

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

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

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

HABAKKUK.

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INTRODUCTION TO HABAKKUK.

I THINK that an argument for the divinity of Scripture might be found in its silence as well as in its speech. It draws a veil, thick and impenetrable, over very much which men, left to themselves, would have been certain to bring forth to the light of open day. How remarkable, for example, is the reticence of the sacred writers about themselves! But for their names at the commencement of their books we should never have known in many instances to whom we owed these Scriptures which are "beyond all Greek, beyond all Roman fame." That is not the manner of men. They are very prone to obtrude themselves. The workman does not care to lose his own personality in the work which he performs, or to be remembered only by what he has done; he likes to carve his name over his achievement in bold and striking letters which all can read. We are too self-conscious, too proud, too anxious for praise, to be mere voices crying in the wilderness for God's glory and the world's good. There is no better biography in existence than that which James Boswell wrote of Dr. Johnson; it makes the very man live before us once more: but the biographer shows himself at every turn; he must be seen and known and recognised in the company of his hero, for good or for ill, in wisdom and in folly; rather than go unnoticed, he will reveal to us his own weaknesses and foibles. But the methods of the human authors of the Bible are altogether different. God inspired them; and, if there were any uprisings within their minds of the egotism and pride which are so natural to us, His Spirit reproved and suppressed the unworthy thought. To disclose God in His character and will, they wrote; and therefore they kept themselves sedulously in the background. Thoughts like these can scarcely fail to be awakened within us in connection with this prophecy of Habakkuk. Short as it is, it is one of the sublimest books in the Old Testament. It speaks a great and lofty language. It throbs with an intense and ardent feeling. Yet how exceedingly little we know of its author! He is a mere name to us, and not a very pleasant or melodious name, as we imagine, although we may find some cause to modify that opinion by and by. So much were the old Jewish rabbis impressed by this doubt and uncertainty that enveloped the prophet—so unwilling were they to rest content with the obscurity in which Habakkuk himself was perfectly satisfied to remain—that they framed all manner of legends about him. They declared that his mother was the Shunammite woman who built a little chamber in the wall of her house for Elisha, the man of God; that thus he was himself the lad to whom death came so suddenly in the harvest-field as he played among the reapers, but whom Elisha restored to life and gave back to his mother; that, in after years, when the Holy Land was overrun and conquered by the Chaldeans, he fled to a place of hiding in Arabia, and returned again when the foreigner had gone, to live for a long period in peace and to die at last in his own home. It is all a tissue of fables, originating in man's unwillingness to be contented with the silence of Scripture. One or two facts, however, about the prophet it is possible for us to gather. So let us think first of the man, and then of the book which he has bequeathed to us.

I. HIS NAME IS FULL OF MEANING. To all of us, I suppose, it is a name which sounds harsh and untuneful in the extreme; and others beside ourselves have had the same feeling. About the rough and uncouth title one good expositor of our own writes, "We apprehend that this name has been a great disparagement to our prophet, and has operated in no faint degree in causing many readers to hold the book in less regard than they might otherwise have done." But such readers have been very superficial, and have not looked below the surface of things. For this ragged name has a beautiful significance. It is like some costly stone, unlovely and apparently worthless at first sight, but needing only to be examined and polished to brighten into the lustre of the diamond or to deepen into the glow of the ruby. Habakkuk means one who "strongly enfolds," or one who "firmly and closely and tenderly embraces." Luther puts a delightfully simple interpretation upon the word. The prophet, he says, "embraces his people and takes them to his arms; that is, he comforts them and lifts them up as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God will, all shall be right ere long." But while it is true that Habakkuk had a very deep and fond love for his people, being patriot no less than prophet, I prefer to regard the name as descriptive of his attitude towards God. He embraces the Almighty; he clings with fast and faithful hold to the Lord of heaven and earth; "in God's breast, his own abode, he lays his spirit down." That is no fanciful meaning to extract from the Hebrew word. It indicates the real character of the man. In the fellowship of the Old Testament seers Habakkuk stands out pre-eminent as the prophet of faith. More than most, he believed God. His was not always a victorious and jubilant faith, an unclouded assurance. Sometimes it had a sore battle to wage with doubt. Frequently he was cast down. It was an enigma to him, as it has been to many, that the Judge of all the earth should act as He did. "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil," he exclaimed, "wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he?" But it was the very simplicity of his dependence, the very thoroughness of his confidence, which led him to speak in these expostulating tones. He could not satisfy himself, as we do, with empty phrases, telling his heart that no doubt the mystery would be solved in good time, and that all was for the best. Just because he had an absolute faith in God's rectitude and mercy—just because he leaned on Him entirely and had an unquestioning trust in His character and ways, it was puzzling to him to see the unrighteous prosperous and the good downtrodden. And when the gloom and the perplexity have passed, Habakkuk's eyes are still directed heavenward; his affections are above. Through the calm and the storm; in the daytime of peace and the night-season of sorrow; when the fields wave with the yellow grain, and when the fig-tree does not blossom and there is no fruit in the vines—he keeps the even tenor of his way; his heart is fixed; he rests in the Lord and waits patiently for Him. We learn from his prophecy, too, what his calling and occupation were. The closing chapter of his book contains a magnificent ode or hymn in praise of God—a hymn to which he has appended the words, "For the chief musician, on my stringed instruments," meaning thereby, no doubt, "Let this ode be sung in the Temple service to the sound of the harps, viols, psalteries, which I am myself accustomed to employ when I minister in God's sanctuary." And so it has been reasonably inferred that Habakkuk was an accomplished musician as well as a poet of the highest order—that he belonged to those bands of Levites who were set apart to sing and play before the Lord—that perhaps he was even a choir-master in the holy house on Zion, one whose duty and privilege it was to arrange appropriate harmonies for the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which were sung there, and to see that they were rendered well and fitly, with grave sweet melody. We may think of him going out and in, like Samuel, in the sacred courts; praising the Lord with heart and voice; delighting to join in the glad and solemn and thrilling music of the hallowed place. He tells us—does he not?—that we should worship God by our songs as well as invoke His mercy and succour by our prayers. God looks for this glad and open tribute, and we disappoint Him when we withhold it or when we render it only in a formal way. Let Habakkuk teach us to praise the Lord, for He is good and His mercy endureth for ever. One other question about the man we can decide, in part at least—the question of the age in Jewish history at which he lived and prophesied. There has, indeed, been a difference of view regarding the matter. Habakkuk has received an earlier date from some, who have placed

him in the closing years of Manasseh—the years when the king, as quaint Thomas Fuller says, “being carried into a strange land, came home to himself”; a later date from some others, who assign his preaching and activity to the days of Jehoiakim when Judea was tottering to its fall, so making him one of the prophets of the Captivity. But we may follow those who steer a middle course, and who fix upon the reign of Josiah as the most probable period of Habakkuk’s life and work. His prophecies were spoken, we know, before the Babylonian invasion, for he predicts it in graphic and powerful words. But that invasion took place very soon after good King Josiah had fallen in battle with Egypt, and after all Jerusalem and Judah had mourned for him who seemed to be taken away from the evil to come. What more likely, then, than that this seer and singer lived and wrote and sang in the short epoch of prosperity which preceded the catastrophe? In those days there was stern work to be done by the preacher of righteousness and judgment; for though it was a time of revival, wickedness still dwelt in the land, and God’s punishment was not far away. II. Let us turn to look at **THE BOOK WHICH HE HAS LEFT TO US**. It divides itself into two parts, the one containing the first and second chapters, the other the sublime poem of the third. But the opening division breaks itself up, again, into two lesser sections, in the earlier of which God’s judgment on Judah is described; in the later, God’s judgment on the Chaldeans who had led Judah captive and wasted and destroyed it. Habakkuk, the prophet of faith, shows us, first of all, faith struggling and perplexed at the sight of the sufferings measured out to the Lord’s chosen people; and then faith filled with a stern joy when it beholds the utter overthrow of the conqueror and tyrant. And in the end he sings a song which has faith for its theme—how it takes comfort amid the fears and glooms of the present from the deliverances of the past; how it bates not a jot of heart or hope; how it rejoices in the Lord and exults for joy in the God of salvation. 1. Habakkuk speaks of the doom that is about to fall on his own country and people. It is a daily grief to him, he says, to see the violence and oppression and strife and plunder which prevail around him, the powerlessness of the law, the crookedness of justice, the entrapping of the righteous by the wicked. He finds it hard to understand why God does not interpose to take vengeance on the evil and to diadem the right. “How long shall I cry,” he complains, “and Thou wilt not hear?” But, even while he wonders and questions, God answers that a day of terrible retribution is fast approaching; that He is about to raise up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation, against His erring children; that a sore and fearful experience, a furnace heated seven times, lies before them in the near future. It is a vivid picture which the prophet draws of these Chaldeans, the instruments of God’s anger. What ruin they bring with them, what misery, what helplessness and despair! The desire of Habakkuk for the punishment of those who were evildoers in his nation was more than satisfied now. It seemed to him, indeed, that this penalty was too severe, this chastisement too sweeping and terrible. It fell on all alike, the good as well as the bad. It overwhelmed land and people in utter destruction. Once again, therefore, he ventured to plead with God. Was it just and fitting to go so far? Was it right to give free rein to so godless a power—one which sacrificed to its own net, and lifted itself in pride to the very heavens? Thus the doom of Judah, the burden which the seer beheld with reference to his native land, is brought to a close. Here let us pause for a moment, that we may learn something for ourselves from the attitude of the prophet. He is a pattern to us. Ought we not, like him, to desire that evil may be wholly rooted out from among God’s redeemed and renewed people; that, at whatever cost and with whatever trying discipline, they may be made entirely pure? And ought we not to pray, too, that the chastisement be not too sharp and grievous, and that God may stay His rough wind in the day of His east wind? The entreaties of Habakkuk were heard. He waited for a while, tarrying in patience like a sentinel on his watchtower; and then again the Lord spoke to him. It was the doom of the arrogant Chaldeans which was disclosed now. The mighty were ultimately to be cast down from their seats; the proud were to be abased. Over and over again the prophet reiterates this assurance of his Lord; he glories in it; it is hard for him to let it go. He tells how the Babylonian plunderer, who had increased that which was not his, and had loaded himself with pledges, should become in turn the booty of others; how the Babylonian tyrant, who had set his nest on high, was really flinging away his life and exposing himself to the wrath of the Almighty; how the Babylonian league-breaker, who had enticed other people into alliances which were

