—I. THE CHARACTERS HERE MENTIONED. There are two. "They that be wise." "They that turn many to righteousness." 1. "Wise," that is, instructors, or teachers. By this character of wise is meant all good men, who have a real, a warm concern to know their duty and to put it in practice, who take delight in serving God and doing good. It is religion that teaches what must be known, and done, to make us happy for ever. We have souls, and we have bodies. These constitute the man. Both deserve and demand our care, but not both in the same degree. 2. "Turn many to righteousness." Some say—If I am good myself, that is enough. Let every man look to himself. But, surely, it is every man's province, every man's duty, and it will be every man's satisfaction, his crown of glory as well as rejoicing, to do all the good that he can. By righteousness is meant in the text, what it usually signifies in holy Scripture, virtue and piety, our duty to God and one another, and a due government of our appetites and passions. II. IN WHAT MANNER, AND BY WHAT METHODS, MAY THE CONVICTION AND REFORMATION OF SINNERS BE MOST PRUDENTLY ATTEMPTED, AND PROBABLY EFFECTED? Some natures are so corrupted, some wills so obstinate, some wicked habits so strong, that counsel, how good soever, signifies nothing. The most natural and effectual methods to excite a sense of religion, to reclaim those to the paths of piety and virtue who have forsaken and run

from them are: 1. Let them be instructed in the knowledge of true religion. 2. Recommend a serious consideration of what they do know. 3. Represent the great encouragement which the word of God gives to enter upon a new and better life. 4. Warn them of the dreadful consequences of living and dying in an unrepentant and unpardoned state. 5. We should not fail to enforce a due care of and attendance upon the appointed means of religion. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT CONTAINED IN THE TEXT. The glory promised to good men is unfading and everlasting. (*Ed. Sandercock.*) *The High Reward of Those Who Turn Many to Righteousness*:—

I. THERE IS A REWARD OF GRACE AWAITING ALL GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS. The general character of God's servants is here exhibited under the attribute of wisdom. 1. In what does this wisdom consist? In the experimental knowledge of all that is essential to salvation. The wisdom thus obtained has not been wasted in fruitless speculation, or suffered to lie as a dormant or inactive principle in the heart. Without this wisdom all is folly; and with it, men of humblest name shall surpass, in a future world, the proudest sons of that perishable science, which has been confined in its operations within the narrow limits of time. 2. Whence is this wisdom derived, and by whom is it sustained? Is it a distinction originating in the sinful creature, or in the boundless sovereignty of Divine grace? This wisdom is undoubtedly from above. Wherever it is possessed, it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. 3. The blessed consequences to which such wisdom conducts in eternity. It is difficult to conceive of a reward where no merit can exist. Who can tell what it is to "shine as the brightness of the firmament"? The most splendid objects in Nature are the chosen emblems of Heaven, to express the high dignity and the unspeakable felicity of those who have become wise unto salvation. Their eternal sphere is one in which all the elements of light, and glory, and peace, and sanctity, combine. II. THERE ARE SPECIAL RESERVATIONS OF GLORY AWAITING THOSE WHO HAVE TURNED MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. The personal possession of true wisdom is distinguished, in the text, from the act of turning many to righteousness. The latter shall be exalted to spheres of peculiar honour and blessedness. There are various degrees of glory in Heaven. All are with Christ, and all like to Him; and the awards of infinite wisdom and grace awaken no envy, and call forth no unworthy jealousy. The principle on which all are accepted is faith in the Son of God; and the degree of service rendered to Christ in the present life will bear an exact proportion to the degree in which the justifying principle was brought into exercise. On the great day, saint and sinner will receive according to the deeds done in the body. The office of ministers is one of extraordinary responsibility, and one which involves peculiar trials. They need great consolations, and great excitements in their arduous work. They have the glorious prospect of gracious and abundant rewards. (*John Morison, D.D.*)

Heaven and Earth Reconciled:—I. THE WORK. 1. The subject we must exercise our skill on are men, tempered of the same mould, having a soul inspired from the breath of the same God, as dear to Him as ourselves, bought with no worse blood than His Son's, guarded with angels, protected by the same Providence, and compassed about with the same mercies that we are. This subject is set down indefinitely, "many." The power of God is here perspicuous, that designs a few to convert many. 2. The predicate we work, men, is righteousness. Righteousness is so fair an object that a man would think there needs no great solicitation to it. The end of the ministry is to bring men to righteousness. It is the cunning of all cunning to govern souls. It is no easy work to make men righteous. 3. The copulatives. The persons whom God hath deputed to atone these two contrary natures, sinful men and righteousness, are the ministers. II. THE REWARD. Our bliss, our heaven. Ministers are said to be stars in five respects. 1. In name. 2. In substance. A star-like and substantial light, not a flash of lightning. 3. In situation. The stars are placed in their orb, and finish their course in a determined space of time. 4. The motion is four-fold—circular, incessant, swift, and orderly. 5. The last similitude consists in the effects. Our influence, our light, our delight. Then despise not, afflict not, impoverish not your stars. (*T. Adams.*) *Becoming Stars*:—You know what the "firmament" is, you young people. It is the blue vault of Heaven above us. And you know what the stars are. A little girl described their appearance by saying, "They are gimlet holes in the floor of Heaven, to let some of the light shine through." Of course they are not. They are great worlds, some of them bigger than the world we live in. 1. Let us see that we understand this verse. By "those that are wise," are here meant those who are "wise unto salvation"—those who have the wisdom to hear God's voice and have been led to trust it and obey Him. The New Testament speaks of believers as a great "cloud" of witnesses. Here they are compared to the "firmament" itself—vault of God's great spiritual temple, His purified and glorified Church, far more gloriously beautiful than the resplendent dome of the sky. By "those that turn many to righteousness" are meant those who are not only wise for themselves, but have wisdom, patience, and love in seeking to bring others also to the love and fear of God. Is not

that the noblest kind of life? If you have found the true wisdom yourself, to seek that others may have it too? That is a poor soul who is only careful for himself. The truly noble life is the life which, in gratitude to God, is laid out for the good of others. People often seek to be thought wise among men—to get credit for knowing a great deal more than other people. Be it yours to be accounted wise by God, in knowing Him, and loving Him. For that is the true wisdom. (C. A. Salmond, M.A.) *Faithfulness Richly Rewarded*:—

1. In these words we have first a general description of all the righteous without exception—they are wise. This description in its highest sense belongs only to the people of God. They only are truly wise, because wise unto salvation. Wisdom was originally the outstanding conspicuous characteristic of man as distinguished from the inferior animals. Wisdom was God's image in the mind, as holiness was His image in the soul of man un-fallen, but the words of our text show that they are no longer characteristic of the race at large, but the distinction of the people of God. True wisdom includes: (1) Consideration. Man as a rational creature is influenced by higher principles than the inferior animals; and God, in His word and in His works, appeals to these higher principles. But in vain are we surrounded by instructors if we do not receive and ponder the lessons they teach. In order that we may learn the lessons, we must consider. Before we can wisely consider the works of God, we must first have considered and entertained the lessons of His word. Ancient Israel failed to do this. (2) Wisdom includes calculation. No man ever gained the whole world, but thousands have lost their souls for want of consideration and calculation. (3) Wisdom includes decision. Acting on convictions. To remain undecided is to decide for sin and Satan, the side on which we all are by nature. (4) To be wise implies not only that a man makes a wise choice, but that he adheres to it, persists in it. A wise man chooses through grace to lead a godly life, not only for a time, but to the end. The new life must begin with a solid work of justification through faith in Christ. Some do not take time to seek and find Christ, but begin at once to build on their convictions, feelings, and resolutions. He that builds on Christ, the Rock of Ages, endureth to the end, and so shall be saved, and is proved to have been wise unto, and up to salvation. 2. The distinction belonging to some of the godly—that of turning many to righteousness. Some are specially diligent and successful in this work. It was said of Richard Baxter that he "never preached without being the means of awakening, convincing, or converting some sinner." But the work of turning sinners to righteousness seems to refer more specially to personal effort in private. 3. The reward. There are two distinct ideas in this promise, a less glorious, and a more glorious, reward. The brightness of the firmament means the star-sown sky by night, and it implies that all glorified saints will shine as stars, with different degrees of brightness. There will be different degrees of glory among the saints in Heaven, depending upon the qualities acquired by them, and the character formed in them while they were on earth. What are these stars to which glorified saints are compared? They are suns, conveying light and genial warmth to separate worlds, or whole systems of worlds, as in the case of our own sun. The describing of John Baptist, a "burning and shining light," applies to all who follow John's example in influencing graciously the minds and hearts of men. The "seven churches of Asia" were lights shining in a dark place, slowly dispersing the surrounding darkness of heathenism. So it was with our Culdee forefathers. When each college of twelve holy men, with their presiding abbot, went forth from Iona, and settled down in some dark region of heathen England, or half-heathen Scotland, they were so many star clusters, who, by the blessing of God, spread the light of Gospel truth more rapidly and more thoroughly than any other missionaries have done since the time of the Apostles. These missions may be described as star clusters, and so every well organised congregation at home, even now, shines with Heavenly light amid surrounding darkness. It seems an appropriate reward that those who are burning and shining lights on earth should continue to burn and shine when transferred to a higher sphere. (C. G. Scott.) *The Peculiar Excellency and Reward of Supporting Schools of Charity*:—I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS DISTINGUISHING REWARD AND GLORY IN THE NEXT WORLD IS PROMISED. Those, in general, who apply themselves to the most probable and effectual methods of instructing mankind in their duty, and turning them into the paths of righteousness. The text describes them as "wise," or "teachers," they who have instructed themselves in the laws of God, and make it their business to see others instructed. A work belonging especially, but by no means exclusively, to ministers. The text also describes them as "turning many to righteousness." In this work ministers may be greatly aided by a due exercise of authority on the parts of parents, of masters, and of magistrates. It includes bending the minds of children, while they are tender and young, to the ways of goodness and righteousness. II. THE PARTICULAR EXCELLENCIES OF TRAINING UP MANKIND TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THEIR DUTY. The care, especially, of the poorer sort of children is peculiarly acceptable to God. 1. As it is charity. 2. As it is charity to the

soul. 3. As it is a charity proceeding from the noblest motives. 4. As it is a charity employed to the best advantage. 5. As it is a charity, extending not only to the present age, but also to posterity. (Bishop Edmund Gibson.) *The Work and recompense of Christ's Ministering Servants*.—I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THESE GLORIOUS PROMISES ARE MADE. Teachers or preachers of God's word. The primary duty of a minister of the church is to teach and to instruct the people. But the mere circumstance of being a teacher cannot ensure the promised reward. There may be false teachers. The reward is only for those who "turn many to righteousness." II. THE DESIGN OF THEIR OFFICE. In the word of God we are constantly and emphatically told of man's utter ruin by sin. Having become by the fall not only inclined to sin, but actual transgressors, there must necessarily be a change wrought in us—a thorough reformation of the inner man—or we cannot be saved. He that has no conviction of sin cannot understand or appreciate the atonement of Christ. This is the turning-point in the life of every child of God, when he comes to himself, bewails his folly, flies to his Father, and seeks forgiveness. How can sinners be turned to righteousness? The shed blood of Christ has procured pardon for any sinner who will accept its benefits. The sinner is not justified because of his faith, but because Christ died. But as faith is the procuring cause, it is important to ascertain where it is to be found, and how it is to be obtained. III. THE REWARD ATTACHED. The souls of faithful ministers shall be raised in the state of glory to an elevated position among the "spirits of the just made perfect." An eternity of uninterrupted joy at God's right hand awaits them, when they shall be crowned with an immortal diadem. (Isaac D. Winslow.) *Soul-Saving and its Reward*.—Those engaged in soul-saving are prosecuting a work of eminent wisdom. Cultivated pagans regarded the wise as men of profound knowledge and great attainments in learning; men whose erudition swept a vast compass; men of deep and solid information in philosophy. Daniel held aloof a nobler species of wisdom. "He that winneth souls is wise." The worth of the soul manifests the wisdom of the work of soul-saving. The dying Lyman Beecher said, "Theology is great, controversy is great, but the greatest of all things is saving souls." In turning many to righteousness it is important that we understand the forces by which we can successfully save souls. We can save them by the power of a holy example. In this centre the aims of life must converge. A holy man or woman is a perpetual sermon. The conduct of professed Christians formulates the creeds of the masses. In example we are holding the invisible reins by which we are guiding souls to Heaven or hell. Another force in soul-saving is the power of prayer. Another is earnest and repeated counsel. Advise, and repeat advice. Be not discouraged. Wait God's time and speak to souls. Faithfully admonish with faith in God, and success will crown your efforts. Where can we best work for the saving of souls? In the home circle. Home is the place of confidence. How glorious the reward celestial! How magnificently the stars shine over old Babylon where Daniel lived! Stars shine in their individuality of beauty. We shall not lose our personal identity in the Kingdom of God. The stars shine in constellations. When the stars all grow dark we shall shine for ever and ever. (S. V. Lecch.) *Wisdom Connected with its Reward*.—The idea contained in this verse is that the reward of wisdom corresponds to the nature of the ends that are sought. I. WISDOM IN ITS ESSENCE. 1. Wisdom has a wide horizon; therefore its reward is wide as the firmament. We are placed on earth, but we have not the contracted horizon that other creatures on earth have. We are like those who study the stars; earth is only the station from which we look out to the Infinite. In looking away from self to God, we can feel free and joyous in a boundless scope which is given to our life. And wisdom requires that we should take the whole width of horizon that there is. If we have God as our reward we can never feel shut in. 2. Wisdom has a bright horizon; therefore its reward is bright as the firmament. The great object placed before us is Christ. He is the brightness of the Father's glory. It is He who has made our horizon bright, taking away the darkness caused by our sin, and bringing forth a righteousness for us like the light. It is He who is the brightness of that world into which He has gone. We are, then, to take Him as the end of our being. Christ will be in us as the brightness of the firmament, His splendid sapphire will appear in our bodies and in our souls. 3. Wisdom has a lasting horizon; therefore its reward is lasting as the firmament. We are but of yesterday, and yet we are linked to eternity. We can plan for future years. We can look away beyond death, we can look out into the boundlessness of time. And wisdom requires that we should take in the whole extent that there is, and not a section merely. Our temptation is to sink of the present, and not of what the future has to tell the present. If we look to the things which are eternal, then we are promised eternity in our reward. II. WISDOM IN ITS AGGRESSIVE AND CONQUERING ASPECT. "He that winneth souls is wise." 1. The results of this aggressive wisdom are of the highest kind; therefore the reward is high. By nature all are turned away from righteousness, and toward sin. If we have seen what is for our own highest