turned to their shame and ruin, should drink of the same cup with which he had intoxicated them ; how the Babylonian idolater, who forsook the living God for dumb idols, should be left unanswered and unaided in the hour of his need. These seem pitiless threats to utter even against a sinful race, and this mood of the prophet looks harsh and intolerant. But when men cry out against the denunciations and judgments of the Bible, they should remember that God only puts into exercise that right with which no earthly sovereign would or could dispense—the right of removing offenders from the earth. And Habakkuk did well to approve of it. Finally, he breaks out into that glorious song in honour of the God whom he trusted and loved. It is a song which is to be sung, he declares, '*al shigyonoth*, that is, in wandering measures, in music of an impulsive and passionate kind, full of sudden changes and transitions, such as the words of the ode demand. For it passes rapidly from one theme to another, from one mood and feeling to another. It is like the slave whom Longfellow heard singing the Psalms at midnight ; its tones "by turns are glad, sweetly solemn, wildly sad." Habakkuk sets out with the request that those judgments which he had foreseen may come quickly, but that mercy may be mingled with them too. Then, to revive his faith, he recalls the years of the right hand of the Most High, the mighty deeds done of old by God. He speaks of the Lord's giving of the law from Sinai, when "His brightness was as the light, and He had rays coming forth from His hand, and there was the hiding of His power" ; of the ravages of plague and pestilence in the desert ; of the terror of the inhabitants of Canaan when the hosts of Israel crossed their border ; of the memorable victory gained by Joshua, when "the sun and the moon stood still in their habitation." All these had been manifestations of Jehovah's power, terrible to His enemies, but most gracious and comforting to such as confided in Him. From the contemplation of them Habakkuk takes hope and courage. All will be well, he assures himself, with him who has God on his side. And so he closes his hymn with those confident and victorious lines, whose beauty and music are not surpassed in any literature. In his song the prophet shows us the secret of real tranquillity in the midst of outward alarms and distresses. It lies in the possession of a personal trust in the Lord. "The just shall live by his faith," we are told in another part of this book—live in calm through trouble and danger and temptation, if he believe God and cling to Him. No evil will befall him, and no plague come nigh him. God, he feels, has wrought wondrously in the past, and He can save him still. (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

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HABAKKUK.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-4. The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.—*Responsibilities* :—We can see how appropriate is the word “burden” used by the prophets to describe their gift and duty. The obligation laid on them often involved strain and danger. And yet it was a glorious privilege to be commissioned by God, to act for Him, to be His mouthpiece to the people. Habakkuk’s burden was the sight of the general evil and corruption prevalent in the Holy Land, among the chosen people. What burden can be heavier than this, to see evil prevail among God’s people, and to be unable to remedy it? Two lessons—1. Every privilege entails suffering. 2. Do not lose heart. The burden is laid on you by the Lord who gave you your glorious privilege. Look at the vocation, not at the burden. (*S. Baring-Gould.*) *The burden of enlightenment* :—The light of Divine favour bestowed upon Habakkuk was the source of much perplexity of mind and distress of soul to him. This paradox is common in Christian experience. The prophet’s mission of mercy was a burden to himself. I. A BURDEN OF ENLIGHTENMENT. He was—1. A spectator of evil; looking upon the great and terrible disorders that devastated his country. 2. An inspired spectator of evil. “God showed him iniquity,” &c. To see, in the light of heaven, the fearful ramifications of evil in society is an essential condition of Christian service. 3. A troubled spectator of evil. His heart-strings vibrated with jarring discords at the touch of the workers of iniquity. II. A BURDEN OF PRAYER. With a vivid consciousness of God’s almighty power the prophet called upon Him to interpose and save His people. But days rolled on and lengthened into months, and still evil abounded. Oh, the burden of prayers unheard! Oh, the burden of unanswered prayers! Oh, the burden of delay! The heart grows sick with hope deferred. III. A BURDEN OF DISCIPLINE. Designed—1. As a test to see if they will continue to work and witness for God. 2. Still trust in the Lord, even in the presence of the great mystery of iniquity. The burden is—3. For training, that God’s servants may become strong in faith, giving glory to God. (*Joseph Willcox.*)

Ver. 2. O Lord! how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear?—*The crisis of prayer* :—The question to be answered is this: How long will God suffer His people to pray, and still neglect to hear? Answer—1. Till they see the plague of their own hearts—till each one sees his own individual iniquities, and lies in the dust before God. 2. Till the Church feels that she stands in the gap between God and a sin-destroyed world. 3. Till they are willing to do whatever of duty He requires, in addition to praying. 4. Till they move the stumbling-blocks out of the way of a revival of His work. 5. If God sees in His people any disposition to withhold from Him the glory of the work He does. We see from this subject—(1) Why so many prayers seem to be offered in vain. (2) We see some of the causes of spiritual declension in the Church. (3) The subject shows how we should set about raising the Church from her low estate. (4) We see the duty of every Christian to search well his own heart. The hindrances to revivals are the sins of individuals. Each Christian, therefore, must search

and purify himself. (5) How fearful is the Church's responsibility; and how great should be her watchfulness, lest by her apathy, her selfishness, or her unbelief, she hinder the work of the Lord. (*National Preacher.*) *The cry of a good man under the perplexing procedure of God.*—I. GOD'S APPARENT DISREGARD TO HIS EARNEST PRAYER. Under the pressure of that "burden" which was resting on his heart, namely, the moral corruption and the coming doom of his country; it would seem that he had often cried unto the Almighty and implored His interposition; but no answer had come. Why are not the prayers of good men immediately answered? In reply to this question three undoubted facts should be borne in mind. 1. That importunity of soul is necessary to qualify for the appreciation of the mercies sought. It is not until a man is made to feel the deep necessity of a thing that he values it when it comes. "How long shall I cry?" Until the sense of need is so intensified as to qualify for the reception and due appreciation of the blessing. Another fact that should be borne in mind is—2. That the exercise of true prayer is in itself the best means of spiritual culture. Conscious contact with God is essential to moral excellence. You must bring the sunbeam to the seed you have sown, if you would have the seed quickened and developed; and you must bring God into conscious contact with your powers, if you would have them vivified and brought forth into strength and perfection. True prayer does this; it is the soul realising itself in the presence of Him "who quickeneth all things." 3. That prayers are answered where there is no bestowment of the blessing invoked. "Not my will, but Thine be done." This is all we want. Acquiescence in the Divine will is the moral perfection, dignity, and blessedness of all creatures in the universe. With these facts let us not be anxious about the apparent disregard of God to our prayers. II. GOD'S APPARENT DISREGARD TO THE MORAL CONDITION OF SOCIETY. "Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." The substance of this is the old complaint, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" Two facts should be set against this complaint. 1. The good have the best of it, even in this life. 2. The evil will have the worst of it in the next life. (*Homilist.*) *The expostulation of faith.*—The prophet is deeply afflicted, for there is little religion in the land, and as little of the true service of God. The one in reality is the measure of the other, although there may often seem more religion than righteousness. He does not, however, begin with attacking vice and irreligion and sin. He knows better than to do this. He carries his complaint to God, and in this way he would find some relief from his perplexity. The prophet expostulates with his God. His work seems almost hopeless, but he is a godly man, and he turns instinctively from man to God. Assuredly there is an expostulation of faith as well as of presumption. It may be good for the prophet, and for those in like circumstances, that at times God is silent. It is not that the prophet distrusts the justice or the mercy of God; it is rather, that in his impatience he would set times and seasons for His working. The times in which the prophet lived were times of ungodliness, of violence, and of misrule. Every one did that which was right in his own eyes. To correct this, the merely human sense of right is powerless. In such times, righteous men, such as wished to "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity," must go to the wall. Even thus they cannot escape injustice and violence, scorn and oppression, from the many who have no belief in the Unseen, and who act accordingly. And so they are compassed about with wickedness. The mercy of God may be compassing them about, but for the time they can hardly see any evidences of it, and they are almost in despair. They are tempted to think that "all the foundations of the earth are moved," and to say, "God hath forsaken the earth." (*P. Barclay, M.A.*) *Freedom allowed in prayer.*—The prophet does not here teach the Jews, but prepares them for a coming judgment, as they could not but see that they were justly condemned, since they were proved guilty by the cry and complaints made by all the godly. Now this passage teaches us that all who really serve and love God, ought, according to the prophet's example, to burn with holy indignation whenever they see wickedness reigning without restraint among men, and especially in the Church of God. There is indeed nothing which ought to cause us more grief than to see men raging with profane contempt for God, and no regard had for His law and for Divine truth, and all

order trodden under foot. When therefore such a confusion appears to us, we must feel roused, if we have in us any spark of religion. If it be objected that the prophet exceeded moderation, the obvious answer is this,—that though he freely pours forth his feelings, there was nothing wrong in this before God, at least nothing wrong is imputed to him : for wherefore do we pray, but that each of us may unburden his cares, his griefs, and anxieties, by pouring them into the bosom of God ? Since then God allows us to deal so familiarly with Him, nothing wrong ought to be ascribed to our prayers, when we thus freely pour forth our feelings, provided the bridle of obedience keeps us always within due limits, as was the case with the prophet ; for it is certain that he was retained under the influence of real kindness. Our prophet here undertakes the defence of justice ; for he could not endure the law of God to be made a sport, and men to allow themselves every liberty in sinning. He can be justly excused, though he expostulates here with God, for God does not condemn this freedom in our prayers. The end of praying is, that every one of us pour forth his heart before God. (*John Calvin.*) *The deeper plan in human events* :—In listening to a great organ, played by the hand of a master, there is often an undertone that controls the whole piece. Sometimes it is scarcely audible, and a careless listener would miss it altogether. The lighter play goes on, ebbing and flowing, rising and sinking, now softly gliding on the gentler stops, and now swelling out to the full power of the great organ. But amid all the changes and transpositions this undertone may be heard, steadily pursuing its own thought. The careless listener thinks the lighter play the main thing ; but he that can appreciate musical ideas, as well as sounds, follows the quiet undertone of the piece, and finds in it the leading thought of the artist. So men see the outward events of life, the actions, the words, the wars, famines, sins ; but underneath all God is carrying out His own plans, and compelling all outward things to aid the music He would make in this world. (*Christian Age.*)

Vers. 5-10. I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.—*The doom of a nation of conventional religionists* :—The Jews were such a nation. They prided themselves in the orthodoxy of their faith, in the ceremonials of their worship, in the polity of their Church. The doom threatened was terrible in many respects. **I. IT WAS TO BE WROUGHT BY THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF A WICKED NATION.** “I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs.” “Nabopolassar had already destroyed the mighty empire of Assyria, and founded the Chaldeo-Babylonian rule. He had made himself so formidable that Necho found it necessary to march an army against him, in order to check his progress ; and though defeated at Megiddo, he had, in conjunction with his son Nebuchadnezzar, gained a complete victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish. These events were calculated to alarm the Jews, whose country lay between the dominions of the two contending powers ; but, accustomed as they were to confide in Egypt and in the sacred localities of their own capital (Isa. xxxi. 1 ; Jer. vii. 4), and being in alliance with the Chaldeans, they were indisposed to listen to, and treated with the utmost incredulity, any predictions which described their overthrow by that people” (Henderson). God employs wicked nations as His instruments. “I will work a work,” He says, but how ? By the Chaldeans. How does He raise up wicked nations to do His work ? 1. Not instigatingly. He does not inspire them with wicked passions necessary to qualify them for the infernal work of violence, war, rapine, bloodshed. God could not do this. 2. Not coercively. He does not force them to it, in no way does He interfere with them. They are the responsible party. How then does He “raise” them up ? He permits them. He could prevent them ; but He allows them. He gives them life, capacity, and opportunities. Now, would not the fact that their destruction would come upon them from a heathen nation, a nation which they despised, make it all the more terrible ? **II. IT WAS TO BE WROUGHT WITH RESISTLESS VIOLENCE.** 1. The violence would be uncontrolled. “Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.” They recognise no authority, and proudly spurn the dictates of others. “They recognise no judge save themselves, and they get for themselves in their own dignity, without needing others’ help.” 2. The violence would be rapid and fierce. “Swifter than the leopard.” “Evening wolves.” **III. IT WAS TO BE**

WROUGHT WITH IMMENSE HAVOC. As the east wind, or simoom; spreading destruction everywhere. (*Homilist.*) **The Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation.**—*The Chaldeans*:—Very graphic is the description of this new and formidable enemy. Gather four lessons for ourselves. I. **THE EVIL OF SIN.** It separates the soul from God. Wherever sin is it makes the prophet's roll to be written within and without. "Lamentation, and weeping, and woe." "All unrighteousness is sin." II. **NATIONAL SINS LEAD TO NATIONAL JUDGMENTS.** They are said to "defile" a land, and to be a "reproach" to any people. Direct judgments come on a nation for its sin; as on Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Israel, &c. Then let our nation take heed. III. **THE POWER OF LITTLE THINGS.** "He heapeth up dust, and taketh it." That is, the king of Babylon, by means of mounds of dust, would put himself on a level with the besieged, and rapidly overcome them. It needs no great means when God is using the instrument. IV. **THE DANGER OF FALSE SECURITY.** "They shall deride every stronghold." When the Lord God is not there, the defence is vain. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth in, and is safe." Every false hiding-place will be swept away in the coming storm. Last year I saw in Pompeii a cellar where eighteen persons had fled for safety in the time of the great overthrow, but it was a false refuge. They were all lost. There is something like that in spiritual things. Many souls are hiding in a refuge of lies. They are trusting to their own merits, or to God's uncovenanted goodness apart from Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Without Christ, the God Man, you are defenceless and exposed to storm and tempest. (*A. C. Thiselton.*)

Ver. 12. Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die.—*The Christian conception of immortality*:—We know that this prophet was inspired, from the profound moral insight and far-reaching spiritual vision revealed in his utterance. His words are his only credentials, but they are amply sufficient. The prophecy dates near the close of the seventh or the beginning of the sixth century, B.C. The circumstances of Habakkuk's time largely determined the contents as well as the form of his prophecy. What were these circumstances? On the one hand grave disappointment in the development of his own nation. The hope centring in Josiah was dispelled by his death in ill-advised battle. Simultaneously the power of Assyria waned, and the power of Babylon grew. The politician's despair is the prophet's opportunity, and grandly does Habakkuk rise to the occasion. The prophet saw that though Babylon was a hindrance to Judah's political emancipation, yet it was one of the necessary agents of its moral deliverance. Chaldea is to this extent God's agent, that it will compel Judah to fall back upon its religion and its God. Because the Eternal God is holy, Judah cannot die. The argument deals, strictly speaking, only with the persistence and decay of earthly societies and kingdoms. The life which is inferred from ethical kinship with God is victorious national life. The individual counterpart of the prophet's argument is given by our Saviour in His inspiring words, "Because I live, ye shall live also." The relation of the principle to the individual, and individual immortality is, no doubt, more subtle and complicated, especially with regard to the negative results of the principle; but there is a wide field of positive conclusions, where the argument is quite as strong and clear and inspiring in the case of the individual as of the nation, and this profounder and richer application has been fully made in the New Testament. Indeed the whole progress of revelation has been the unfolding of old principles into ampler significance rather than the addition of new ones. In the New Testament the individual is emphasised, and all ethical and religious considerations are first of all studied in reference to the individual. There is a little danger nowadays of losing sight of the individual again, of going back to the old world immature conceptions of society, in which the individual lay latent in the mass. This is a mistake. We shall not create an ideal society by accomplishing superficial reformatory in the mass; we must be ever searching through the mass for the individual. The religion of Christ is primarily for the individual. Primarily, therefore, in the application of the Divine message, we have to deal with the spirit of man in its individual relation to God. I. **THE SPIRITUAL MAN'S CONVICTION OF IMMORTALITY.** The Scriptures nowhere assert the general principle of human immortality. There is certainly no clear indication of conditional immortality. The biblical revelation of immortality is in part bright and clear as the noonday, in part obscure

and shadowy. We must not confound the method of Plato and Butler with the biblical method. One thing is clear. As man is, like God, an essentially ethical being, he cannot be destroyed by a merely physical change like death. The sense of spiritual kinship with God gradually compelled the personal conviction of immortality. The revelation has always come in the intense individual conviction, "I live in God, and so live for ever." The manifest aim of revelation has been to develop the Christian consciousness, not to satisfy all our curiosity about the eternal future. It is sometimes said that the only certain proof of immortality is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is correct, if it is carefully stated. It is correct, when the resurrection of Christ completes the Christian consciousness, and is vitally related to it. Paul argues thus, "If the resurrection of Christ be not a historic fact, then the deepest and noblest spiritual consciousness of men is a vanity and a falsehood, for that depends upon and demands a risen Christ." The Christ within me is the final assurance of life and immortality.

II. THE CHRISTIAN CONTENTS OF THIS CONVICTION. It is a conviction, not of mere continued existence, but of eternal life, rich and varied in its content, a life filled to overflowing with the fulness of the Eternal. 1. The Christian conviction of immortality involves the assurance of a great increase and expansion of life after death. This assurance of expansion of life does not imply a breach of continuity between this life and the next. 2. The contents of this conviction include the resurrection of the body. Scepticism on this subject has arisen from supposed intellectual difficulties which have been allowed to obscure the utterance of the living voice of the Christ-spirit within. The denial of the resurrection of the body is virtually a denial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Are there then no difficulties? None at all, except those created by superficial theories of the resurrection. The continuity and redemption of our wonderful complex life will be complete. (*John Thomas, M.A.*) *The eternity, providence, and holiness of Jehovah*:—I. THE PROPHET REGARDS THE ETERNITY OF JEHOVAH AS AN ARGUMENT FOR THEIR PRESERVATION. "Art Thou not from everlasting?" The interrogatory does not imply doubt on his part. The true God is essentially eternal, He "inhabitheth eternity." From His eternity the prophet argues that His people will not perish,—*"we shall not die."* There is force in this argument. His people live in Him. Christ said to His disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Man's immortality is not in himself, but in God. II. HE REGARDS HIS PROVIDENCE AS A SOURCE OF COMFORT. "O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O Mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction." "Jehovah, for judgment Thou hast appointed it, and, O Rook, Thou hast founded it for chastisement" (*Delitzsch*). Whatever evil of any kind, from any quarter, comes upon the loyal servants of God, comes not by accident: it is under the direction of the All-wise and the All-beneficent. These Chaldeans could not move without Him, nor could they strike one blow without His permission; they were but the rod in His hand. All the most furious fiends in the universe are under His direction. Whatever mischief men design to inflict upon His people, He purposes to bring good out of it; and His counsel shall stand. III. HE REGARDS HIS HOLINESS AS AN OCCASION FOR PERPLEXITY. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" Jehovah is the Holy One. As if he had said, Since Thou art holy, why allow such abominations to take place? why permit wicked men to work such iniquities, and to inflict such suffering upon the righteous? This has always been a source of perplexity to good men. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.—*The holiness of God*:—There is in our Maker a purity of nature, and an essential sort of holiness which render Him incapable of enduring sin in any person, or under any circumstances. I believe this is the very foundation of all religious feeling whatever. The true fear of God is the fear of His holiness. 1. This is no contradiction to the character in which God is exhibited to us in the Gospel, as a God of love. But we must notice the limits under which the love of God must be taken in application to ourselves. Only in the Gospel is it revealed. 2. God has always shown a sort of instinctive abhorrence of sin, which no worth of the individual sinner could induce Him to overcome. This holiness of God is opposed to sin in every form and degree. There is nothing in man which can reconcile the nature of God to sin. Is sin regarded by us, as we must know and believe