good, we will not see it for ourselves alone. For the end which we have in God and His Kingdom embraces others as well as ourselves. Our wisdom will be directed to this, to gain men from sin to righteousness, from Satan to God. The Gospel is the wisdom of God for this end. And they are wise who can appreciate its wisdom as a means. If we are instrumental in producing results of so high a kind as this, then our reward shall be correspondingly high. They that turn men to righteousness shall be as the stars. There is no object on earth which can set forth the height of the reward. We need to turn to the sky above us. 2. It has results to individuals; therefore its reward is individual and varied as the stars. "Many." Numbers are of great consequence when so high a result is involved. Joy is in Heaven over one sinner. There is no saving in the mass; and there will be no rewarding in the mass. 3. It accomplishes lasting results; therefore its reward is as the stars for ever and ever. To turn men to righteousness is to do them lasting good. It is doing what will be felt to all eternity. Who are the star-souls? They are not necessarily the highly gifted, those who have left a name on earth. They shine out of the nebulous mass of humanity, out of the indistinguishable multitude. They shall keep their light, it shall never go out. Because Christ shines they shall shine also. (R. Finlayson, B.A.) *Righteousness*.—Righteousness was the idea of the ancient hierarchy. Righteousness is the result of the work of the Christian Church. What is the power of righteousness, what is the source of righteousness, what is the instrumentality? 1. Righteousness means right in all departments of our being, the brain, the heart, the lips, the life. Righteousness is a power that conquers Time; a power that turns life, not into the victim of the passing day, but in the highest sense into life everlasting. 2. Take another measurement of righteousness. The best, the greatest, the purest, the most loving, are the subjects of imperfection. Andreas del Sarto when he went to look at Raphael's pictures granted that the drawing was imperfect. He said, "I dare not touch it, because it is marvellous, but certainly it is wrong." Then the higher genius, the most saintly life, may be the victim of imperfection. Now righteousness conquers that. It changes now. 3. Take another measure. Take friendship, which is one of the dignities of humanity. One thing cuts the tie that binds soul to soul; it is inconstancy, the weakness of will, of heart, of perception, that separates souls. Righteousness conquers it. What is the source of righteousness? It is the glory of God. The glory of God means the sum total, the collection, the complete centre of life, the central point on which we can rest. Righteousness of the soul is the result of God's power. Our last thought upon God's glory is the fact that God loves us. (Canon W. J. Knox-Little, M.A.) *Glory in Reserve*.—The sky is a magnificent object. This magnificent feature of creation has furnished the prophet with an illustration of the glory which awaits a certain part of the human race. The text has a climactic description of Heaven. **I. PIETY ALONE IS HONORED IN HEAVEN.** Men are removed to that blessed land only as a reward of piety. 1. Being in Heaven is itself the reward of piety, as it is an expression of God's approbation. To be there, is proof of being fit to be there. And, besides expressing fitness, it will be an honour conferred, a reward of service. To be there is to receive the reward of faith, integrity, courage, and patience. 2. The beauty of holiness will be there seen to constitute man's true glory. Everything else God has made is perfect in its kind and place; and when man shall recover his lost beauty there will be great splendour. There will be the perfectly restored image of God. Each one will look like Jesus. His beauty will be the beauty of holiness; which is love in place of selfishness. **II. THE PIETY MOST HONoured IN HEAVEN WILL COME FROM THIS EARTH.** It is God's purpose that where sin abounded grace shall superabound. 1. Their glory is a reward indirectly to them, directly to Christ. His suffering and mediation all have their recompense in man's salvation. Nothing is done directly on their own account. Their piety will have in itself no peculiar excellence above that of angels; but it will have peculiar relations to the person and work of Christ. 2. They will appear in a peculiar lustre, as conquerors. The angels are represented as fighting; but they never fought an enemy within their own being. They never so taxed the resources of grace as we have. **III. USEFUL PIETY FROM EARTH WILL BE THE BRIGHTEST CREATED OBJECT IN HEAVEN.** 1. Usefulness is the highest form of piety. There are two extremes in sincere believers. There may be an excessive cultivation of personal piety; and there may be too much outward activity; that is, disproportioned to personal cultivation. The height of all cultivation is to grow into useful piety. Love is the crowning grace. It has two phases, complacency and beneficence. Love has its perfection in exercise. Self-denial will be honoured in Heaven. The exercise of sentimental love and theoretical love does not disturb our selfishness. They flatter our conceit without taxing our self-love. Practical love develops the highest form of strength. 2. Their own blessedness, too, will be the greatest. The useful will shine in the brightness of a peculiar happiness. There will be the joy of seeing those saved for whom they cared. What treasures of joy is every weeping labourer now laying up in

Heaven! There is the joy of receiving the love and gratitude of those whom they have saved. Learn: (1) The world's wisdom, at best, is short-sighted. (2) The study of the modes of usefulness is one of the most important branches of human pursuit. (3) Believers can afford to wait, to toil, and to suffer. The glory that awaits them is an infinite compensation. (*E. N. Kirk, D.D.*) *The Glorious Reward of the Righteous*:—In the writings of the prophets we generally find that after predictions of calamitous events consolatory promises are added for the support of the true people of God under them. Daniel is here instructed by the angel to deliver such promises as were adapted to sustain the faith, and console the minds, of the children of God. I. THE TWO DESCRIPTIONS OF PERSONS SPOKEN OF BY THE ANGEL TO DANIEL. "They that be wise." "They that turn many to righteousness." By the wise is not meant the learned, or the subtle, or the worldly-wise, or the politic, but simply those that are godly, or righteous, or that possess genuine religion. True religion is wisdom. It removes the source whence arise most of the follies of mankind. It improves whatever is excellent in human attainments and actions. It fills the mind with tranquility and peace; a kind of wisdom which few rich, great, or learned men attain. Righteousness includes the justification of men's persons, the renovation of their nature, and a practical obedience to God in heart and life flowing therefrom. The angel does not speak of turning men from one opinion, or mode of worship, or sect and party to another, but to righteousness, true, genuine, Scriptural righteousness. No wonder that the angel should single out the character of those who "turn many to righteousness," and lay such stress upon it. For by their zeal and labours men escape a misery unspeakable and eternal, and obtain a happiness that has neither measure nor end. The two characters are not opposed to each other. All that are wise will endeavour to turn others to righteousness. II. THE PROMISES MADE TO SUCH CHARACTERS. "Shine," as the unclouded sky. They shone on earth by their holy example and conversation. Then every obstruction to their shining will be removed. They shall be as conspicuous and brilliant stars in the right hand of the Creator. (*J. Benson.*) *Wise and Useful Men will Shine in Glory*:—I. THE WORK OF THE WISE. 1. They turn many to righteousness. This work is truly good, being a work of mercy to the souls of men. It is a work of vast importance, uniting in its objects the glory of God and the salvation of souls from death. 2. The means which wise men use are calculated to promote the desired end. The weapons of their "warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." They use wise instruction, earnest prayer to God, and a good example. 3. The ends accomplished are valuable beyond description. God is honoured and glorified in their salvation; truth prevails over error; virtue triumphs over vice; and these miserable sinners are made holy and happy. This work is not confined to ministers. Many obscure saints have been happy instruments of saving souls. II. THEIR FUTURE REWARD. 1. They shall shine as the firmament. The vast expanse around us, illuminated by the sun, moon, and stars, shines with a bright lustre. 2. But the glory of the stars is particularly noticed. The glory of the sun resembles the glory of our Lord, who is the Sun of righteousness. But the glory of the moon and stars resembles the glory of wise and useful men, especially in this particular—they will shine by reflection. 3. The stars are of different magnitudes. This conveys the idea that some will shine with a brighter lustre than others in the world of glory; and this must be the case if everyone be rewarded according to his works. 4. The glory of Heaven will endure. Holy and useful men shall shine there as the stars, for ever. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The Christian Minister Turning Many to Righteousness*:—1. "They that be wise." Who are they? Two kinds of wisdom are contrasted. Those whom the world counts wise, but who reject the word of the Lord. Those who are wise, because they are willing to come to God to be taught. The true wisdom is treasured up in the word of God. 2. "Turn many to righteousness." Many who possess worldly wisdom feel no desire to communicate it to others. They are proud of the possession of it, and either keep it to themselves or else impart it to others for selfish considerations; but he who is possessed of true wisdom invariably feels an earnest desire to make others partakers of it. God has been pleased specially to assign the work of turning many to righteousness to His ministers. How must the Christian minister fulfil his office? 1. He must point out to men the necessity of being turned and converted. 2. He must point out the righteousness of God, and show how men may attain to it. 3. He must lead people to Christ; teach them to renounce their own righteousness, and accept the free offers of the righteousness of Christ made in the Gospel. What result may be expected from such a ministry? (*E. Jones.*) *As the Stars for Ever*:—1. How may we turn many to righteousness? (1) By the charm of a right example. (2) By prayer. (3) By Christian admonition. 2. What will be our reward for so doing? "Shall shine as the stars." (1) The redeemed have a borrowed light. (2) Christian workers shall be like the stars in the fact that they have a light independent of each other. (3) They shall shine as the stars in clusters. (4) In swiftness of motion. (5) In

magnitude; and (6) In duration. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The Distinction of the Wise in Glory*.—I. THE NATURE OF THAT WISDOM OF WHICH THE PROPHET SPEAKS. It cannot consist in that natural sagacity of which some men are possessed in a much higher degree than others. Nor are we to understand that cunning, or political craftiness, which is sometimes to be found in the most vicious and degraded characters, and is generally the object of fear, rather than of esteem. Neither does it signify that worldly-acquired wisdom, of which Solomon says, that "in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." True wisdom originates in the "fear of the Lord," which imports the correct knowledge and supreme love of His character, combined with an esteem of His favour as our chief happiness. With regard to the influence of this wisdom, it leads to a conformity to the will of God in heart and life, to liberality, to patience under affliction, love to our neighbour, and the exercise of every Christian grace; so that it includes both the principles and practice of all true godliness. It is affirmed of this wisdom that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Now, it is of the utmost importance to be thoroughly convinced of this. Many will admit that the ways of true religion may conduct to happiness at the end; but they imagine that all the way thither is a most cheerless, melancholy, and unpleasant path. There cannot be a greater mistake than this. Wisdom's ways are now "ways of pleasantness" to those who walk in them. II. THE DUTY OF IMPARTING THIS HEAVENLY WISDOM TO OTHERS. The word translated "wise" is in the margin "teachers." This points out the plain duty of instructing the ignorant, and the quality of the instruction to be imparted. It is one of the essentials of the Sacred Book that it leads men to holiness. Scriptures become the instrument of a moral elevation. In every departure of human learning religion must be the basis upon which the superstructure is reared. We cannot commence our Christian efforts at too early an age. III. THE REWARD PROMISED TO THOSE WHO ARE DILIGENTLY EMPLOYED IN THE WORK OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION. What can the most ambitious desire beyond what is here shadowed forth in figurative language? The words evidently denote some high degree of distinction in a future state of existence, but it is not within the power of man to say precisely in what it shall consist. This happiness is not to be only realised hereafter, for true wisdom has in it the elements of present peace and joy, and is at once a foretaste and a pledge of future blessedness. There is, in the wisdom of which we speak, a principle of satisfaction not to be discovered in any mere worldly possession. It brings men into intimate communion with God, as the source of life and salvation through Christ Jesus. Whilst a glorious reward awaits those who are "wise unto salvation," a peculiar promise is made to those who "turn many to righteousness," and this should stimulate our most active exertions in the great cause of Christian education. (*Edward Pizey, B.A.*) *The Supreme Reward of a Devoted Life*.—These words recognise a broad distinction between being saved and saving others. They that are "wise," i.e., personally believe and accept Christ, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament"—like the sky illuminated by the sun; but "they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"—as suns in the everlasting kingdom! It is impossible to conceive of a more glorious reward than this. Let us glance: I. AT THE SERVICE. "They that turn many to righteousness." It is not sufficient to be wise in our own behalf to get into the kingdom ourselves. The Christian life is a "calling," a "service," in which and by which we are to honour Christ, and walk in His footsteps and strive to save our fellow-sinners, and spend and be spent for the salvation of the world. To live for self, even if it includes our own salvation, is to dishonour our Master, to live contrary to the spirit and teachings of the Gospel. II. AT THE REWARD. Shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." 1. The reward of faithful Christian service is sure. It is one of the fundamental principles of Christ's Kingdom. It was for the glory set before Him that Christ endured and suffered. And He holds out the same motive to His disciples. He does not call us to service without the assurance of a corresponding reward. 2. The reward is a discriminating and proportionate reward. Christ, the final Judge, will know the kind and measure and effectiveness of every man's service, and this reward hereafter will be in strict accordance therewith. Now, it is otherwise. The rule is not applied here. Each individual is not singled out and the exact results of his life set off to him and the reward rendered. 3. The reward will be one of light and glory unspeakable. There is nothing in nature so glorious as the stars, the centres and illuminating power of vast systems in the stellar universe. And what these are in God's vast material universe, they that turn many to righteousness will be in the spiritual kingdom of the future. 4. The reward will be enduring; "as the stars for ever and ever." Never will their lights go out. Never will they cease to roll on in their majestic orbits. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *How to Win a Soul*.—Dr. Torrey gave us two main thoughts: (1) Choose the man or woman whose salvation you are determined to compass—choose your "victim" alone with God in prayer; select someone that is (a) accessible to you—someone in Manchester, not

someone in Shanghai; (b) approachable by you—someone of your own sex, own age, own plane in social life. (2) Lay siege to the soul you desire to capture in one or all of the following ways: (a) by prayer; (b) by personal work; (c) by letter; (d) by tract. *How to Win Souls*:—One of the mightiest soul-winners I knew was Colonel Clarke, of Chicago. He is in Heaven now. He worked his business six days every week, and he kept his mission open, which he supported out of his own pocket, seven nights every week. He had a wonderful crowd of five or six hundred men every night in the year—drunkards, thieves, pickpockets, gamblers, and everything that was hopeless. I used to go and hear Colonel Clarke talk, and he was one of the dullest talkers I ever heard in my life. Yet while Colonel Clarke was talking, these men would lean over and listen to him, spellbound. Some of the greatest preachers in Chicago used to go down to help Colonel Clarke, but the men would not listen to them as they did to Colonel Clarke. When he was speaking they would listen and be converted by the score. Why? Because they knew that Colonel Clarke loved them. I heard this story. I don't know whether he told me or his wife. Colonel Clarke said: "In the early part of this mission I used to weep a great deal for these men who came in, until at last I got ashamed of my tears. Then I steeled my heart, and stopped crying. I lost in power. Then I prayed to God, 'O God give me back my tears!' And God gave me back my tears, and gave me wonderful power over these men." (R. A. Torrey.) *How to Win Souls*:—Dr. Theodore Cuyler once said concerning the 3,000 souls he had received into the Church during his ministry, "I have handled every stone." A lot of men were imprisoned in a coal-mine, as the result of an accident. Great crowds gathered to help to clear away the earth and rescue the men. An old, grey-headed man came running up, and, seizing a shovel, began to work with the strength of ten men. Someone offered to relieve the old man. "Get out of the way!" he cried. "I have two boys down there!" Nothing but love for the souls of the unsaved can help to provide a way of escape for them. Five things the personal worker needs: A converted heart, a Scripture-stored mind, a love for souls, a prayerful life, the Spirit of God. Dr. Talmage once said: "Brethren, do not go fishing for souls with a crawfish for bait, a log-chain for a line, a weaver's beam for a pole, and then scream, 'Bite, or be lost for ever!'" Spurgeon wisely says: "If a man is to be a soul-winner, there must be in him intensity of emotion as well as sincerity of heart. You may repeat the most affectionate exhortations in such a half-hearted manner that no one will be moved either by love or fear. I believe that for soul-winning there is more in this matter than in almost anything else." *The Work and the Destiny of a True Preacher*:—I. THE WORK of a true preacher. What is it? To "turn many to righteousness." To "righteousness." 1. Not to creeds. 2. Not to sects. 3. Not to ritualisms. "Circumcision or uncircumcision availeth nothing." But turn them to righteousness. 1. This is the true evangelical work. "Christ came to establish judgment [rectitude] on the earth." Righteousness was the grand theme of His ministry. He came to make men righteous in their characters, relations, and engagements. Righteous towards God, towards themselves, and towards the universe. Righteous in commerce, politics, literature, and religion. 2. This is the most difficult work. It is comparatively easy to turn men to theological opinions, to superstitious feelings, to conventional churches, and sensuous ceremonies. 3. This is the most urgent work. Unless you "turn" men to "righteousness," you do them no real good. II. THE DESTINY of a true preacher. Shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." How glorious are the stars!

"Whoever gazed upon them shining
And turned to earth without repining,
And longed for wings to fly away
And mix in their eternal day?"

How do stars shine? 1. They shine in the brightness of the sun. They revolve round one centre; from that centre they borrow the light which they reflect. So that the glory of the true preacher will come from Christ. 2. They shine in endless variety. They differ in size, bulk, and brilliancy. 3. They shine with an imperishable lustre. All the stars perhaps that now shine on this earth are as bright to-night as they were when they shed their radiance on the bowers of Eden. Redeemed spirits will in Heaven neither fall from their orbits nor grow dim. Nay, they will grow brighter with the ages. 4. They shine with an utter unconsciousness of their glory. How indifferent are the stars to the upturned eyes of admiring generations! It is characteristic of a great man that he is unconscious of his greatness; of a glorious soul, that it does not feel its lustre. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 4. **Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.**—*Capital and Labour*:—One of the most striking features of the history of the race has been the want of continuity or conformity in the progress of mankind. Nations have apparently shot up as toadstools do, in a night, and perished like them. Now and then a single

nation has made an era. The Jewish people developed a great moral power. They were not pre-eminently a moral people: yet they gave birth to great natures that understood and gave form and expression to those moralities which have become the common property of all the people of the earth, and that is about all they did. Faulty in a thousand things, they were employed simply to develop one single element—one letter of that sentence which shall spell final Christian civilisation. Then they subsided, but their work was garnered. The Grecian civilisation developed the intellectual, but in the direction of philosophy and art—not in the direction of domesticity. They had not moral power enough to cohere and maintain a permanent government. Then came the Roman civilisation. It developed itself in engineering; in the science of government pre-eminently. Its literature was a pale reflection of the Grecian. Then came the world's great plumber; and when mankind aroused out of this, they began that career of knowledge of which our text speaks. It is my purpose to show that it is that the spread of knowledge—real knowledge—among the whole of the peoples of different nations, is bringing forth fruit. The transcendent advance of intellect seems to be confined to the Western world. Still the Orient slumbers. In all previous developments the knowledge that was developed resided in the top of society. It caught only the philosophers, the men of genius, the educated men, the commercialists, the natural rulers of mankind; for where intelligence is, there rule will be. The people were yet left in deep darkness, and were held in contempt. Modern intelligence, unlike any that has preceded it, has neither been provincial nor class intelligence. The causes that have been operating are obvious, by which knowledge that begins at the top penetrates clear to the bottom. The progress of knowledge in science has been astounding. The Baconian philosophy is bearing fruit everywhere. All the more elemental sciences have sprung into existence within one hundred years—I mean, with anything like florescence and fruit. The two great discoveries that underlie or direct almost all others are evolution and the persistence of force. All knowledge has, taken on, or has tended to take on, a practical form. Plato, and the Platonic school, are tainted with the heresy that knowledge should be possessed simply for the love of knowledge, and that a man who wants knowledge for the sake of doing something with it is vulgar. The Baconian philosophy has revolutionised that. The knowledge that is diffusing itself through the world, and infusing the under classes of mankind, is largely concerned with scientific inductions, and with the realisation of scientific discoveries in the industries of the world. All knowledge has taken on a practical application, and thus it has aroused and educated the working men of the world. Great Britain may be called an empire of machines. It has been a great benefit, but at the same time it is more or less an injury. Putting machines against men is a dangerous operation. One machine will do more than thirty men. To a large extent machinery is working against opportunities. There has been a steady setting in from the individual industry toward the gigantic machine industry of the land. Where machinery is largely employed, it is generally because capital has organised itself. Where you concentrate capitalists into manufacturers you increase the producing power of material, and diminish the diffusing industry of individuals throughout the community. You improve goods and deteriorate men. Organised capital is itself a tremendous element of civilisation; but organised capital has not yet learned the gospel. It is capital that is protected—not the working man. It is not my purpose here to enter into any criticism of the rude methods of the workmen who have combined for a greater advantage. I simply consider the effect of growing intelligence upon the conditions of industry and social life in the civilised nations of the earth. It is said that a little knowledge is dangerous. I say there is nothing more dangerous than blindness; an ignorant man is a blind man. Every step of knowledge that a man can get is so much guaranteed that he will be more virtuous and more patriotic. . . . Patience, then, Hope, Courage, Justice—these should be our watchwords. We can see partial, imperfect, fulfilments, and can wait. We shall see the fulfilment of the designs of God. Society will grade itself. But there will be a just distribution of influences and results, and there will be peace and good fellowship. (*Henry Ward Beecher.*) *Science, the Intellectual Gospel*:—It is not necessary to decide to what period of the world's history the text has reference. There have been several crises in human affairs at which it has found at least a partial fulfilment. We may apply the prediction to our own age with the fullest propriety. There was never so much going and coming, and never so vast a growth of knowledge. Deal with that special form of Knowledge which is called science. Science may be described as the knowledge of nature reduced to system. It examines facts, arranges or classifies them, and tries to detect their hidden law. Science is a fact of modern growth. It has sprung forth full armed in these latter days. The world of Greece and Rome was wonderful in its way, but it had no science, in our modern sense of the word. Science dates very much from Bacon. Not entirely. There were other men of science before him. And science has grown wonderfully. It has amazingly enriched

human life. It has quickened, too, all the neutral powers. What is there that we do not tabulate and catalogue? To this progress of science we can make no objection. People who object against science in reality do not know what they mean. "What's the use of screaming at the calm facts of creation?" said the wise American. If fact is on one side, and our dislikes or prejudices, or narrow theories, are on the other, it requires no prophet to tell which shall win. For fact proves itself. I do not admit that there is any inconsistency or opposition between religion and science. They may look at the same facts from different points of view. Yet, though perfectly at one, science and religion are not quite the same thing. Science is related to religion as one sister is to another. There are many questions of which you can scarcely tell whether they are properly scientific or religious. Yet religion is more than science. You may be steeped up to the lips and the eyes in science, and be without religion altogether. Science has a message which, as far as it goes, is a true gospel, a real good news. It promises a great increase of human convenience and comfort. The world is not nearly so pleasant a place to live in as it might be. It promises to give us subjects of thought and investigation which will add greatly to the interest of life. And nobly is the promise fulfilled. It promises a vast enlargement of our view of the world. It will widen the boundaries of thought as to the facts of this wonderful universe; by revealing both the infinitely little and the infinitely great. It promises a great amelioration of our social arrangements. I accept to the full the gospel of science. But no science can fill the place of the Saviour. Science is only for time; it has no gospel as to eternity. Science has no gospel for the sinful and suffering millions. Science has no power of moral inspiration, no spiritual force which can lift the soul of a tempted, sinful man to goodness, holiness, purity. Do not oppose science, but go beyond science, enter the spiritual world. Draw near to God and to His Christ, and then, when knowledge shall vanish away, you may be found doing the will of God, and so may abide for ever. (*J. F. Stevenson, LL.D.*) *Results of the Exploring Spirit of the Age*:—One of the most remarkable characteristics in these late times is a moving, roving disposition of mankind. A very great proportion of human beings are seen actuated by a restless impulse to go hither and thither. Impatience of the sameness of life, business, friendship, curiosity, the spirit of enterprise, religious zeal, are carrying multitudes in all directions. This consequence has necessarily followed—a very great increase of knowledge. We are not to regard this as wholly an improvement in the character of these our times. How many do it from no motive of seeking wisdom, or solid good of any kind! Some seem to "run to and fro" for the very purpose of attracting into themselves all the diversified vices and vanities anywhere to be found. A strong magnetism for the attraction of all congenial evil. But turn to the more favourable view of the subject. There has resulted a vast increase of knowledge, which may be of immense value and instruction. 1. Knowledge of the natural world, the whole order of nature on this globe. 2. The remains and monuments of ancient times. We have now a much more comprehensive information of the actual state and quality of the human race. We find that man is everywhere the same; but the human nature is miserably and horribly perverted and depraved. 3. Every extension of our geographical knowledge has enlarged and aggravated the hideous account of what we are to call religion among the human race. All this displays what man is. His reason is as perverted as his moral dispositions. 4. Knowledge reveals the sameness in all parts of the world of the operation in the mind of the converting Christian truth. Our increasing knowledge of this wide world should render us more fit to live to good purpose in it, and at length to leave it. (*The Evangelist.*) *The Spread of Knowledge and Scientific Discovery*:—These words bring before us a great increase of knowledge as one main feature of the last times announced to us in the close of this remarkable prophecy. 1. THE PREDICTION ITSELF IS MOST REMARKABLE. Only two of the prophets were named by our Saviour in His teachings. Isaiah and Daniel. Our Lord Himself exhorts His people to pay particular attention to the prophecy Daniel has given. Daniel's last prophecy closes with the words of the text. 1. What is meant by "the time of the end?" The last times, in contrast to some earlier period. It may apply to three periods. (1) All the times of the Christian dispensation. The meaning of the prophecy was not to be understood until the Messiah had appeared, and the light of the Gospel had begun to dawn. Until then they must be content to wait. The days of the apostles, when the Christian dispensation began, were, compared with former ages, a time of great social intercourse and large increase of knowledge. It was an age of remarkable civilization; the knowledge of natural science was greatly increased. (2) The later times of the Christian dispensation; eminently to the period of the great and blessed Reformation. The times of the Reformation were marked by the two features which are mentioned in the text—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (3) The times in which we are now living, that period of the world's history which commenced with the outbreak of the first French Revolution, and reaches to the present hour. II. THE