it is regarded by God? (*H. Raikes, A.M.*) *The holiness of God.*—I. HIS HOLINESS IS UNIVERSALLY MANIFEST. 1. It is manifest to man. (1) In law. The principles of His moral law are holy, just, and good. (2) In providence. Justice is but holiness in action, and through all ages God has expressed His abhorrence of sin in the judgments He has inflicted. (3) In Christ. He sent His Son into the world. What for? "To put away sin." To cleanse humanity by His self-sacrificing life. (4) In conscience. The moral constitution of man, which recoils from the wrong and sympathises with the right, manifests God's holiness. There is no room for man, then, to doubt God's holiness. 2. It is manifest to angels. They live in its light. They are adorned with its beauties, they are inspired with its glories, and their anthem is, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." 3. It is manifest to the lost. They are bound to exclaim, "Just and right are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." II. HIS HOLINESS IS ETERNALLY ORIGINAL. The holiness of all holy intelligences is derived from Him. III. HIS HOLINESS IS GLORIOUSLY EFFULGENT. "He is glorious in holiness." He is light, in Him there is no darkness at all. IV. HIS HOLINESS IS ABSOLUTELY STANDARD. It is that to which the holiness of all other beings must come, and by which it must be tested. The law is, we are "to be holy as He is holy." But how can fallen man be raised to this standard of holiness? Here is the answer, and the only satisfactory answer: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," &c. (*Homilist*). Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously?—*Things that suggest mistrust of God.*—St. Hierom's opinion is that the name Habakkuk is derived from a word that signifies embracing, and may imply the embraces of a wrestler, who clasps his arms about the person he contends with. In this chapter we have the prophet contending with no less an antagonist than the great God, and upon no lower subject than His holiness, justice, and goodness. Is it not a very bold and daring thing for a creature thus to arraign the justice of His Creator? The father fore-mentioned explains that the prophet in his own person represents the frailty and impatience of man. We understand Habakkuk to be really saying, "True it is, O Lord, we are a very wicked and sinful people; but yet not so bad as the tyrannous Nebuchadnezzar, and his idolatrous Chaldeans. How then can it be consistent with Thy justice and hatred to sin, to permit the greater sinners to prosper in their oppression of the less, of those that are better than themselves?" "Why dost Thou favour them in their treacherous enterprises?" The words of the text contain an expostulation with God, concerning that seemingly strange dispensation of His providence in suffering the wicked to prosper and thrive, and that by the afflictions and oppressions of the righteous. I. THE GROUND AND OCCASION OF THIS EXPOSTULATION OF THE TEXT. Good men cannot oppress, or take indirect methods to thrive; they have a God above, and a conscience within, which overawe them, and will not suffer them to do it. Nor can they be supposed to use such means as may effectually secure them from the violences and oppressions of others; for the good man, charitably measuring others by himself, does not stand upon a constant guard, nor use preventive methods to keep off those injuries that he is not apprehensive of. But a bad man has none of those restraints of God, or conscience, or charity, to hinder him from falling upon the prey that lies exposed to him. It is not then to be wondered at that "those who deal treacherously prosper," or "that the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he." II. INQUIRE INTO THE OBJECTIONS THAT ARE MADE AGAINST GOD'S PERMISSION HEREOF. How comes it to pass that God does not interpose, that He does not hinder the evil and defend the good? This has been a stumbling-block in all ages. It was to holy Job; to Jeremiah; and to Asaph. It is a great argument of the atheists to banish the belief of a God and His providence out of the world. They say, If God would hinder them but cannot, then is He not omnipotent; if He can, but will not, then is He not just and good; so that either His power, or His justice and goodness, must be given up; or else those attributes must be salved by the imperfection of His knowledge. But the true notion of God is a Being infinite in all perfections, and therefore he that is defective in knowledge can no more be God than he that is not infinite in power, justice, or goodness. And so they would dispute God out of being. III. VINDICATE THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE BY SHOWING THE WEAKNESS OF THESE OBJECTIONS. It may be very consistent with the justice and goodness of God to permit these things. The objection is built upon the contrary supposition. 1. It is not inconsistent with God's justice and goodness to suffer good men to be afflicted

in this world, because—(1) Afflictions are not always punishments, but means whereby God does a great deal of good and benefit to them that are exercised with them. He weans them from the world, reduces them (leads them back) when they are going astray, tries and proves their faith, patience, submission, resignation, &c. 2. Supposing afflictions to be punishments, the best men will find failings and sins enough in themselves to make the punishment reasonable. They may well think God good and merciful in thus chastising them. 3. He has appointed a day wherein He will abundantly recompense all the troubles and sorrows and sufferings of pious men with joys unspeakable. 4. It is not inconsistent with God's justice and goodness to suffer bad men to be prosperous here. (1) Prosperity is not always a blessing. If the impunity of the wicked be their hardening and judgment, it is certainly not unjust with God to suffer it. (2) There is hardly any man so bad but has something of good in him, by which he is useful and serviceable to the world. For God to reward the natural or moral goodness of otherwise bad men, with outward temporal blessings, is agreeable to His rule of rewarding every one according to his works. (3) It cannot argue want of justice or goodness in God to try all means to reduce wholly wicked men and make them better. (4) There is a day of retribution coming. 5. It is not inconsistent with God's justice and goodness to suffer bad men to be the instruments whereby good men are afflicted. If a thing has to be done, and is right to do, it cannot matter whether the agent employed is good or bad, so long as he is efficient for the work. And can the good be employed in many of these judgments, or calamities, or wrongs? If God may work by such things, He must use the sort of people who can do them. Inferences—I. This subject gives us an irrefragable assurance of a future judgment and state. 2. Learn not to "love the world, nor the things of the world." 3. The facts dwelt on should excite and inflame our desires and longings after the other world, where the wicked shall be made miserable, and the good man happy. 4. Learn not to think hardly of God, nor to envy wicked men when He permits them to persecute His Church, and to triumph in the miseries and ruin of His best servants. (*W. Talbot, D.D.*) "Wait, and you will see":—Linnell, the artist, had a commission to paint a picture, for which he was to receive £1000. Not wishing any one to inspect it until perfected, he veiled it when not working at it, and wrote over it in Latin, "Wait, and you will see." The final issue of much of God's work is now hidden from us, but assured that, even in times of affliction, God is acting wisely, we must wait until He is pleased to let us see the finished glory of His work. (*Gates of Imagery.*)

Vers. 14-17. **And makest men as the fishes of the sea.**—*Rapacious selfishness in power*:—Illustrated in Nebuchadnezzar. Selfishness is the root and essence of sin. All unregenerate men are therefore more or less selfish, and rapacity is an instinct of selfishness. Selfishness hungers for the things of others. I. IT PRACTICALLY IGNORES THE RIGHTS OF MAN AS MAN. "And makest man as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them." The Babylonian tyrant did not see in the population of Judea men possessing natural endowments, sustaining moral relationships, invested with rights and responsibilities similar to his own fellow-men; but merely "fishes";—his object was, to catch them and turn them to his own use. It is ever so with selfishness: it blinds man to the claims of his brother. What does the selfish employer care for the man in those who work in his service and build up his fortune? He treats them rather as fishes to be used, than as brethren to be respected. What does the selfish despot care for the moral humanity of the people over whom he sways his sceptre? He values them only as they can fight his battles, enrich his exchequer, and contribute to his pageantry and pomp. What were men to Napoleon? &c. II. IT ASSIDUOUSLY WORKS TO TURN MEN TO ITS OWN USE. "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad." Ah me! Human life is like a sea—deep, unresting, treacherous; and the teeming millions of men are but as fishes, the weaker devoured by the stronger. The mighty ones use the hook to oppress individuals one by one, the net and the drag to carry multitudes away. As the fisherman works by various expedients to catch the fish, the selfish man in power is ever active in devising the best expedients to turn human flesh to his own use. III. IT ADORES SELF ON ACCOUNT OF ITS SUCCESS. "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." Because men are everywhere selfish,

they are everywhere "sacrificing unto their net, and burning incense unto their drag." The selfish statesman says, There is no measure like mine; the selfish sectarian, There is no Church like mine; the selfish author, There is no book like mine; the selfish preacher, There is no sermon like mine. IV. IT REMAINS UNSATIABLE NOTWITHSTANDING ITS PROSPERITY. "Shall they therefore empty their net?" &c. An old author thus paraphrases the language, "Shall they enrich themselves and fill their own vessels, with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again to catch more? And wilt Thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net?" Conclusion—What an awful picture of the world we have here! (*Homilist.*) *The baits of Satan*:—All sorts of baits are used to catch human souls. One of the old fathers of the Church says that Satan is the ape of God. That is, Satan imitates whatever God does, but with a different object. God uses the beautiful things He has made to draw you to Him. Satan uses the same things to lure you into his power, and draw you away from God. Since man has been in the world, he has had to work. And God has blessed work. But Satan takes work, and tries to make mischief with it. He tries to make you care for your work apart from God, and thus it is turned into dead, graceless, unprofitable work. The world—the society of your fellows—may draw the souls of those who move in it to God; for there is a great deal of good in the world. You cannot always say that this or that is bad in itself. It is bad only when Satan has put his hook through it. Consequently you must not rashly denounce an amusement or a pursuit, as bad, unless you can see the hook in it. Look at some scriptural instances of Satan's fishing. Case of Job; of David; of Judas Iscariot. As you go through life you will meet with all sorts of temptations. Temptations are Satan's baits. Then, whatever you undertake, keep God before your eyes: keep God in your thoughts. Directly you begin to lose sight of God and to forget Him—then beware! Recover yourself as quickly as you can; you have somehow got hold of a bait which Satan is pulling towards him. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*)

Ver. 16. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense to their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.—*Self-worship*:—Nebuchadnezzar is here represented as gathering the people into his net, and then, forgetting that he was only an instrument, doing homage to his own power and skill, as though they had won for him the victory. 1. The most numerous illustrations of this spirit are those which may be found in the conduct of our secular work. The ungodliness of the daily life of men is a fact too manifest to be disputed. They see in every increase of their wealth and power a fresh evidence of their skill and strength; and, intoxicated with pride or vanity, burn incense only to their own net. Among those who bear the Christian name there are evidences only too palpable of its presence and power. How prone are we, in secular matters, to forget the relation in which we stand to God. The precept, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," is either wholly ignored, or its application restricted to special spiritual exercises and duties. We need a more thorough and pervading sense of God's presence, and our reliance on Him to penetrate our lives. The danger is one to which we are specially liable in an age when the science and industry of man have achieved so much. Science has unveiled so many secrets of nature that we begin to fancy that there is nothing so hidden that the same skill may not drag it from its retreat. It is not wonderful that man should deify intellect, and forgetful of Him from whom comes every talent, should ask, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" Everywhere, in fact, do we see men thus exalting themselves and their own wisdom. They would fain put God out of His own world, by enthroning man in His place. To correct these godless views of life, God, from time to time, sends us solemn and emphatic warnings of His power and our dependence. The wise hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. Judgment instructs those whom the gentler voice of mercy did not reach. 2. Mark the development of this spirit in our spiritual life. Much apparently Christian service would not abide the Master's test, because so much of this earthly element enters into the spirit by which it is inspired. Is there not too often a disposition to trust in the wisdom of our plans and the efficiency of our instruments, rather than in that blessing which alone can make rich? Self-reliance,

self-conceit, self-exaltation, self-seeking, self-worship, are evils that intrude even into religious institutions. (1) This spirit may reveal itself in the motives that induce activity in the service of the Church. Love to Christ is the only true and enduring motive of all Christian labour. But we may work to extend our party rather than to glorify God. There is danger in mere sectional attachments. Our motives may be more directly personal. We may labour only to gratify our own ambition or fancy. Our vanity may be pleased by the rich incense of flattery. Our desire for power may be gratified by the influence we gain over other men. There are tests which we may all employ with advantage to prove the character of our work. (2) The spirit displays itself in regard to the modes of Christian labour. There are two opposite extremes against which we have to guard. There are not a few who are crying out for a new Gospel. There are those who are sticklers not only for truth, but for the very phrases in which it is set forth. These two parties are wide as the poles asunder, yet they agree in this—they are both burning incense to their own net. (3) This spirit may reveal itself in the way in which we regard the results of Christian labour. In the hour of success we think more of the efficiency of the instrument than of the grace of the Divine Spirit. The greatest talent is insufficient if alone. We want all the power that Christians possess sanctified to Christ. We want to see the most perfect instrumentality, but we want something beyond that. There is no real power unless the Spirit of God be in our midst. (*J. Guinness Rogers, D.D.*)