NOTORIOUS AND STRIKING FACT WHICH CORRESPONDS IN OUR DAYS TO THIS INSPIRED PREDICTION. 1. The means of intercourse were never so abundant as in the present age. It is marked above all others for multiplying the means of rapid communication. The motives for intercourse have been increased in the same proportion. The whole world has been thrown open to our researches.* The Colonial empire of our own country is a remarkable feature of the present age. The whole earth is in a manner at our feet, and thus there is a political necessity for our people to be in rapid intercourse with all the countries on the face of the globe. These two things have completely changed the whole character of the age in which we live. The inspired prediction also says, "knowledge shall be increased." 1. Natural knowledge shall be increased. This seems necessarily to be implied. True, there was some increase of knowledge in the Augustan age. In the days when the Gospel was first preached there were discoveries in science and art of no mean importance. There was a great increase in natural knowledge in the time of the Reformation, when printing and gunpowder, and the telescope and microscope, were first invented. But of all ages, beyond all comparison, our own age is that in which natural knowledge has been most increased. Look at the grand compartments of human science, and see what an immense development every one of them has received. (1) The science of the heavens. (2) Of the earth. (3) The elements which compose both earth and the heavens. The words also apply to historical science, the knowledge of the world's history, including natural knowledge, political knowledge, spiritual or Christian knowledge. Such is the wonderful fact spread before our eyes, what practical lessons then may be gathered from the words of the text? (1) The wonderful nature of God's foreknowledge. (2) The value of Divine truth, and of an insight into the prophecies of the Word of God. (3) The wonderful and impressive character of the times in which we live. We are in the midst of wonderful events already past, the precursors of something still more wonderful and glorious, the coming of Christ, and the establishment of that Kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (*T. R. Birks, M.A.*) *The Advancement of Knowledge, the Fulfilment of Prophecy*:—These words lie in the very midst of a portion of Daniel's prophecy, which reiterates the glories of the Saviour's triumph over sin and Satan, and which proclaims the ineffable blessedness of the redeemed, as participating in the victory of the "Lord God Omnipotent," who shall then reign, His name being one, and His people one. 1. "Many shall run to and fro." At the time when the prophet uttered these words, the intercourse between men and nations was circumscribed to an extent, of which we, in these modern days, can have no conception. With Greece and Rome, as civilization advanced, the change became more marked and definite. Long after Christianity had prevailed, the transit from country to country was confined to the magnates of the earth. Who that estimates aright these times can fail to perceive that the literal accomplishment of Daniel's prophecy has begun? The untravelled man is now the exception to the rest of his fellows. 2. "Knowledge shall be increased." Much of the knowledge which now prevails upon comparatively indifferent subjects was enjoyed by the ancients, and made the subject of their ardent inquiry. Few in the present day are capable of closer reasoning than the learned of Greece and Rome; in literature they were certainly our equals, if not our superiors, and in their writings, still extant, we trace talents of the most transcendent order. But in all these instances, knowledge was confined to the few. And, after all, what was the knowledge even these possessed? It was "of the earth, earthy"; it was circumscribed and bounded by the trammels of time; it soared no higher than the sensual and the intellectual; it elevated no one to a perfect acquaintance with himself: it taught not the attributes of the one true God. The truths of the Gospel had to struggle for acceptance up to the fifteenth century. Since then the prophecy of Daniel has been remarkably fulfilled. While knowledge is increasing upon the earth, it ought not to be forgotten that God uses men as instruments for its diffusion. (*John Edmond Cox, M.A.*) *The Missionary Movement of the Age*:—I. THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT IN PROGRESS. The knowledge that is to be increased is to "turn many to righteousness." This by imparting knowledge from God's Word and the Gospel of Christ. This is the work, the errand, of faithful missionaries abroad, this their message to Jew and Gentile. Wherever men are turned to Christ, they will proceed to turn with abhorrence from the love and the practice of all unrighteousness and sin. Note their number; they are "many." Observe their activity; they "run." They are labourers, not loiterers. The promise of the text is not confined to ministers or missionaries. All friends and servants of Christ are included. II. THE SUCCESS OF THE MOVEMENT. "Knowledge shall be increased." The knowledge by which "many shall be purified," etc. There shall be good success in the missionary movement faithfully made. Those "sent of God" shall not run in vain, nor labour in vain; though they may sometimes be discouraged. The prophecy is a promise, and like all the promises of God in Christ Jesus, it is true. (*John Hambleton, M.A.*) *An Ever-growing Argument for Evangelism*:—Our age realises the scene

here predicted. This generation is pre-eminently migratory; men are everywhere on the move; a restless impulse has seized the world; and the fixed habits which bound our ancestors to their hearth are giving way. Different principles stimulate men in this incessant migration. The intellectual result of all these intermigrations is knowledge. Knowledge increases as men journey to distances and mingle with foreigners. Their knowledge of the physical world increases. Their knowledge of man increases. I shall use this necessary augmentation of knowledge as an argument for the necessity of propagating the Gospel. **I. THE MORE SECULAR KNOWLEDGE THE WORLD HAS, THE MORE NEED IT HAS OF THE GOSPEL.** 1. Mere knowledge effects no radical change in the great principles of human character. The sources of all action are in the heart. Our likes and dislikes are our controlling impulses. Now does secular knowledge change the heart? Does it make a dishonest man honest, a selfish man generous, and a sensual man spiritual? Let the history of intelligent nations answer. Greece, Rome. Knowledge may induce and qualify a man to act out the evil principles of his heart in a more refined and less offensive manner. But you may multiply schools on every hand, fill the nation with secular knowledge, and still the springs of morals may remain as polluted as ever. Nothing but the Gospel can act upon the heart. 2. The more knowledge, the greater will be the power for evil. As the world grows in knowledge, it grows in power to trample upon the laws of God, to poison the fountains of influence, and to rebel against the interest of the universe. The power of the Devil is the power of knowledge. 3. The more knowledge, the larger the amount of responsibility. Here, then, is my argument. If secular knowledge is destined to increase, if this knowledge has not the power to change the heart, whilst it increases man's power to do evil, and enhances his responsibility, ought not our earnestness in the propagation of the Gospel to rise with the increase of general intelligence? **II. THE MORE KNOWLEDGE THE WORLD HAS, THE MORE LIKELY IS IT TO RECEIVE THE GOSPEL.** We rejoice in the fact that the Gospel is suited to man in the lowest stage of development, but we contend that the more intelligent a man is the more favourable his condition for Gospel influence. 1. The more intelligent a man is the more evidence he will have to convince him of the truth of the Gospel. 2. The more illustrations he will have of the power of the Gospel. 3. The more indications he will see for the necessity of the Gospel. 4. The more fitted he will be to appreciate the discoveries of the Gospel. The more knowledge he has, the better will he be able to appreciate the wisdom of the scheme, the righteousness of the claims, and the adaptation of the provisions of the Gospel. (1) The character of the Gospel encourages this impression. (2) The effects of missionary labour encourage the impression. (3) The example of the first ministers of Christianity. They selected the most enlightened and influential parts of the world for their spheres of labour. From this subject we may learn the glory of the Gospel, and our encouragement to diffuse it. (*Homilist.*) **Knowledge Increased by Many Running To and Fro:—I. AN END TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.** "Knowledge shall be increased." The prophetic parts of Scripture describe a happier state of the world than has yet been witnessed; and this shall be introduced by an increase of knowledge. 1. The faculty which man has for acquiring knowledge forms the most obvious distinction of our species. 2. It is to the credit of the Christian religion that it is founded on knowledge. 3. The knowledge of God shall be increased. God is partially known by His works, but fully described in His Word. Experimental knowledge is necessary. This will lead us to love God; it will produce confidence in Him, and also obedience. 4. The knowledge of God will lead to the acquisition of useful knowledge of every kind. Religion enlarges the mind, illuminates the understanding, rectifies the judgment, and teaches men to think more clearly and more comprehensively on subjects of general science. **II. MEANS USED FOR ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.** "Many shall run to and fro." God works by agents and instruments. 1. The number of gospel ministers. In some periods of the world the advocates of truth have been reduced to a very small number; now they are many. 2. The prompt activity of ministers. Preaching is figured to us as running. 3. The sphere of ministers' operation. The world. Inferences: (1) The great end of public preaching is to increase knowledge. (2) How careful and diligent should ministers be in acquiring knowledge. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 5—13. **Then I, Daniel, looked.**—*The Epilogue to the Vision:—*Hitherto the angel has prophesied the development of history, without adding any remark or exhortation. Here, however, he concludes his predictions by adding the strongest possible incitement to faithful perseverance; an incitement which must have had all the stronger effect since, though it is occasionally referred to in earlier prophets, the resurrection had never been brought forward so distinctly and powerfully, and especially had never been shown in its connection with retribution. Turning to the history of the period referred to, we learn that the hope of resurrection to eternal life did sustain the sufferers of the

Maccabean times, under the infliction of the most dreadful cruelties. Wittingly, too, does the allusion to the resurrection at the last bring the whole series of predictions to a close, and lead the angel to say, "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even unto the time of the end." Viewed in connection with the final judgment, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is not only a support to those who are suffering wrongfully, but also a warning to all who are dealing unrighteously with God and His people. The present life is connected most intimately and inseparably with that which is to come. Now is for every one of us the germ of hereafter. With what importance does this invest the present life! Observe, also, the reward of the working saint. Probably the two clauses, "They that be wise," "They that turn," etc., form one parallelism, after the manner of the Hebrew poets. They who turn many to righteousness shall be honoured with bright and particular glory in the Heavenly state. Here is the grand aim toward which Christian ambition should be directed. Finally, we have here the rest of the waiting saint. Do not disquiet yourself about the future. Leave that in God's hands. You shall rest in Him during the remainder of your life on earth; and when that shall end, you shall rest with Him. (*William M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?—*The Philosophy of Wonders*:—There are many things at which we need not wonder. There are marvellous things in the kingdom of nature at which we continue to wonder. Man himself, as fearfully and wonderfully made, is as much a source of wonder to the greatest of modern philosophers as he was to the sages of Greece. But what are all the wonders of the material universe in comparison with the more sublime and complicated wonders of Divine grace and providence? These are especially the wonders that will never cease. No man can read the Bible without seeing a very large number of strange historical facts in it, and coincidences. 1. Wonders have an educational value. Coleridge says, "In wonder all philosophy began, in wonder it ends, and admiration fills up the interspace; but the first wonder is the offspring of ignorance, and the last is the parent of devotion. To a child everything is wonderful. Its sense of wonder is the spring of its desire to know. If it be possible to find a man, or a community, who has ceased to wonder, then you have a man—or a community—in a state of mental decay or mortification, for without the sense of wonder and the desire to know, mental, moral, and spiritual progress is impossible. 2. Wonders are God's voice in man's soul against materialism. They speak to us of things unseen and eternal. They rouse us to thought and action. Wonders for the mind and heart are as much needed as bread and water for our bodies. 3. Wonders are a kind of protest against rationalism. We are helped by reason in a thousand different ways. But there is something above and beyond reason. Reason has its limits as well as its laws. 4. Wonders are helps to faith. We may wonder at that chemistry in the field of nature by which God gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, or how He makes the grass to grow for the cattle; but enough that we know whom we have believed, and can pray as children, "Give us this day our daily bread." (*J. Kerr Campbell.*)

Ver. 8. And I heard, but I understood not.—*The Aspect of the Times*:—I. CONTEMPLATE SOME OF THESE WONDERS—THE CALAMITIES OF THE CHURCH. 1. It is a wonder that the Church of God should be exposed to calamity. 2. That they should sometimes be so great and overwhelming. 3. That they have come visibly from the hand of God, and are accompanied with evident tokens of His displeasure. 4. The duration of the calamity is often another wonder. 5. And it is a wonder that the Church's calamities produce so little effect. Now proceed to specify some particulars in our present situation which furnish ground for anxious wonder. (1) It is a dark and portentous spot in our sky that the progress of knowledge should be accompanied with so much infidelity and irreligion. (2) Another ominous cloud is the engrossing attention to politics, and the indifference or aversion shown to religious privileges amidst the struggle for those of a civil nature. (3) Another is that those who had so long pleaded for a national reformation of religion should have abandoned that plea at the very time when Providence seemed to present the opportunity of prosecuting it with some measure of success. (4) Another, that a spirit of determined hostility against the religious establishments of the country should have displayed itself at the very time when a revival of evangelical religion began to make its appearance in them, and internal exertions were making to reform their abuses. (5) Another, that the late revival of evangelical doctrine should have been followed and checked by enthusiastical extremes. II. THE EXERCISE AND CONDUCT BECOMING TO US IN CONTEMPLATING AND ENQUIRING INTO THESE WONDERS. 1. Such enquiries should be conducted with holy adoration of the doings of God. 2. With deep humility. 3. In the exercise of fervent prayer. 4. With firm faith in the preservation of the interests of religion, and the deliverance of the Church. (*T. M'Crie D.D.*) *The*

Reservations of God:—Who can be so perplexing as God? "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." We think we have got an answer when we have got a reply. There is a great sound of thunder in the air, but what it all means not even Daniel can tell. Yet the thunder is very useful; the thunder is the minister of God. There are mountains that have never been climbed; if they had been climbed they had been vulgarised. The pinnacles of the church were not made to be stood upon. Daniel asked a question and received all these words in reply, and no man knows what they mean. There they are, and they are useful every one of them. Who would be without the mystery? Who would have an earth without the sky? it would not be worth having. Yet the earth is underfoot and comparatively manageable; we can dig it, plough it, put stones into it with a view of putting up a house which the earth will always try to cast out; for the earth does not like masonry, the earth does not like to be violated. But the sky no man has touched. The sky is the best part of us. We get all our vegetables out of the sky, though we think we do not. All the flowers are out of the sun, though we think we planted them. So easily may we be misled by half-truths and by mere aspects of facts! Yet we cannot do without astronomy. We may have it as a science, it is not every mouth that can pronounce long words, but we must have it as a sovereign and gracious effect. What, then, have we to do? We have to do three things. First we have to attend to the practical. Many men have been trying to make out the meaning of the twelve hundred and ninety days who have never kept one of the commandments. If we are to understand the apocalypse we must first keep the commandments. If we would enter Heaven we must keep the commandments first. Do the little which you do know. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" O thou foolish soul, trying to make out the meaning of the twelve hundred and ninety days, and forgetting to pay the wages of the hireling, forgetting to cool the brow of fever. Then, secondly, we are not to deny the mysterious. The Bible will always be the most mysterious of books. Why shall it always be the most mysterious of writings? Because it contains God. No man can find out the Almighty unto perfection. He cannot be searched or comprehended or weighed in a balance or set forth in words and figures. So long as the Bible tabernacles God it will be an awful sanctuary. Then, in the third place, we have to learn patience. Personally, I am waiting for God's comment upon God's words. There are many persons who have handled the Bible indiscreetly. They have been keen in finding discrepancies and contradictions; they have busied themselves about signatures, they have asked whether Moses signed this, and David signed that, and Daniel signed the other; and they have got up a *post hoc* case in favour of the Bible. On the whole they have come to think that possibly bits of it may be inspired. I have not reached any such conclusion. All I know of it, in the matter of conduct, and elevation of soul, and prospect of salvation, is inspired enough for me; and as for the parts I do not understand I am waiting, and perhaps when God comes to read it to me I shall find that, not God, but the critics have been wrong. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Searching into the Deep Things of God:*—I once heard Mr. George Muller say that he liked to read his Bible through again and again, and he liked specially to read those portions of the Bible which he did not understand. That seems rather a singular thing to say, does it not? For what profit can come to us if we do not understand what we read? The good man put it to me like this: he said, "There is a little boy who is with his father, and there is a good deal of what his father says that he comprehends, and he takes it in, and he is very pleased to hear his father talk. But sometimes his father speaks of things that are quite beyond him, yet the boy likes to listen; he learns a little here and there, and by-and-by, when he has listened year after year, he begins to understand what his father says as he never would have done if he had run away whenever his father began to talk beyond his comprehension." So is it with the prophecies, and other deep parts of God's Word. If you read them once or twice, but do not comprehend them, still study them, give your heart to them, for, by-and-by, the precious truth will permeate your spirit, and you will insensibly drink wisdom which otherwise you never would have received. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 9. **For the words are: loosed**—*The Sealed Book:*—Daniel, having heard of the great troubles and afflictions that the Church was to meet with in the last days, was desirous to know how long they should continue, and to have some more particular information concerning the issue of them. The angel said, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." As if it had been said, Daniel, what hath been revealed to you already is enough to support your faith and hope, and the faith and hope of my people in future ages, amidst all the troubles and trials that they may be exercised with, and this you must be contented with in the meantime; for a full explication of the mysteries of Divine providence, of God's dispensations towards the Church and her members, such an explication of them as will leave no darkness, doubt, or

difficulty remaining, is not to be expected during the present state of things. In these words we have: I. A SEASONABLE ADMONITION, "Go thy way, Daniel." Mind your own business; apply yourself to the performance of your present duty. 1. A needful caution. Not to indulge an unwarrantable curiosity of prying into those things which God hath not seen meet to reveal, into the secrets of His government and providence. 2. A suitable exhortation. To apply himself to his present work, and set about the performance of present duty, leaving events to the Lord. II. THE REASON FOR THE ADMONITION. "For the words are sealed up," etc. There was something intricate and mysterious in the prophecy concerning the Church's troubles and deliverance that would not be fully unfolded until it was accomplished. By "the time of the end" may be understood the time when the several predictions concerning the troubles and trials that the Church was to meet with should be fulfilled. In every future period new discoveries would be made of the gracious designs and mystery of Providence respecting the Church till all were finished and unfolded. The end of time may be meant. A seal denotes security, as well as secrecy or concealment. When, therefore, it is said that the words were sealed till the time of the end, it might imply that there would be an exact accomplishment of all God's promises concerning the Church, whatever difficulties appeared to be in the way. 1. Let us observe some things in general concerning those discoveries that God is pleased to make of His mind and will to His people in this world. (1) All true believers are privileged with some discoveries of the mind of God that others are unacquainted with. They are all taught of God; not doctrinally, or externally, by the word only, but internally, effectually, and savingly, by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit shows them many things concerning Christ; concerning His person and undertaking, righteousness, grace and salvation, which are hid from the rest of mankind. (2) The discoveries God makes to His people He ordinarily makes to them by means of His Word. The Holy Scriptures are sufficient to "make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The work of the Spirit now is, not to make any new revelations of the will of God, but to open the understandings and enlighten the minds of men to perceive, and make a suitable improvement of, what is already revealed in the written word. (3) God doth not reveal His mind to His people all at once, but gradually, and as He sees meet. (4) The discoveries which God makes of His mind and will to His people in this world are still imperfect. (5) Even saints of God are too apt to indulge a sinful curiosity in prying into those things which God hath not been pleased to reveal, and which it is not necessary for them to know in their present state. (6) However dark and intricate the dispensations of Divine providence may be, so much is made known as is sufficient to support faith and hope, and to encourage believers in the way of duty. 2. Some of the discoveries which God makes to His people, which are sufficient to direct them in the way of duty. These discoveries may concern the people of God themselves. That He loves them. That the covenant He has made is ordered in all things and sure, immutable and everlasting. That there is a fulness of grace deposited in Christ as the Mediator of the New Covenant. That He will never leave them. That all dispensations shall turn to their advantage. These discoveries may concern the Church in general. Such as that all future troubles of the Church were foreknown and appointed by God. That they would only continue for a limited time. That all the promises would certainly be accomplished. That all the Church's sufferings would have a glorious issue. 3. Many things are still dark to God's people, and must remain so as long as they continue in the world. There are still things dark in the Church's troubles, in the promises of God concerning His Church. Believers have but imperfect views of the privileges conferred upon them; and of the truths and doctrines taught in the Word of God. There is mystery in that gracious work which God has begun, and is carrying on, in souls. There is a veil upon that glory and happiness reserved for them in the other world. There are reasons why we should attend to present day, and not pry into the unrevealed. (1) Inquiries into those things which God hath not been pleased to reveal are unprofitable and vain. (2) What God hath clearly revealed is sufficient for their direction and encouragement in the way of duty. (3) It is the will of God that His people, while they are in this world, should live by faith, and walk by faith. (4) When the people of God mind their present duty, they greatly honour God. They give Him the glory due unto His name. (5) All that is now dark and mysterious either in the purposes or promises of God, or in the dispensations of His providence, will at last be clearly manifested and unfolded. (D. Wilson.)

Ver. 10. **And none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.**—*A Virtuous Mind the Best Help to Understand True Religion:*—To seek a man's true and final interest, by parting with some present and inconsiderable advantages for the sake of more and much greater ones to come, is the proper act of wisdom; and the general character of folly is the purchasing of some trivial present benefit at the hazard

of much better and more valuable things in reversion. Folly is but another name for sin. To "understand" may be taken in two senses. Either the understanding of particular providences, or the understanding the true nature of religion in general. Consider the text according to the latter interpretation. The proposition they contain is this:—A virtuous disposition of mind is the best help, and a vicious inclination the greatest hindrance, to a right understanding of the doctrine of true religion. What is there in the nature of things themselves, and what there is in the positive appointment of God, which makes a virtuous disposition so great a help, and a vicious inclination so great a hindrance, to a right understanding in matters of religion. 1. There is something in the nature of things themselves, something in the very frame and constitution of the mind of man, something in the nature and tendency of all religious truths, which helps to verify the general proposition. In a mind virtuously disposed, there is a native agreeableness to the principles of true religion; in like manner as in a healthful body the organs are fitted to their proper objects; and as in the frame of the material world, everything is suited to its proper use and employment. In the study of every human science there is some particular previous temper, some certain predisposition of mind, which makes men fit for that particular study, and apt to understand it with easiness and delight; generally and specially, a love to that particular science, and a high esteem of its value and usefulness. The same holds true in proportion in religious matters likewise. A general love of virtue, an equitable, fair, and charitable spirit, and a just sense of the necessity and reasonableness of obeying God's commands, is the first principle and beginning of religion. Practice and experience in the course of a virtuous life, and in the obedience of God's commands, is in continuance the best information and perpetual improvement of a man's understanding and judgment in the knowledge of Divine truths. "He that keepeth the law of the Lord, getteth the understanding thereof," says the wise Son of Sirach. He that practises what he knows, improves his knowledge continually by that practice. By actions, even more than by speculation and study, is the understanding of practical truths enlarged. There is a spirit and a life in the discourse of a righteous man, proceeding from the sincerity of an upright heart, which no skill or art can imitate. In religion, there is no man truly wise and knowing but he that has lived like a Christian; instead of disputing about it. On the other hand, a vicious disposition blinds men's eyes, corrupts their principles, and subverts their judgments. It prejudices men against the truth, and causes them even to hate it, and become professed enemies to it. Now we consider what there is in the positive appointment and constitution of God, by which we are assured that none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise (righteous) shall understand. 1. In general, God will take care that righteous and piously-disposed persons shall attain to so much understanding as is necessary for their own particular salvation. 2. By the secret influence and assistance of His Holy Spirit, God will peculiarly direct and enlighten those that are truly sincere. But where there is a vicious inclination, and an affection to wickedness, there men's minds are not only blinded by the natural consequence of such a disposition, but God moreover withdraws His Spirit from them, and the Holy Ghost will not dwell in a heart that takes pleasure in unrighteousness. Indeed, God justly permits wicked men, when they obstinately refuse to hear Him, to be deceived by the Evil One to their own destruction. From what has been said, we may infer: (1) That wicked men have no reason to complain for their not being able to understand religion, and infidels no excuse for their not believing it. (2) From hence appears the reason of our Saviour's speaking so much in parables. (3) We may observe how it comes to pass that faith, which is generally looked upon as an act of the understanding, and so not in our own power, is yet in the New Testament always required and insisted upon as a moral virtue. The reason is, because faith, in the Scripture sense, is not barely an act of the understanding, but a mixt act of the will also, consisting very much in that simplicity and unprejudicedness of mind which our Saviour calls "receiving the Kingdom of God as a little child." (4) There is then no need of an infallible guide on earth, or of an unerring Church. All necessary truth is sufficiently made known in Scripture. (5) Yet this must be so understood as to be a security, not against all, but against fatal mistakes. The best and most pious persons may in many things err, but their errors cannot be dangerous, or of final ill consequence; for in things absolutely necessary to salvation the wicked only can be void of understanding. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Ability to Understand a Moral rather than an Intellectual Quality*.—This passage seems to warrant three inferences of importance. (1) That though God for certain reasons saw fit to give this revelation of the future to Daniel at a certain date, He did not intend it to be understood for centuries; since, whatever may be the exact limits of the "time of the end," it could not include more than the course of this dispensation, the commencement of which was several centuries distant when Daniel wrote. (2) That even when in the lapse of ages the meaning of this prophecy should become apparent to some, even when knowledge "should be

increased," and the wise understand, it was the will of God that it should still remain a dark mystery to others, that "none of the wicked should understand." (3) That the comprehension or ignorance of this prophecy, when the time for its being understood at all arrived, would depend rather on the moral than on the intellectual state of those who should study it. The wise alone should understand it; the wicked should not. (*H. Gratlan Guinness.*)