The worship of the net :—The word “drag” simply means a large fishing net. The bold metaphor of the text is that of a fisherman whose mind is so overborne by the large draughts of fish which he is continually taking that he begins actually to worship those nets which are the instruments of such wonderful success. The prophet is portraying the condition of the Babylonian Empire. It had been swallowing up the smaller nations. Puffed up by its military successes, it had sunk into a condition of practical atheism. They came to worship the resources which they had at their disposal. They paid homage to material power. In answer to his prayer the prophet receives a vision of judgment. Haughty, idolatrous Babylon will not continue for ever. They worshipped the *net*; they would be captured by the net of another military empire. The sin of man keeps repeating itself throughout the ages. Notwithstanding all the lessons of the past, there are still multitudes who forget the living God. They seek their own gratification and aggrandisement. When they are successful they are puffed up with pride. They boast themselves of the means and methods which have been the instruments of their success. Let us be thankful that the righteousness of God keeps repeating itself too. The principles of the Divine government are eternal. God was in the history of old Judæa and Assyria, but He is also in the history of every nation of modern Europe. His providence must not be left out of human calculations. Have we in England learnt the lesson that only “righteousness” can really and permanently exalt any nation? How prone are we to magnify the instruments of our national greatness! We worship rank, wealth, intellect, business. But God is not mocked, and in many ways He breaks men’s idols before their eyes. (*T. Campbell Finlayson.*)

The idolatry of work :—In our times the idolatry of work has replaced the thirst for wisdom; there is no time to fill the treasure-house, and there is no time to dispense its stores. The consequences of this sort of life are sufficiently mischievous before we bring in on it the light of Christ and the Gospel. What was our Lord’s teaching in correction of this tendency to an idol-worship of work? He taught that work is not an end, but a means. It may be fruitful or unfruitful, stopping with itself, or producing something. It is essentially of two kinds—it may begin with itself, or it may have a beginning behind it; it may be (so to say) its own life, or it may be the manifestation of a life prior and ancient. Not the work, but the workman, is the all-important thing. All depends, not upon what the man wrought, but upon what he was. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*)

Self-conceit :—The over-estimate of one’s capabilities and powers, and the depreciation of the capabilities and powers of all other people. Self-knowledge is not self-conceit. Nor is the right and diligent use of the talents with which God has entrusted us any indication of self-conceit. Illustration—The principle contained in the words, “They sacrifice unto their own net,” &c. I. MEN DO THIS WHEN THEY ATTRIBUTE THEIR TEMPORAL PROSPERITY TO THEIR OWN SKILL AND ENERGY, AND NOT TO GOD. Wealth may, or may not, be a proof of skill and industry. Self-reliance is a noble quality; it is different from self-sufficiency. But we are dependent upon God. II. WHEN THEY ATTRIBUTE THE DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE AND THE INVENTIONS THAT HAVE

BENEFITED THE WORLD TO THE HUMAN INTELLECT AND NOT TO GOD. Man's discoveries are God's revelations. III. WHEN THEY ATTRIBUTE THE PROSPERITY OF A COUNTRY TO ANY OTHER SOURCE THAN TO GOD. Patriotism is a virtue. Our prosperity may be ascribed to different causes. Let us honour God; let not our pride weaken us. IV. IN THEIR TREATMENT OF GOD'S MERCIFUL REVELATION TO THE WORLD. V. WHEN THEY DEPEND FOR THE SPREAD OF GOD'S RULE ON HUMAN PLANS AND ORGANISATIONS, AND NOT ON THE BLESSING OF THE HIGHEST. "The excellency of the power is of God." Without God's presence and blessing all that we do is in vain. (*James Owen.*) *Conceit born of success*:—This passage discovers to us the secret impiety of all those who do not serve God sincerely and with an honest mind. There is, indeed, imprinted on the hearts of men a certain conviction respecting the existence of a God; for none are so barbarous as not to have some sense of religion; and thus all are rendered inexcusable, as they carry in their hearts a law which is sufficient to make them a thousand times guilty. But at the same time the ungodly, and those who are not illuminated by faith, bury this knowledge, for they are enveloped in themselves; and when some recollection of God creeps in, they are at first impressed, and ascribe some honour to him; but this is evanescent, for they soon suppress it as much as they can; yea, they even strive to extinguish (though they cannot) this knowledge, and whatever light they have from heaven. This is what the prophet now graphically sets forth in the person of the Assyrian king. He had before said, "This power is that of his God." He had complained that the Assyrians would give to their idols what was peculiar to God alone, and thus deprive Him of His right; but he says now, that they would "sacrifice to their own drag, and offer incense to their net." This is a very different thing; for how could they sacrifice to their idols if they ascribed to their drag whatever victories they gained? Now by the words "drag" and "net" the prophet means their efforts, strength, forces, power, councils, and policies, as they call them, and whatever else there be which profane men arrogate to themselves. But what is it to sacrifice to their own net? The Assyrian did this, because he thought he surpassed all others in craftiness; because he thought himself so courageous as not to hesitate to make war with all nations, regarding himself as well prepared with forces, and justified in his proceedings; and because he became successful, and omitted nothing calculated to ensure victory. Thus the Assyrian regarded as nothing his idols; for he put himself in the place of all his gods. But if it be asked, whence came his success? we must answer, that the Assyrian ought to have ascribed it all to the one true God; but he thought, that he prospered through his own valour. If we refer to counsel, it is certain that God is He who governs the counsels and minds of men; but the Assyrian thought he gained everything by his own skill. If, again, we speak of strength, whence is it? And of courage, whence is it but from God? But the Assyrian appropriated all these things to himself. What regard, then, had he for God? We see how he now takes away all honour even from his own idols, and attributes everything to himself. But this sin belongs to all the ungodly; for where God's Spirit does not reign there is no humility, and men ever swell with inward pride until God thoroughly cleanse them. It is, then, necessary that God should empty us by His special grace, that we may not be filled with this Satanic pride, which is innate, and which cannot by any means be shaken off by us until the Lord regenerates us by His Spirit. God cannot be really glorified except when men wholly empty themselves. (*John Calvin.*) *Sacrificing to the net*:—There is a curious passage in the prophecy of Habakkuk which speaks of fishermen who "sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag." I think that sometimes very true and earnest Christians are in danger of doing that. They almost worship the visible Church, which, after all, is only a net "to catch men" for Christ. They delight in its historic character. They glory in its apostolic order. They venerate every feature of its organic structure. In one word, it becomes no more a spiritual Church, but a kingdom of this world. But by and by a terrible shock shakes them like an earthquake. Some iniquity appears in Zion. Wickedness shelters itself under the robes of piety. Political scheming creeps into ecclesiastical councils. The very law of the Church is made an instrument of oppression. They stand confounded and amazed. What means it all? Why, it means just this, that Christ is telling you that no earthly kingdom is the Church of Christ. This is not your rest. The marriage supper of the Lamb is not in the poor feast of a visible Church. The "New Jerusalem" is not yet let down from God out of heaven. (*Bishop Cheney.*)

CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower.—*Awaiting the Lord's message* :—Nothing definite is known of this man Habakkuk. In the text we see him preparing himself for his holy task—ascending his tower, that he may see; secluding himself, that he may hear; making his bosom bare, that he may feel the message of the Unseen. I. THE SECRET OF LIFE IS TO REALISE THE UNSEEN. To this man the world is full of an unseen, majestic presence. The very air he breathes throbs with the pulse of God, and the silence may be broken at any time by God's voice. So he spends life watching, listening, waiting. Is not every life noble and grand and true just in proportion as it realises this, as it seeks the Unseen? This is indeed the Gospel—that God is now reconciled to us, and that His presence broods over us in unutterable love. To realise this and enter into its blessedness is not only the secret of life, but it is the whole duty of man. II. WE OUGHT TO EXPECT MESSAGES FROM THE UNSEEN. To the prophet this great Unseen One is no dumb God. The truth is, that God seems to be always seeking some heart sufficiently at leisure from itself that He may talk with it. He found such an one in Abraham and in Moses. In the days of Eli we read there was "no open vision." God was silent, for none could hear His voice; God was invisible, for earth-blinded eyes could not see Him. If we could but hear, He has much to say unto us—much about His purposes of grace toward ourselves, and about His purpose toward the world; much about the coming glory. In three ways—1. By His Spirit through the Word. 2. By His Spirit through our conscience. 3. By His Spirit through His Providence. We need these voices from the Unseen to guide and help us in the sorrows and perplexities of our lives. If it be a miracle for the Unseen to speak with men, then that is a miracle that happens almost every hour. III. HOW WE SHOULD DISPOSE OURSELVES TO RECEIVE GOD'S MESSAGES. 1. We should get up, up above the heads of the crowd, up above the crush and clamour of the worldly throng, to where there is clearer air and greater peace. It is not the new play we want, nor the most fashionable church, but the new vision of His face. Wherever we can get most of that is the place for us. 2. We are next to quicken our whole being into a listening and receptive attitude. 3. Quiet is needed also; for God most often speaks in a still, small voice. (*J. C. Johnston, M.A.*) *The watch-tower* :—Almost nothing is known about the personal history of the author of the prophecy contained in this book. He himself retires into the background, as one content to be forgotten if the Word of God uttered by him receives the attention it deserves. The self-abnegation of many of those whom God employed to do a great work among His ancient people teaches a lesson that is much needed. It implies a whole-hearted consecration to God's work and interests in the world that ought to be more aimed at than it sometimes is. It is a trial that comes to the prophet's faith, and how he met it, that are brought before us in the whole passage of which our text forms a part. What was the trial of his faith? In answer to his cry to God to interpose to put a stop to abounding wickedness in the Covenant nation, the reply is given to him that terrible judgment was about to fall upon it, and from an unexpected quarter—from Babylon. The havoc that would be made by this fierce, proud, self-sufficient world-power is made in vision to pass distinctly and clearly before him. He sees its terrible army marching through the land—a garden of Eden before it and a wilderness behind it. The scene that thus fills his mind's eye, his patriotic spirit would not allow him to contemplate unmoved. He trembles for the safety of his people under this dark cloud of judgment. He seeks refuge from them in God, holding fast the conviction that a righteous God would not allow a wicked, proud nation like that of the Chaldeans to hold His people for ever in cruel bondage. "Art Thou of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst Thou not look upon iniquity? Wherefore lookest Thou, then, upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" As he contemplates the Chaldean army, conscious of its own strength and making a god of it, ravaging the whole land, this conviction grew doubtful to him. It seemed sometimes to slip away from his grasp. This was the trial of his faith, and the greatness of it can only be measured by the sincerity of his religion and the strength of his patriotism. How does he meet this trial? The words of our text inform us. "I will stand upon my watch-tower, and set me upon the fortress, and will watch to see what