Ver. 13. But go thou thy way till the end be.—*Go Thou Thy Way*:—I. GOD HAS A SPECIAL WAY FOR EACH MAN, AND A GENERAL WAY COMMON TO ALL. 1. The special way. Christianity teaches that God is a Being of infinite love and wisdom, who will guide every man into his special way of thought if we seek to do His will. We have neither the right to complain of, nor to attempt to force the belief of other persons who conscientiously follow their own way of thinking and acting, providing their action be within the lines of morality. The text says, "Go thou"—not our way—"Go thou in thy way." Let men honestly doubt, if they like; it will do them good. I like the idea that each man has a special way appointed for him. Each man is simply a part of God's plan. The Heavenly Father is the Architect, Sculptor, Modeller of humanity, and He is leading us aright and guiding the world in the proper path. Let each one of us dare to believe that our life is a plan of God. 2. The general way in which God asks all of us to go. Is it not the way of the cross? Until a man takes up his cross, and guides himself by the example of Jesus, it is impossible for him to attain the highest manhood; for the most divine life on earth is that which bears a cross for the benefit of another. Is not the way in which we are all called to go the way of repentance? Is not this also a way that must be approved by every sound thinking man? Though it is a hard way, it is a safe way; for repentance is the passage from death to life. And is not the general way for all of us that we should be religiously decided? We are not to hesitate and turn about, but be decided, making a bold plunge in our determination to be Christ's, and to live to do good. Let us go in the general way appointed for all—the way of love. In all our doings with our fellow-men, let us go and come in the way of forbearance and compassion and love; and let us go in these ways because God is our Father and men our brethren. II. GOD EXHORTS US TO GO IN THE APPOINTED WAY. "Go thou thy way till the end be." It is easy to find fault with another; it is marvellously difficult to do right one's self. Thou shalt stand in thy lot, the lot that you are now making, the end you are now preparing. Lord Beaconsfield gave this advice to Greece—"Your country has a great future; therefore be patient and wait." This advice he carried out in his own life. Defeated, he learned to wait. While he waited, he worked. Many men fail because, though they wait, they do nothing. These are the Micawber class of men, who wait for something to turn up instead of setting to work and turning up something. Let us get into the right way, and resolve with a resolution which will carry you on to the end. Be determined, be resolute. The text says, "Go thou thy way." The way God has appointed for you. Our Lord's way is the safest and best. (*W. Birch.*) *Good Men and the Future*:—The cry: "Oh, my Lord, what shall the end of these things be?" is often wrung from the lips of the sufferer about his pains, the friend about the woes of friends, the patriot about the turmoils of his country, the philanthropist about the state of the world. I. THE BEWILDERMENT OF GOOD MEN CONCERNING THE FUTURE. As we have already hinted, there is frequently this bewilderment: 1. About the future of the world. How shall Christianity conquer heathendom? So also about: 2. The future of individuals. Recalling the unexpected events in our own past, and the surprises we have seen in the biographies of others, what may not befall us? We are led to reflect upon—II. THE EPOCH WHEN THIS BEWILDERMENT WILL TERMINATE. The "end" will come. This is: 1. The anticipation of universal conscience. 2. The prediction of Scripture. 3. The necessity of the present state of things. Chaos cries out for cosmos, as winter does for spring. This "end" may come to the individual at death, to the race at the great "day of the Lord." III. THE DUTY OF GOOD MEN WITH REGARD TO THAT EPOCH. There is not only: 1. Hopeful expectation of it, though that is clearly taught; but: 2. Progress towards it. "Go thy way"; not simply drift through the time-spaces that intervene. IV. THE DESTINY OF GOOD MEN AT THAT EPOCH. 1. Personal existence is implied. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot." 2. Right condition is assured, "thy lot." 3. Perfect blessedness is promised. "Thou shalt rest." With such a prediction the good man is fortified for all the pilgrimage, battles, storms, that are his present experience. (*Homilist.*) *Our Way and its End*:—The opening words of the verse do not so much speak of the "end," as of what shall be "till the end." Till the end it will be said to each man separately and individually, "Go thy way." I. THE SOLEMNITY OF THIS MESSAGE. In turning your thought from "the end of all things," and fixing them on the separate and successive deaths of individual men, I lose much that is solemn and impressive in

grandeur, but I gain in the solemnity and impressiveness of personal interest. Let us realize it. God shall one day speak thus to you and to me—"Go thou thy way." In the individuality and solitariness of our dying hour we see its solemnity. II. ITS CERTAINTY. The "end of all things" can be made the subject of doubt, and it influences but few. But we feel that if there is one thing surer than another, it is that "it is appointed for all men once to die." I. THE MEANING OF THIS MESSAGE. When we are called to "go our way," it is implied that this life is not the end of our being, that death does not put an end to our active existence. At death we only go away from time into eternity, from the world that is seen into the world that is not seen. At death we enter into an eternity of conscious and continued activity. The message that calls us away indicates the direction in which we are to go. "Thy way"—the way in which thou art walking. The way in which thou now art walking is now irrevocably, eternally, unalterably, "thy way"—the way which thou hast chosen, and in which thou must go on for ever. Onward and onward, at death, each shall go in his own way. Sinners and saints shall continue to go on in their respective ways. Perpetuity is implied in this going our own way, perpetual progression; and perhaps also is implied accelerating speed. Are we, then, now walking in the way in which we would wish to go on for ever? (*W. Grant.*) A *New Year's Message*:—Daniel had been receiving partial insight into the future by the visions recorded in previous chapters. He sought for clearer knowledge, and was told that the book of the future was sealed and closed, so that no further enlightenment was possible for him. He is bidden back to the common duties of life, and is enjoined to pursue his patient course with an eye on the end to which it conducts, and to leave the unknown future to unfold itself as it may. I. THE JOURNEY. This is a threadbare metaphor for life. The figure implies perpetual change. The landscape glides by us, and we travel on through it. If life is truly represented under the figure of a journey, nothing is more certain than that we sleep in a fresh hospice every night, and leave behind us every day scenes that we shall never traverse again. What madness, then, to be putting out eager hands to clutch what must be left, and so to contradict the very law under which we live. Another of the commonplaces that spring from this image is that life is continuous. There are no convulsions in life. To-morrow is the child of to-day, and yesterday was the father of this day. What we are springs from what we have been, and settles what we shall be. We make our characters by the continuity of our small actions. Let no man think of his life as if it were a heap of unconnected points. It is a chain of links that are forged together inseparably. Therefore, we ought to see to it that the direction in which our life runs is one that conscience and God can approve. The metaphor further suggests that no life runs its fitting course unless there is continuous effort. There will be crises when we have to run with panting breath and strained muscles. There will be long stretches of commonplace where speed is not needed, but pegging away is, where the one duty is persistent continuousness in a course. Mark the emphasis of the text, "Go thy way till the end." You older men, do not fancy that in the deepest aspect any life has ever a period in it which a man may "take it easy." You may do that in regard to outward things, but in regard to all the deepest things of life no man may ever lessen his diligence until he has attained the goal. Until the end is reached we have to use all our power, and to labour as earnestly, and guard ourselves as carefully, as at any period before. And not only "till the end," but go thy way "to the end." Let the thought that the road has a termination be ever present with us all. There is a great deal of so-called devout contemplation of death which is anything but wholesome. It is more unwholesome still never to let the contemplation of that end come into our calculations of the future. Is it not strange that the purest thing is the thing that we forget most of all. II. THE RESTING-PLACE. "Thou shalt rest." This is a gracious way of speaking about death. It is a thought which takes away a great deal of the grimness and terror with which men generally invest the close. It is a thought the force of which is very different in different stages and conditions of life. Few, if any, however, but have some burden to carry, and know what weariness means. The final cessation of work has a double character. The only way to turn death into the opening of the gate of our resting-place is setting our heart's desires and our spirit's trust on the Lord Jesus. III. THE HOME. "Stand"—that is Daniel's way of preaching the doctrine of the Resurrection. "Thy lot." Image from the security of the Israelites in Canaan. Humanity has not attained its perfection until the perfected spirit is mated with a perfect body. God is the true inheritance. In that perfect land each person has precisely as much of God as he is capable of possessing. What determines our lot is how we went our way till that other end, the end of life. Destiny is character worked out. Therefore, tremendous importance attaches to the fugitive moment. Each act that we do is weighted with eternal consequences. (*I. MacLaren, D.D.*) *The Path and End of the Upright Man*:—Daniel's career was neither smooth nor easy. But the course he chose was so sure and true that this text, the last recorded

voice to him from Heaven, bade him pursue it patiently, in sure expectation of a happy eternity. 1. HIS WAY. 1. The way of resolute consecration to God. 2. The way of steadfast faith in Divine friendship. 3. The way of regular private devotion and Bible study. II. THE END PROMISED HIM. "The end of that man is peace." 1. Repose in Hades. 2. A personal share, at the resurrection, of Christ's Kingdom. 3. An inheritance for ever. Let the Heavenly word which closes the book of Daniel (1) awaken the undecided; and (2) confirm the resolution of the believing to adopt his course. (*David Dale Stewart, M.A.*) *The Servant of God Dismissed and Rewarded*:—1. We are all, like Daniel, servants of God, and charged with the performance of that work which He has respectively assigned us, arising out of our situation in life, and the various duties and engagements connected with it. (1) We have our providential work to do. The situation and work of mankind are various, but the appointment is of God. There are some persons who imagine that the labours which arise from providential circumstances are distinct from piety and obstructive of it. They may be made so, but they are not so necessarily. No man has a charter to be idle. Idleness as infallibly destroys the soul as open sin committed against God. We are all stewards of his manifold gifts. (2) Our connection with the Church of Christ opens to us another class of service. As members of religious society we have our duties. When we are ourselves "converted," we are to "strengthen the brethren." No Christian man "liveth unto himself," and no Christian man "dieth unto himself." Every man that professes the name of Christ is bound to promote His cause—not in the spirit of party, but in the spirit of Christianity. We are to stem the torrent of iniquity, promote the influence of truth, and endeavour to extend the religion of the Son of God to every land. (3) There is a work arising out of our personal salvation. The work of salvation can only be effected by strong and vigorous efforts. We cannot of ourselves form a gracious thought or a good desire. We know these things, but let no man plead them as an excuse for his own sloth. God works in us, but He also works by us. He saves us, but He effects our salvation by giving energy and application to our own powers; and in the strength which He imparts He calls us to resist evil, to watch and pray, to mortify our corruptions, to cultivate our knowledge and every grace. This is our personal and our daily work. Every duty assigned to us day by day is the work which God has given us to do. Frequently to reflect on this will produce the happiest results. 2. In the text we have an important intimation of the termination of all things. "Go thy way till the end be." There will be an end—an "end of all things." Strangely, we feel little interest in contemplating the end of all things. (1) There will be an end of the providential dispensations of God. This is strongly marked in the text, which follows a series of prophecies relating to the fate of empires. An angel reminded Daniel that an end will be put to the dispensations of Providence with respect to nations and empires. A time will come when all the tumults of earth will be hushed into silence. Why should we feel surprised at the changes in our own circles, when things so vast, so firm, so lasting, must end and be forgotten! (2) There will be an end of that which is of infinitely more importance than the concerns of empires—the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ. Of that Daniel had an interesting view. Before him the triumphs of the Gospel were displayed. Jesus Christ has a kingdom more extensive than that of any earthly monarch. The Saviour will not always be the Mediator between man and God. He must exchange the office of Intercessor for that of Judge. (3) There will be an end of the world itself. The heavens and earth that are now shall pass away. 3. An interesting view of the state of the pious dead between death and the end of all things. "Thou shalt rest." It cannot mean annihilation, nor a loss of consciousness between death and the termination of all things. This rest is the composure and settled triumph of the spirit, escaped from wind, tempest, battle, danger, and at home with God. Rest from religious labours, and from religious fears. 4. Instruction in the closing part of the angel's address to Daniel. Allusion is to the manner in which the tribes were settled in Canaan. (1) The Christian's Heaven is secured as was Canaan to the Israelites. (2) Rewards relate to character. (3) Both variety and degree are suggested. (4) The full reward will come at a fixed period. Two considerations. The faithfulness of Jesus will conduct you to this happy state if you are found faithful. And this subject is well calculated to encourage the faithful saint. (*E. Watson.*) *The Servant of God Dismissed and Rewarded*:—These are the words in which the angel Gabriel dismissed the prophet after delivering his message to him. The book of Daniel is interesting for the length of time it covers; the eventful period to which it relates; the nature of the prophecy it contains; and the character of the man who wrote it. In intellect he was a giant; in morals he was a model. 1. Daniel's death or dismissal. "Go thou thy way." This may be regarded as the God-sent summons for him to depart this life. The way we have walked through life is the way we must walk in death. Death is only finishing the journey; it is but the last step in the life-trodden way. Daniel could not have been less than ninety years old when he received this

angel's visit. He was full of years and honours. If we are in our sins unreconciled to God, death can only come as the "King of terrors." If we are at peace with God through Jesus Christ, then death will come to us, as he came to Daniel, in the form of an angel of light: as a blessing, as a friend, as "the servant Jesus sends to call in to His arms."