He will say in me, and what I shall answer to my plea." He resolves to lay his doubts before God, and to wait upon Him—withdrawing his attention from all earthly things—for solution. In carrying out this resolution he compares himself to one who mounts the watch-tower—attached to ancient towns and fortresses—that he may scan the surrounding district to see if any one might be approaching, whether friend or foe. Like one on the watch-tower in the eager strained outlook for some messenger, would the prophet be in relation to the expected explanation from God. When he himself tells us that on this watch-tower he was watching to see what God would say in him—for this is the proper rendering of the words—waiting for an inward voice he could recognise as God's, the spiritual nature of the transaction is placed beyond all doubt. The revelation which came to his soul thus waiting, of which we have an account in the subsequent part of the chapter, solved his difficulties and strengthened his faith and hope. The assurance was given to him, as we learn from the 14th verse, that not only Canaan, but "the whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." I. THE MOUNTING OF THE WATCH-TOWER. This is an exercise to which we must be no strangers if we are to have God's light shining on our path, God's voice saying to us: "This is the way, walk ye in it," and God's hand laid upon us to strengthen us for every trial and conflict. 1. May we not regard it as laying before God the difficulties caused by his own dealings? There was a mystery in the events of Providence which the prophet felt that he could not penetrate. Was it possible that God's chosen people—to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants—would be overwhelmed in the disasters in which he saw them plunged? Would the ungodly might of Chaldea be allowed to crush them altogether, and all the hopes bound up in their life? To the eye of sense this seemed likely, but the prophet knew that behind all events and forces there was a personal God—Jehovah the Covenant God of Israel. He knew that they were but carrying out His will, and he would not believe, even though the appearances of things pointed to it—that that will was seeking the destruction of the Covenant nation. Sense was drawing him one way, his faith was drawing him another, and the questions born of this conflict which were agitating his mind he wisely resolves to lay before God. What are Job's wonderful speeches in his conversations with his friends, but a series of impassioned reasonings with God about His dealings with him? What, again, was Asaph's exercise under the triumphing of the wicked as recorded in a well-known Psalm, but a talking with God about His dealings? And do we not find the plaintive Jeremiah, when his soul was sore vexed with cruel opposition, saying, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" It is not a blind impersonal force that the believer sees behind the events that take place, compelling sullen submission to whatever happens? No! It is a loving Father to whom appeal may be made about the perplexing questions that may be aroused by His own dealings. Fatalism—in which things are accepted simply because they cannot be changed—is not Christian resignation, and falls far short of the attitude in which the believing heart can find rest. Openness in our dealings with God is what He delights in, and what will lead us to the knowledge of that secret of His that is with them that fear Him. Faith will have its difficulties both with the wondrous revelation God has given to us in His Word, and with the unfolding of His purposes in the course of His Providence. The finest natures—those touched to finest issues—are very often those who feel these difficulties most keenly, and have to fight their way to the bright shining shore of certainty and rest by buffeting with many a storm. And the best way of dealing with all those difficulties is just to take them to the watch-tower and lay them before God. 2. But this dealing with God about questions that may perplex us implies the stilling of our souls before Him, that He may give us light and guidance. The prophet after pleading with God, expostulating with Him on the apparent contradiction between the Divine providence and the Divine promise, places himself before God and waits for His voice. That he may hear it all the better—may catch the slightest whisper of the Divine voice within him—he retires into himself, quiets his own spirit, and intently waits. The expressive language of the Psalmist may be used to describe his attitude, "My soul is silence unto God." And this exercise, need we say, is essential to the obtaining of any deep insight into God's will, to our receiving those discoveries of Himself as a

God of grace and love, that will give us rest even under the most trying dispensations. It is by the Divine voice within us that the Divine voice without us in His written Word is clearly, distinctly understood, and is made to throw its blessed light upon Divine Providence. Without the inward revelation that comes to us by the teaching of God's Spirit, the outward revelation given in our Bibles will remain dark and unintelligible. If we do not withdraw now and again from the bustle and noise of the world, and commune with our own hearts, the Divine voice will be lost to us. It will remain unheard, as the bell striking the hour above some busy thoroughfare is often unheard by those in the throng. It is the calm lake which mirrors the sun most perfectly, and so it is the calm soul that will catch the most of the heavenly glory that shines upon the watch-tower, and reflect it on the world around. But we must not think of this calmness or silence of the soul toward God as a mere passive attitude. "It requires the intensest energy of all our being to keep all our being still and waiting upon God. All our strength must be put into the task; and our soul will never be more intensely alive than when in deepest abnegation it waits hushed before God."

3. Though it may involve an apparent contradiction, the silent soul will be one full of the spirit of prayer. The prophet had been pleading with God for light to guide him in dark days, and it is with a longing pleading soul that he mounts the watch-tower and waits for an answer. He has directed his prayer to God, and he looks up expecting an answer. There is really as much prayer in this silent submissive waiting for an answer to his cry as there was in the cry itself. The expectant look of the beggar after his request has been made has often more power to move the generous heart than the request itself. And the mounting of the watch-tower after prayer to maintain an outlook for the promised answer puts beyond all doubt that we have been sincere and earnest in the exercise, and will have power with God. The place on the watch-tower may have to be maintained for a time before the answer comes, but it is sure to come in some form or another. 4. But last of all here, this standing upon the watch-tower has been regarded by some as the prophet's continuance at his work notwithstanding the difficulties that encompassed it. Not unfrequently in the Old Testament is the prophet's office compared to that of a watchman. What the watchman in the tower did in the earthly sphere—keeping an outlook for the people and warning them of coming danger—the prophet was to do in the spiritual sphere. And so when the prophet here says: "I will stand upon my watch-tower," he is regarded as meaning, "I will not leave my post—the place in which God has put me, but will wait in the faithful discharge of every commanded duty for the solving of my doubts and the removal of my difficulties." Certainly in acting in such a way he took the very best plan of getting his way made clear. When we allow our perplexities, whatever they may be, to keep us back from work God is plainly laying to our hands, they will increase around us. Activity and steadfastness in duty will purge our spiritual atmosphere, while melancholy inactive brooding will laden it with pestilential vapours. A higher attainment still is to have the soul stilled before God, and expectant even in the midst of our labour.

II. WHAT IS ENJOYED IN THIS WATCH-TOWER. The prophet's experience was one so rich and blessed that a glimpse of it may well stir us up to follow his example: 1. He heard the Divine voice for which he listened. "Then Jehovah answered me and said." He became aware of a Divine presence within his soul, and conscious of a Divine voice speaking to his heart. His waiting and looking up met with a rich reward. Though this experience cannot now come in the same form to the trustful waiting soul, yet, in its inner essence, it may and does come. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit within believers as their teacher is a blessed reality. They who submit themselves to His guidance will be led by Him into all truth, will not only gain a deep insight into God's will, but will see its bearing upon events in Providence. It was a very simple truth that was now divinely spoken to the prophet: "Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." The man or the race of men that are lifted up with vain self-confidence shall experience no tranquillity, but they who abide firm in their allegiance to God and make Him their trust shall be maintained by His mighty gracious power. The simplest truths, that may in some of their aspects have long been familiar to us, are often used in the teaching of the Spirit to lift the soul above the mists that obscure its vision. It will be the declaration of truths thus divinely spoken to our hearts that will be accompanied with greatest power. 2. Again, let us notice that this experience

brought him a new sense of the Divine presence with His people. The song with which the sad prophecy ends, recorded in the third chapter, expresses this sense of the Divine nearness to His people. The land that had witnessed such marked manifestations of His presence and power, the memory of which was fondly cherished by the pious, had not been forsaken by Him. What had been done when "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran," would again be done for the overthrow of the proud oppressor, and for the deliverance of the humble fearers of His name. The eternal order lay behind the confusion caused by the wicked, and would in due time assert itself, for the God of this order was behind all. 3. So the prophet finds his labours for the land and people he loved sustained by a restful hope. Dark days may come in which the fig-tree shall not blossom, and there shall be no fruit in the vine, and the field shall yield no meat, but when their purifying work is accomplished brighter times shall dawn. His labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Neither will ours if done in the right spirit. (*R. Morton.*)

Watchfulness:—I. THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS. 1. This duty arises from various causes which affect us in our outward circumstances, as well as in our minds and hearts. They are our enemies or our friends; such as build up the character of man for good, and lift it heavenwards, or mar it and force it downwards to destruction. The ever-present, active, and all-pervading causes of good and evil, acting upon man's moral and spiritual nature, provide a powerful reason for this duty. For while a man is thus taught his dependence upon God for strength, and is shewn his own weakness in the battle of life, he is at the same time taught to use every precaution against his foes, to guard every avenue of his heart against their influence, and to be vigilant and watchful in all his daily undertakings. 2. But watchfulness as a moral duty may be considered as a recognition of God's laws and government. The man who waits, like Habakkuk, for the Almighty, will see the hand of God everywhere. He recognises God as the watchful Father, noting every tear and hearing every sigh that inspires the watchful heart with hope, and that sheds a bright ray of comfort through the gloom.