2. Notice what the angel said to Daniel about his condition after death. "For thou shalt rest." A condition of conscious happiness in the presence of the glorified Redeemer. A rest, not of sleep, but of conscious enjoyment. A satisfying rest, but yet a rest that does not bring with it the full reward of final blessedness.

3. How long is this state to continue? "Till the end be." "In the end of the days." This end must be the end of the present dispensation; the end of the kingdom of this world. The end of the days means the morning of the resurrection. Then the rest will enter on a new stage of development that will go on in widening and deepening channels of glory and blessedness for ever.

4. Note what the angel said about Daniel's final state, when that end comes. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot." (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The Christian in Life, in the Grave, and in Heaven*.—That is a dark leaf in the book of God's providence which, on account of one man's disobedience, made it necessary that death should pass upon all men. Partakers of Adam's fall, we share in Adam's penalty. The prophet Daniel is the most faultless human character on record. To the young, he is an example of humble and self-denying piety; to those of mature years, of stern and unbending uprightness; to the aged, of holy and triumphant faith in the promises of a covenant, keeping God. Daniel was a life-preacher. His influence is to be found in his daily life. His acts were a commentary on the purity of his creed, and himself a temple to his Maker's praise. Yet all this could not revoke the sentence of the angel, "Thou shalt rest."

I. TO EVERY MAN THERE IS APPOINTED SOME USEFUL SPHERE OF LABOUR. Usefulness is one of the ends for which our Maker has formed us. No man can boast a charter for idleness. There is a restlessness about the mind of man which must be employed about something—a perpetual elasticity which must have occupation—whether it be to guide the plough or frame our laws. But if man scorns all useful and good occupations, Satan is sure to provide him with a bad one. Man has not a greater foe than sloth. There is no exemption from appointed labour for those whom Providence has enriched with "all manner of store," and released from the necessity of toil. Our work must not be confined to the duties which belong to us either as citizens or as men. We call ourselves by the name of Christ; and, if we are wise, we shall not rest till we have made that calling sure. We must, like our Master, "be about our Father's business."

II. A TIME IS COMING WHEN THE SERVANT OF GOD SHALL BE DISMISSED AND REPOSE FROM HIS LABOURS. The state of the soul between death and judgment has always been a favourite subject of speculation. The state of the soul after death is entirely a matter of revelation. Admitting that the soul will have a conscious existence immediately it leaves the body, our enquiry is, What will that condition be? It is not its most perfect fruition. That is not till "the end of the days." And yet it must be fruition, or it would not be gain to die. The angel calls it a state of rest. It shall be the first stage in that moral progress in which the soul is changed from glory to glory; never completing the number of its perfections in finding that it can attain no more.

III. THE PERIOD WHEN THE SERVANT OF GOD SHALL RECEIVE HIS ETERNAL RECOMPENSE. Days and months and years are milestones along the road of life. But there shall be an end of these days. Our joys will be always beginning then; one unceasing now of a space that shall never terminate. The soul of the righteous shall "stand" when all else have fallen, erect in the confidence of its own immortality, and waiting for its "lot at the end of the days." What shall the lot be? Will it be the same for all? Who, then, will be contented to shine as a star when there is another glory, "the glory of the sun," within his reach? Can we overlook the danger that if we are seeking only the poorest "lot at the end of the days," it may turn out that we shall find no lot at all; that having sown with a niggard hand we shall find no fruit but bitterness. Forget not that we have every one of us a work to do, and a work in which every day we live must bear its part. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The Lot at the End of the Days*.—These words contain undoubtedly the dismissal of Daniel from his whole life work, and may, therefore, be applied to anyone who has been working well for God, and has now gone to rest. The text, taken in its connections, may bring to our view: I. THE MAJESTY AND GREATNESS OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. There is no subject perhaps which we are so apt to dwarf and belittle in our ordinary conceptions as the subject of the world-providence of God. We require to place ourselves, so to say, in a position to see it. This book of Daniel is a magnificent climbing-ground. It gives us a succession of far-reaching views. It shows us the continuity of history, the connecting of one thing out of another, the plan of God in it all. God says not only to individuals, but to communities of men, and witnesses for the truth; to churches and to generations, "Go thy way." What power of will and thought is His which can develop

itself in fullness only through all the worlds and along all the ages! How vast is His providence, by which the whole is wrought out. Everything is ruled and used for the accomplishment of His ultimate and perfect will. II. HOW LITTLE IS INDIVIDUAL MAN. Insignificant as man is, God is mindful of him. A fly is more than a cathedral, for it is living, organised, capable of motion, and of a kind of thought, and is, therefore, more in the scale of being than any form or size of inanimate matter. A man, living, intelligent, immortal, is more than the whole providence of God. It, therefore, may be expected that God will look to and tenderly regard the sons of men. We may trust Him to gather up the fragments of our life activity, so that nothing at all shall be lost. God says to every one of His dying children, "Go thy way. Thy day's work is done. I have watched thee at it all the day long. I alone know what thy work has been. I have known thy secret purpose, and I have reckoned that in thy work. Thy work is done. Go in trustfulness. Go in peace." III. "THOU SHALT REST." To go from earthly labour for God is to go to Heavenly rest. Even the earthly part rests in the grave. But the better part is carried to the waiting yet happy and restful company of sainted souls. Some interpret "sleeping in Jesus" literally. There is nothing unphilosophical in this theory. The practical extinction of time is not difficult to imagine. No length of time is anything when compared with eternal duration. He that falls asleep in Jesus may sleep safely through all the remaining ages of time, and still have undiminished eternity to live in. But it seems that to sleep in Jesus is not to be unconscious. It is to be in Paradise; and that must mean, to be patient, perceptive, happy. The meaning seems to be, "Thou shalt rest," and know that thou art resting. Of course, this rest after the work of life will be more or less to each, according to the labours that have preceded it. He who does what his hand findeth to do with his might through life's working day, will go to his Heavenly rest with a satisfaction and a zest which loiterer and laggard can never know. IV. THE REST AT DEATH IS PREPARATORY TO SOMETHING FAR MORE COMPLETE AT THE "END OF THE DAYS." Then—when the whole vast system of earthly providence is wound up—then shall each man, woman, and child stand in their "own lot." The reference here is chiefly to the righteous. The term "stand" expresses the completeness, and above all the permanence of the new life. And it will be our own lot. We shall stand then in that which we are making now. We shall claim that which by our faith we claimed before, and in a measure possessed by our love and hope. (*Alce. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The Labouring Saint's Dismissal to Rest*:—1. The person dismissed, Daniel. Note: (1) His qualifications; wisdom, love to his people, uprightness and righteousness in the discharge of that high place whereunto he was advanced. (2) His employment. Consider the nature of the employment itself, and some considerable circumstances of it. All his visions close with some eminent exaltation of the Kingdom of Christ. 2. The dismissal itself. Singly, relating to his employment only. In reference to his life also. The Lord dischargeeth Daniel from his farther attendance on Him in the way of receiving visions and revelations. And there is also intimation that he must shortly lay down his mortality. Three things may be intended in the word "end." The end of his life. The end of the world. Or the end of the things whereof the Holy Ghost is peculiarly dealing with Daniel. God oftentimes suffers not His servants to see the issue and accomplishment of these glorious things, wherein themselves have been most eminently engaged. Observe that the condition of a dismissed saint is one of rest. Rest holds out two things to us. A freedom from what is opposite thereunto, wherein those that are at rest have been exercised. And something which suits them, and satisfies their nature in the condition wherein they are. What is it the saints are at rest from? Sin, and labour, and travail. What is it that they are at rest in? In the bosom of God, because in the fruition and enjoyment of Him they are everlastingly satisfied, as having attained the utmost end whereto they were created, all the blessedness whereof they are capable. Every man stands in a threefold capacity, natural, civil, and religious. And there are distinct qualifications that are suited unto these several capacities. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *The Assurance of Rest and Future Glory given to Daniel*:—Many extraordinary discoveries had been made to Daniel of the principal events that were to happen to the Church and world to the end of time. Some hints were given him as to the times when these events should happen. The prophet did not understand them, and, therefore, desired to be more particularly informed concerning them. He is told that they would not be fully understood "till the accomplishment" explained them. He is cut short with the assurance that whatever was the state of the Church and the world, his own state should be happy. He must, therefore, attend to his duty, wait God's time, and comfort himself with these pleasing prospects. I. THE CHARGE GIVEN TO DANIEL. "Go thy way till the end be." Some understand this as a dismissal from life. Prefer to understand it as, "attend to your proper business, the duties of your station and age, till the end of life comes." It may be a discharge from his public office as prophet. It may be a general admonition not to be too inquisitive about prophetic matters. The

Greek version renders, "Go thy way, and be at rest"; be content with that station and condition to which God hath appointed thee. Go on faithfully and cheerfully through that portion of life which yet remaineth unto thee. II. THE GRACIOUS ENCOURAGEMENT SET BEFORE HIM. Three things are promised. 1. A peaceful rest in the grave. Thou shalt die in peace, and enter upon a state of rest. This implies that the present is a state of trouble and disquietude. Little rest is to be expected here. Good men, and good ministers in particular, have their peculiar troubles. Their bodies shall rest in the grave, and their souls shall rest with God. The former is a kind of negative happiness. The latter is the rest of a being who is still existing, a rational, active spirit. It wants something suited to its nature, that will satisfy and fill its desires; and this it finds in God, to whom it returns, as to its rest, portion, and happiness. 2. Daniel is promised a glorious resurrection from the grave. His rest in the grave was to continue to the end of the days, and that he was then to stand in his lot. The end of the days refers to the resurrection. Observe, then, that days shall have an end. The revolution of seasons shall cease. Then Daniel, with the rest of God's faithful servants, shall arise and stand upon the earth. 3. Daniel is promised a happy portion in the Heavenly world. The expression in the text intimates that there shall be a day of judgment, when every man shall be tried, and have his lot publicly assigned to him. It may also intimate that good men shall stand in that judgment, and not, like the wicked, flee to hide themselves from the presence of the Judge. The expression intimates that there shall be different lots or portions assigned to good men, according to the degree of their holiness and usefulness here. Application: (1) See the necessity of securing a happy lot for ourselves. See how kindly God treats His servants, and how comfortably He speaks to them. (2) Let the servants of God attend to the charge given to Daniel. (3) Let aged saints comfort themselves with the prospects of this happiness promised to Daniel. It is the lot of all God's faithful servants. (*J. Orton, S.T.P.*) *A Divine Course for Every Man*:—All human affairs are under God's dominion, and must develop the wisdom of His rule and the glory of His counsel. Daniel's visions perplexed his soul. He longed for more light, but to his eager cry there came the calming direction, and the consoling assurance, of the text. I. THERE IS AN APPOINTED COURSE FOR EVERY MAN. With all our similarities, we are made to feel our separateness. "Thou." "Thy way." 1. Having a separate existence we have a separate way. This is set forth in Scripture, and evident by observation. (Heb. xi. for illustrations.) (a) Then we should take our case to God, and our course from God. "Wait on the Lord"—consult Him, trust Him, give attention to Divine requirements. "Wait for the Lord"—for the indications of His will within, and the movement of His hand without. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." (b) We should render obedience. "To every man his work." We are not compelled to "go" by a fixed fate. Man is moral, and, therefore, free to disobey. The element in obedience that pleases God is willingness. Christian principles, right motives, untiring service, will make our days bright with Heavenly light. Is the course you are taking one that God and conscience can approve? "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man"—but what about the end thereof? 2. Providential mysteries ought not to interfere with duty. There are hidden things in creation, secrets in God's dealings, and mysteries in the Scriptures. Shall all obligation be superseded until these are fully known? There is nothing dark about duty. (Micah vi. 8.) O troubled soul, cease repining; weak heart, take courage; depressed, baffled spirit, repose in God! Inactivity brings no solution; fretfulness removes no obscurities. Trust and toil, and life will be a diversity of discoveries. With a separate existence and a peculiar way—do thine individual duty. "Go thou thy way." A commonplace but impressive fact is next inculcated. II. THAT THERE IS AN END TO MAN'S COURSE ON EARTH. "Till the end be." When, where, or how Daniel passed away, we know not. The end came, "and he died." 1. Think of the inevitable end—(a) to business engagements; (b) to Sabbath enjoyments; (c) present sufferings; (d) earthly relationships; (e) our connection with time. 2. The end is under God's control. "Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee; Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." 3. The end of this life is the beginning of another. To abide in our calling, strive after conformity to Christ's image, daily to renew our acts of trust and service, and faithfully discharge the stewardship of life, will help us to finish our course with joy, and prepare us for the world to come. The words to Daniel give: III. THE PROMISE OF AN ALLOTTED FUTURE. "For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." 1. A pledge of rest. God's promised rest is not the calm of unfeeling apathy, nor the rest of the grave; but the rest of perfect satisfaction. (Rev. vii. 13—17; xxi. 3, 4.) 2. The assurance of a personal portion. The way in which the land of promise was divided to tribes and families supplies the figure. A better inheritance than a few acres of land is assured to the man, Daniel; an individual portion, peculiar and permanent. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days." At the end of the days will come the day of days—

judgment. Then the possession of some shall be "everlasting life," and the doom of others "shame and everlasting contempt." (Verses 1—3.) Let us carry away these related and suggestive thoughts—an individual life and path, the burden of singular duties, a separate judgment, and a personal reward. Listen to the voice of your God. He tells you to walk resolutely in the path of His choosing; He reminds you of the end of your earthly course; and predicts, for the obedient, untroubled rest and an enduring portion. "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (*Matthew Braithwaite.*) *Daniel, His Example and Reward*:—These words reveal to Daniel three things important to be known. How God's servants leave off their life-work here. What happens to them immediately it is over. What is their final condition. We have all of us work to do here. Some have to labour, others to direct; some to teach, others to learn; some to rule, others to obey. But whatever our place is, God has put us in it. God gives us our duties in it. Daniel's had been a long and difficult life. Having a good record, it was a happy day at last when his warfare was accomplished, and he got the message of his dismissal, "Go thy way; faithful servant, thy work is done." That is the end we wish for those we love and live for. At the eventide of our time, God will say to each labourer in his turn, "Go thy way." What, then, is our intermediate state? Does the Scripture inform us where we are to be, what we are to do, until the end come? Thou shalt "rest"—not in death, or unconsciousness. But this rest will not be then complete. The triumph of the Church, though assured, will not yet be consummated. When the resurrection trumpet of the great jubilee shall sound, then the people of God shall enter each upon the full enjoyment of their inheritance, long ordained and set apart; and to each it shall be true, "Thou shalt stand in thy lot." You know the reality of life is not in life's uncertain goods, but in the hopes and promises of God; and those are happy who, walking through the wilderness, use them for a well, and the pools are filled with water. The child of God, walking in an honest, simple faith, may have to face many trials, but never the trial of hearing, like the king, "Thy hope is at an end, thy kingdom is departed from thee." The longer he works on the brighter grows his promise, and though he go his way and take his rest, he will stand again in his lot at the end of days. (*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*) *The Duty of a Good Man in Time of Trouble*:—I. A GOOD MAN'S LIFE IS OFTEN PASSED IN THE MIDST OF GREAT EVENTS. This was the case with Daniel. II. A GOOD MAN'S SOUL IS OFTEN PERPLEXED BY THE VARIETY AND MYSTERIOUSNESS OF THESE GREAT EVENTS. These words of the text show that Daniel was greatly perplexed. How is it that we are so perplexed with the operations of God's providence. 1. We have not the capacity to judge. The events of time are remote in their causes, and complicate in their details, and vast in their consequences. We cannot understand God, nor find out the Almighty to perfection; therefore, let us be resigned. 2. We are not fit to judge. We love Daniel because we see he was just as weak, and just as foolish, as we are, at times. III. A GOOD MAN'S DUTY IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE IS TO WAIT THE END OF THESE PERPLEXITIES, RATHER THAN TO TRY AND EXPLAIN THEM. There will be an end. Let us wait till then. We are to stand by as spectators in the great drama of life in which God is all in all. Not careless or uninterested spectators; far from that, but devout and reverent beholders of the great mystery. Nor yet idle spectators either. We are to go and stand in our lot till the end of the days; to go and occupy our place, and fill our niche, and do our work, and be willing, after having served our generation, to die in harness, having accomplished our mission. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The Christian's Path, and its Glorious Termination*:—We see the wisdom of God in surrounding prophecy generally with obscurity; we see His wisdom in involving it in comparative darkness, because, as men are to be the instruments in executing the Divine purpose and accomplishing the Divine counsels, if prophecy were very clear, the responsibility of these agents would be certainly compromised, and the process of Divine moral government would be certainly interfered with. But in the prophecies of Daniel we see that he was carried far above the ordinary range of prophetic vision. His eye swept down the whole stream of time. He saw the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom, which is to comprehend all kingdoms. In this verse he comes before us to receive his dismissal; his prophetic work was done. We are here taught some very important truths. 1. That every child of God has his own way marked out and appointed by Heaven, in which it is his duty, through all the trials and afflictions of his life, faithfully to persevere, till death, the end, has come. The prophet is commanded to go his way, his own special way. I cannot go in another man's way, neither can another man go in my way. We are born into this world under certain laws and conditions, which determine our fitness for certain situations and employments, and have each a certain path of usefulness and honourable activity marked out for us. These differences in our constitutions, these differences as to peculiar adaptations, these differences as to faculties and susceptibilities—why, they are the very foundation of human society, for what one man is not meet for, another man is.

This, kept in mind, will make us more patient and charitable and forbearing towards our fellow-men. No man can tell what it is that his brother man has to contend against; no man can tell what it is that his brother has to do battle with in his own breast, or, it may be, through bodily disorder. 2. Whatever our gifts may be, we should bear in mind that they came from God at first, who gives to every man according to His wisdom and grace. The poor man should remember that his poverty is not dishonourable. He may be as honourable before God as any man can be, and have his rank in the sight of Heaven equally with the prince and the peer. There is nothing dishonourable but sin. Since our way is marked out by God, it would not contribute to our happiness if we could get out of that way. It is not change of situation in this world that can make a man happy. II. AFTER DEATH THE SOUL OF THE SERVANT OF GOD SHALL ENTER ON A STATE OF REST. The rest of the soul after death is not unconsciousness. Men found this opinion upon a certain philosophic creed. Dreams foreshadow the great truth that the soul of man can exist, yea, be conscious of action, when separated from the body. The Christian enters upon a state which, while it is called rest, is full of unspeakable blessedness. It is rest in contradistinction to the toil and labour and trial, and disappointment and pain, in this mortal world, a state where the mind will be invigorated and exalted to the loftiest degree. III. THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION. 1. This is to take place at the "end of the days." The great cycles of Providence will come to their termination. There will be an end to the days of grace, an end of Sabbaths, and ministry, and ordinances. 2. There will be the resurrection of the good. Mark the attitude "stand." Mark the attitude, mark the dignity, mark the nobility, of it. 3. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot." Israel had, in Canaan, each his own lot. So in the resurrection, each one shall have his own place, and his own inheritance; exactly suited to his intellectual, moral, and spiritual capabilities. We shall find, each of us, that we have got as much given to us as we are capable of receiving. Is not this an encouraging and inspiring prospect? (*J. Kernahan, B.A.*) *On the Prospect of Heaven:*—To afford the pained heart desired relief, the prospects of futurity, which the gospel of Jesus Christ affords, are especially suitable and useful. 1. The servants of God shall enjoy rest after death. While their mortal part reposes in the grave, their spirit rests in the embraces of their Lord. We are taught to look on our present life as the season of trouble and exertion. The remembrance of what life is may keep us from idolising present comforts, from making a god of this world. The word "rest," applied to the future destination of the believer, teaches us also to conceive of the life that precedes it, as one of labour. We are now called to the labour of duty, to improve the spring-time of life, by sowing to ourselves righteousness, that we may reap in mercy. Now we are called to the labour of self-denial, and the labour of watchfulness. Amidst the labours and cares of life, be it our aim to secure, through the Saviour, this place of rest for ourselves. 2. The servant of God shall possess an inheritance in the Heavenly Canaan. The angel said unto Daniel that he should "stand in his lot." Joshua made the tribes cast lots for their respective portions. When the land was thus divided, they possessed the lot appointed them by Jehovah. That Canaan was type of a better. That better country the God of all grace shall divide amongst His faithful people, and each disciple of Christ shall have his share. This will be larger or smaller, according as believers have, by Divine grace, been made to excel in every Christian virtue, in usefulness in their generation. This place is called an inheritance, to show them that they have not procured a right to it by the purchase of their own works, but as a legacy left them by a friend. It is upon account of their connection with Christ as their elder brother that they have any right to it—that they shall ever possess it. The promise, "Thou shalt rest," refers to exemption from evil; the promise, "Thou shalt stand in thy lot," to the enjoyment of good. By the first, the good man had the prospect of deliverance from pains, and sorrows, and cares, and sins. By the second, his hopes were raised to the possession of a great portion, an inheritance in eternity. 3. This inheritance of the servant of God shall be lasting. "At the end of the days." At the end of all days. The conviction of the uncertainty of what we have here, casts a damp on the enjoyment of it; but the lot in Heaven, the portion of the Christian, is abiding, is lasting, is for ever. 4. The prospect of this rest, and inheritance, supports the soul in the view of the approaching calamities. The same prospect is the believer's support in the view of personal trials. We are all taught the uncertainty that hangs over all our present comforts, but with the view of Heaven as his approaching rest the Christian shall never be entirely destitute—never be left without the cheering light of hope. 5. The enjoyment of Heaven will make up the loss of the comforts the Christian possesses below. 6. In Heaven, the glorified saints shall hear of the triumphs of the Church on earth. And 7. We are here taught that the hopes of futurity should impel to present duty. Daniel was not to spend his time in indolent contemplation of these glorious events, but to go on his way in the path of duty. From these remarks learn: (1) To view afflictions in the light

of eternity. (2) To look at duty in the light of eternity. (3) Let the Gospel-neglector contemplate his conduct in the light of eternity. (*A. W. Knowles.*) *The Christian's Lot*:—"Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot." Such shall be the word to all who cast in their lot with God. They shall have the sweet assurance, ere they pass through the dark river of Jordan, that they are passing on to their rest. Daniel knew God himself. Many identify knowing of God with knowing God. A man reads about God, hears about God, thinks about God, sees God in nature, traces Him in providence, admires Him in revelation, and then he thinks—I know God. He only knows of God. To know God is much closer and more personal. It is to have heard Him speaking to us as none other ever has spoken to us. It is to have come into spiritual contact with God. And what is our joy in Christ? It is this, that Christ knows not of us, but that he knows us. He knows all about you, and your heaven on earth is that you know Him. (*F. Whitfield, M.A.*) *Human Life*:—I. THE PERPLEXITY. How much in the history of human life there is to perplex! The origin of sin. The reign of wrong. The prosperity of the wicked. The afflictions of the good. The tardy march of the Gospel, etc. These events often make men pessimists, who declare that life is not worth living. II. THE CRISIS. "Till the end be." There is a great crisis awaiting the life of mankind. 1. Analogy suggests this. 2. So does science. 3. So does the moral sentiment. 4. So does Scripture. See *Matt. xxv.*; *II. Cor. v. 10*; *Rev. xx. 11—15*, etc. III. THE DUTY. "Go thou thy way." 1. There is a divinely-appointed way for every man to pursue. 2. It must be pursued, however great the difficulties. Wait calmly and courageously for the end. IV. THE ULTIMATE DESTINY. 1. "Thou shalt stand," personally. Thou, not another for thee. Thine individuality will never be amalgamated, thine identity never be lost. 2. "Thou shalt stand," appropriately. What is the true lot of man? A correspondence of his circumstances with his character. A man's moral character must ultimately, under the government of a righteous God, determine his position. 3. "Thou shalt stand," peacefully. "Thou shalt rest." The moral universe, agitated by the storms of successive ages, shall be hushed, every godly man shall rest. Conclusion. "Go thou thy way till the end be," brother. The portentous clouds will not always roll over thy sky, nor will confounding whirlwinds always bewilder thee on thy path. There is an end, in that end thou shalt rest, rest in holy faith and love, and shalt have "thy lot." A sphere suited for thy moral aspirations and faculties, a sphere that will give scope to thy every power, satisfy thy every want, and transcend thy highest expectations. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *No Rest Till the End is Reached*:—"Go thy way till the end." You, my contemporaries, you older men, do not fancy that in the deepest aspect any life has ever a period in it in which a man may "take it easy." You may do that in regard of outward things, and it is the hope and the reward of faithfulness in youth and middle age that when the grey hairs come to be upon us we may slack off a little in regard to outward activity. But in regard of all the deepest things of life, no man may ever lessen his diligence until he has attained the goal. Some of you will remember how, in a stormy October night years ago, the *Royal Charter* went down three hours from Liverpool, when the passengers had met in the saloon and voted a testimonial to the captain because he had brought them across the ocean in safety. Until the anchor is down and we are inside the harbour we may be shipwrecked if we are careless in our navigation. "Go thou thy way until the end." And remember, you older people, that until that end is reached you have to use all your power, and to labour as earnestly, and guard yourselves as carefully, as at any period before. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *In View of the End*:—According to Calvin, he was to be content with his lot, and expect no more visions. Bullinger understands the words as an exhortation to persevere, and continue to the end. According to Junius, he was to set all things in order, and make himself ready for his end, without curiously searching further into these things. Brightman understands the words as intimating that what the Lord might have further to reveal, He would do it by other prophets, as He did by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. (*T. Robinson, D.D.*)