II. FAITH FOUNDED UPON THE REVELATIONS OF GOD IS AN ARGUMENT AGAINST ALL MISTRUST AND DOUBT OF HIS POWER AND GOODNESS. 1. The answer which God gave to the prayers of Habakkuk was the authority by which he met every quibble of his opponents, and by which he confronted his enmity. 2. A true faith acts on the revelation of God in the life history of Christ, and on the soul's immortality. In the life of Christ, weighted with suffering the most intense, we find a solution to our own troubles, as well as their sanction. Then let us "stand upon our watch." (*W. Horwood.*)

On the watch-tower:—There is no remedy, when such trials as those mentioned by the prophet in the first chapter meet us, except we learn to raise up our minds above the world. For if we contend with Satan, according to our own view of things, he will a hundred times overwhelm us, and we can never be able to resist him. Let us therefore know that here is shown to us the right way of fighting with him: when our minds are agitated with unbelief, when doubts respecting God's providence creep in, when things are so confused in this world as to involve us in darkness, so that no light appears, we must bid adieu to our own reason; for all our thoughts are nothing worth when we seek, according to our own reason, to form a judgment. Until then the faithful ascend to their tower, and stand in their citadel, of which the prophet here speaks, their temptations will drive them here and there, and sink them as it were in a bottomless gulf. But that we may more fully understand the meaning, we must know that there is here an implied contrast between the tower and the citadel, which the prophet mentions, and a station on earth. As long, then, as we judge according to our own perceptions we walk on the earth; and while we do so, many clouds arise, and Satan scatters ashes in our eyes, and wholly darkens our judgment, and thus it happens that we lie down altogether confounded. It is hence wholly necessary that we should tread our reason under foot, and come nigh to God Himself. We have said that the tower is the recess of the mind, but how can we ascend to it? Even by following the Word of the Lord. For we creep on the earth; nay, we find that our flesh ever draws us downward,—except when the truth from above becomes to us, as it were, wings, or a ladder, or a vehicle, we cannot rise up one foot, but, on the contrary, we shall seek refuges on the earth rather than ascend into heaven. But let the Word of God become our ladder, or our vehicle, or our wings, and, however difficult the ascent may be, we shall yet be able to fly upward, provided God's Word be allowed to have its own authority.

We hence see how unsuitable is the view of those interpreters who think that the tower and the citadel is the Word of God; for it is by God's Word that we are raised up to this citadel, that is, to the safeguard of hope, where we may remain safe and secure while looking down from this eminence on those things which disturb us and darken all our senses as long as we lie on the earth. This is one thing. Then the repetition is not without its use; for the prophet says, "On my tower will I stand, on the citadel will I set myself." He does not repeat in other words the same thing because it is obscure, but in order to remind the faithful that, though they are inclined to sloth, they must yet strive to extricate themselves. And we soon find how slothful we become, except each of us stirs up himself. For when any perplexity takes hold on our minds we soon succumb to despair. This, then, is the reason why the prophet, after having spoken of the tower, again mentions the citadel. (*John Calvin.*) *Watching for God*:—1. It is our safest way, in times of temptation and perplexity, not to lie down under discouragement, but to recollect ourselves, and fix our eyes on God, who only can clear our minds and quiet our spirits; therefore the prophet, after his deep plunge in temptation, sets himself to look to God, and get somewhat to answer upon his arguing, or reproof and expostulation, that so his mind may be settled. 2. It is by the Word that the Lord cleareth darkness, and would have His people answer their temptations and silence their reasonings. 3. Meditation, earnest prayer, withdrawing of our minds off from things visible, and elevating them towards God, are the means in the use whereof God revealeth Himself, and His mind from His Word, to His people in dark times. 4. Faithful ministers ought to acquit themselves like watchmen in a city or army, to be awake when others sleep, to be watching with God, and over the people, seeking after faithful instructions which they may communicate, seeking to be filled from heaven with light and life, that they may pour it out upon the people; and all this especially in hard times. 5. Albeit the Lord's people may have their own debates and faintings betwixt God and them, yet it is their part to smother these as much as they can, and to bring up a good report of God and His way to others. (*George Hutcheson.*) *On noting the providences of God*:—The observer of grace should be studious to discern the workings of Divine providence, and to consider their purposes in the counsels of the Most High. We inquire into the importance of observing the various ways in which the Almighty is pleased to address us, and of determining how far we have hitherto regarded them, and turned them to our individual improvement. In reply to the complaints of His servant, the Almighty shows that mercy would not be long extended; that the Chaldeans would soon inflict summary vengeance on the Jews. To these declarations of the Divine displeasure the prophet rejoins by stating the conviction of his own safety, and of the protection which would be extended to the rest of God's people. He had hoped that God would have been satisfied with gentler corrections, and not have employed an idolatrous nation to punish His chosen people. But he resolves to wait patiently, in quietness and in confidence, for the answer of God, that he may know what statement he was to publish. Every Christian is as a man standing on the watch, as one who will have to give account; who watches to see what God will say to him. The will of God is declared both in His Word and in His works. The great end to be effected by watchfulness is, that we may know our actual state, and be ready at any time for aught that may befall us. It is that we may not be surprised, that we may not be taken at unawares. What do you propose to answer when you are called to appear before an all-seeing God? He has not only spoken to us in national judgments and mercies, He has said a word privately to each one of us as individual. (*Richard Harvey, M.A.*) *Man's moral mission in the world*:—Wherefore are we in this world? We are not here by choice, nor by chance. Man's moral mission—I. CONSISTS IN RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. This will appear—1. From man's nature as a spiritual being. (1) Man has a native instinct for it. (2) A native capacity for it. (3) A native necessity for it. 2. From man's condition as a fallen being. As a sinner, man has a deeper and a more special need than angels can have. Communications from God are of infinite moment to man. 3. From the purposes of Christ's mediation. Christ came to bring men to God. His Cross is the meeting-place between man and his Maker. 4. From the special manifestations of God for the purpose. These we have in the Bible. 5. From the general teaching of the Bible. In the Book men are called to audience with God. II. HOW ARE DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED? Two things are necessary—1. That we resort to the right

scene. The prophet to his "tower." 2. That we resort to the right scene in the right spirit. III. MAN'S MORAL MISSION CONSISTS IN IMPARTING COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. That we have to impart as well as to receive is evident—1. From the tendency of Divine thoughts to express themselves. Ideas of a religious kind always struggle for utterance. 2. From the universal adaptation of Divine thoughts. 3. From the spiritual dependence of man upon man. 4. From the general teaching of the Bible. IV. MAN'S MORAL MISSION CONSISTS IN THE PRACTICAL REALISATION OF COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE ETERNAL MIND. In the Divine purpose there is a period fixed for the realisation of every Divine promise. However distant it may seem, our duty is to wait in earnest practical faith for it. Learn who it is that fulfils his moral missions in the world. The man who practically carries out God's revelation in the spirit and habits of his life. Notice—(1) The reasonableness of religion. (2) The grandeur of a religious life. (2) The function of Christianity. What is the special design of the Gospel? To qualify man to fulfil his mission on earth. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. Write the vision, and make it plain.—*Teaching must be plain:*—Think of that railway excursion train as it hurries onwards with impetuous speed! A vast crowd is collected there, and how various and complicated are the interests of each! A rapid impulse bears forward the whole; that impulse resides in every member of the group; one single bystander directs and controls it all. In an unexpected moment a shock, as of a thunderbolt, crushes them together; in the twinkling of an eye the elements of destruction are terribly let loose; each hapless one becomes an instrument of injury or death to his neighbour. What pain can paint the terror, the agony, the anguish of such a scene! They will be remembered for long, long years in mutilated forms, in shaken nerves, in bereaved or orphaned homes; the records will make multitudes shudder by their firesides, or will haunt them in their slumbers. Such have been the effects of one false or mistaken signal! Let us who are ministers of the Gospel remember what interests we hold, and by how much the soul is more precious than the body. Let us beware! There are, in the age in which we live, spiritual impulses innumerable, strange, impetuous. And we are the signal-men! (*J. G. Miall.*) *The voice of the old pulpit:*—I. THE OLD PULPIT'S APOLOGY FOR SPEAKING. I am old. My outward appearance has been diversified at different times and places. I have a variety of experiences. My great influence is acknowledged by a large majority in every age and clime. II. THE OLD PULPIT'S COMPLAINTS AND BOASTINGS. 1. My complaints—(1) I complain because some very ungodly characters have taken the liberty of ascending my steps. (2) Because some look at me as a mere workshop to make a living in. (3) Because I have been compelled to serve as a stage to exhibit men, and not Christ. (4) Because I have been too long used as a place of refuge for blind bigotry and prejudice. (5) Because many who have stood on my floor did not do my work with all their might. (6) Because there is not more attention paid me. 2. My boastings—(1) In the multitude of my sons. (2) Of the fame of my sons. (3) In the greatness and glory of my themes. (4) In the extent of my influence in the world. (5) In the preservation of my life in spite of numerous and powerful enemies. (6) That I am the great favourite of heaven. (*J. Roberts.*) *The simplicity and freeness of the Gospel salvation:*—The vision was to be written upon tables, and made plain, that every one who read it might run. He who gave the vision commanded that it should be made plain upon tables, that the way of escape might be at once learned by those that were in peril, and that without a moment's delay they might run in that way and be delivered. What was the danger with which the people were threatened, and from which this vision was to indicate the way of escape? It is usually thought to be an anticipated invasion of the Chaldeans. It seems to me the danger is that to which all men as sinners are exposed; and that the way of escape indicated is that which is revealed to us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I regard the prophet as here commissioned to announce to his countrymen, and ultimately, through the volume of inspiration, to the world at large, the folly, sin, and danger of rebellion against God, and forgetfulness of Him; and having thus warned them of the evil and peril of their ways, to urge upon them the importance of running in that way which has been opened for their escape. In favour of this interpretation the following considerations may be adduced—1. Look at the circumstances in which the prophet tells us this commission was delivered to him. 2. In verse 4 is a passage three times quoted by

the apostle Paul, as applicable to the salvation of the Gospel—to the enjoyment of eternal life. 3. Peter (Acts x. 43) tells Cornelius that *all* the prophets preached the doctrine of salvation by faith through Christ. 4. The interpretation proposed seems to give greater unity and appropriateness to the prophet's subsequent declarations. The commission, then, which the prophet received from God was a commission to declare plainly and faithfully to men their guilt and danger as sinners against God, and to point them to that salvation in connection with which God has revealed Himself to them, that they may escape the calamities to which their iniquity has exposed them. It is plain, then, that in order to ascertain correctly the way of salvation we must go to the written records of God's will, and read. (*W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time.—Visions:—He whom men style a visionary has for the most part little or no honour among them. But no one can help having visions unless he be devoid of imagination. A vision is an inward view, an image, or series of images, broader, larger, grander, deeper than aught that the bodily eye can see; it is evoked by some outward sign, on which a spiritual force acts. Visions may come from God; they may bring men near to God. There are day visions. It was to be a sign of the latter days, that in them there should be second sight far into hidden things. And a life without visions is not that which an imaginative and sympathetic man or woman would care to live. There are false visions and true; some that never come, and some that will come, and truly. The false visions are those which have this world for their boundary, and the things of this world for their substance. They generally relate to self: to one's own aggrandisement, to one's own enjoyment, or to the gratification of some desire of the natural heart. There is a great variety in them, even at that rate. It is sometimes the will of God that men should get the discipline they need, and without which they would be lost for ever, by making the pilgrimage of life with visions before them which for ever fly pursuit. Turn from visions that fade to one which does not fade. That vision is supernatural; it is pure vision, for it is seen by faith, and by faith only. What is that vision of these latter days? Jesus came to earth, lived, disappeared. But with that departure came a vision such as never mortals beheld before. The vision of a ransomed and purified race of men and women; of the destruction of all that is false, and the setting straight all that is wrong; of perfect truth, and a clear view thereof. Then never lose faith, never fear. God's light will grow brighter and stronger every year as you fight off the powers of darkness and hold faster to Him, and at last you shall see what made the light of your life, and you shall find all truth and all knowledge and full reward in the beatific vision of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (*Morgan Dix.*) **Though it tarry, wait for it.—Waiting on God:—**In these words we have something supposed, and a duty prescribed. "Though it tarry." This implies some degree of impatience, which may be due either to unbelief or strength of desire. "Wait for it." The vision is at present hid in the Divine purposes, but will at length break forth and be revealed. **I. INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN "WAITING."** 1. A firm persuasion of the being and reality of what God has promised. Faith makes unseen things visible, and future things present; and as to things of a spiritual nature, it so demonstrates their excellency as to engage us to choose and give them the preference to all other things, while it excites strong desires after them. Faith therefore enters into the very essence of the duty here enjoined. 2. The deepest humility, joined with reverence and love. In order rightly to wait upon God we must have high apprehensions of Him and low apprehensions of ourselves. The waiting soul is sensible of its own dependence on the Divine all-sufficiency. 3. Fervent and continued desire. For these two are joined together in Isa. xxvi. 8. Waiting will cease when desire fails; but when everything else in a Christian seems to be gone, this remains. Waiting upon God is opposed to a stupid and lethargic frame of spirit. 4. Patience must be exercised in waiting. Not despairing patience. Not merely natural patience. A truly Christian patience, whereby we bear without murmuring the greatest afflictions, and are not totally discouraged by the longest delays. A patient spirit is neither timorous and distrustful on the one hand, nor rash and hasty on the other. For an apostolic similitude, see James v. 7, 8. We expect from God; we must not prescribe to Him. 5. Fixedness and stability, in opposition to a fluctuating and unstable temper of mind; constancy and resolution, in opposition to fickleness and levity. The prophet

calls it "standing upon a watch-tower." 6. Diligence and constancy, in opposition to sloth and weariness. Waiting upon God does not imply indolence, but activity; not neglect of the means, but diligent use of them. Diligence without dependence is the greatest folly; and dependence without diligence is no better than presumption. II. THE REASONABLENESS OF THE EXHORTATION. Consider—1. We are but servants; and what should servants do but wait? 2. What God has promised must be worth waiting for. Surely those put a great slight upon the promised blessings who will not earnestly seek and patiently wait for them. 3. God has long waited upon us. He has had great patience with us, and shall we not patiently wait for His mercy? 4. It is one end for which God bestows His grace upon us, that we might be able and willing to wait. It is this which calms the boisterous passions and stills the tumult of the soul. 5. God seldom performs His promises or answers our expectations till we are brought to this state of mind. When we are submissive in the want of blessings we are most likely to enjoy them; whereas fretfulness and discontent will provoke God to withhold them. When we contend with Him, He will contend with us; but when we resign ourselves up to His will, He will gratify us in our wishes. 6. The sweetness of blessings is generally proportioned to the time we have waited for them, and the longer they have tarried the more welcome they are when they come. Learn from hence that when grace has reached the heart there is still much for the Christian to do. Our present state is oftentimes a state of sore and pressing want, and always of imperfect enjoyment; and therefore we should wait, and our waiting should be accompanied with cheerfulness; and to secure this we should regard promises more than appearances. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *A three-fold tarrying*:—Three different Hebrew words are in English rendered by the one word "tarry." One means, to tarry for a reason, because constrained to do so by some rational necessity exterior to the actor. One signifies to tarry for shame, to remain in a place because ashamed to leave it. One word has in it the idea of choice, and means to remain behind willingly. Illustrate by Gen. xxiv. 56; Deut. vii. 10; Gen. xix. 16. Habakkuk is speaking of the second advent of Christ. To the yearning inquiry of the Church, spiritually heard by the prophet, "Lord, when wilt Thou come in Thy glory?" the answer comes—"The time for His coming is appointed, though He tarry for some reason"; such reasons there are in the conditions of this wicked world which delay His coming; still, wait for Him; because it (He) will surely come; it (He) will not tarry freely, willingly, upon His own account, of His own arbitrary choice. (*Alex. Mrywvitz, A.M.*) *God's delays*:—There is nothing so painful or mysterious in the experience of the children of God as the Lord's frequently long delay in coming to their help in answer to their cry. This experience is not only painful in itself, but it often implies much spiritual conflict. It tends to shake faith to its foundations. Yet this is often God's way. And since it is His way, our first source of comfort under this trial is—1. To be still, and know that He is God. In all extremities we must fall back upon this, the sovereignty of God. 2. However dark be our path, we have no reason to doubt His love. 3. We can sometimes discern reasons why the Lord delays His coming. The expression, "the fulness of time," reveals to us much of the secret of God's delays. The waiting time is usually a time of growth. The suppliant sees things very differently at the close of his struggle from what he did at the outset; and the blessing so ardently sought becomes now a real blessing from his being thus prepared to receive it. 4. It will follow from this that when our prayers are offered up for blessings for others they too, at that time, may be unfitted to receive them. 5. As it is with human souls, who cannot, without a miracle, be in a moment transformed from childhood to maturity, there must be in all mental and spiritual processes, first, the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. So it is with the constitution of things. Sometimes before prayer can be answered many things must happen. (*Evangelical Advocate.*) *The Divine slowness*:—This word is the one word which the Divine wisdom often seems to utter in rebuke of human impatience. God is never in haste. I. THE DIVINE PROCEEDINGS ARE SLOW. 1. The history of the earth illustrates this principle. Creation was the work of long eras. 2. There is something in the movement of the seasons tending to remind us of this great law. How silently and slowly winter retires before spring, and spring gives place to summer and autumn. To the Divine mind that orders it all there is a majesty in slowness. 3. The history of all life conveys the same lesson. Life, whether in plants or animals, is everywhere a growth; and all growth is silent, gradual,—so

gradual as not to be perceived. The education of an individual is slow; the education of a people must be very slow. II. GUARD AGAINST IMPATIENCE IN JUDGING THE WAYS OF GOD, AND KNOW HOW TO WAIT. Religion, revealed religion, includes much in harmony with these facts of nature and providence. 1. Note the long interval which was to pass between the promise of a Saviour and His advent. 2. So, when the Saviour did come, the manner of His coming was not such as the thoughts of men would have anticipated. The kingdom of heaven was to come without observation. 3. It is not without mystery to many minds that the history of revealed religion since the advent should have been such as it has been. We might have anticipated that the doctrine of Christ would be retained in its purity, and that its subduing power would be everywhere felt. But on reflection we find analogy suggesting that this was by no means probable. 4. If we descend from the general life of the Church to the spiritual history of the individual believer, we may find much there to remind us that the experience of the Church at large, and the Christian taken separately, are regulated by the same intelligence. With regard to much of our personal history, we are expected to wait for the revelations of God. (*Robert Vaughan, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **The just shall live by his faith.**—*Faith and the higher life*.—All men live by faith, and in our world man is the only creature who lives by faith. A world altogether without faith, where no man could trust another in anything, would be a most miserable world. Take away faith altogether, and all the social fabric would be one heap of ruins. Man is the only creature in this world who can live by faith. All creatures and all things depend upon God for the continuance of their existence as truly as man does, but it is man only who can trust in God. The fact that man can know God and trust in Him is a proof of his greatness and glory, and shows him to be the object of God's special care and tenderness, as was shown by Christ in His Sermon on the Mount. Yet there are many men who do not trust in Him for His blessings, and live for His glory, in the enjoyment of them. Faith in Him is not a condition of the bestowal of His temporal blessings upon men. But men cannot have God's spiritual blessings without faith in Him. To live for the spiritual and invisible is impossible without faith in God, and man is too great and glorious a being to live only for the present. The truth is, that the man of faith in God is the only man who truly lives. I. **THE NOBLEST CHARACTER.** In the Bible men are divided into two great divisions, the righteous and the wicked. The righteous is a man who trusts God's Word, submits to God's will, and lives in conformity with God's righteous and holy law. He is a straight, or right, man—right in mind, in heart, and in life. The unjust man is a man with a crooked soul. In the Old Testament the word righteousness refers more to conduct than to the inward principle of spiritual life, and the righteous man is characterised by truthfulness, honesty, uprightness, tenderness, and unswerving fidelity to duty in relation to God and man. II. **THE HIGHEST LIFE.** Man's highest life is a life of trust in God. No man can live to himself in the highest sense of life, and if he tries to do so he will die in the very attempt. It is through the death of the lower self that the higher and true self can live. To enable men to do this was Christ's object in coming to the world to live and die for us. Through faith men die in His death and live in His life, and this is the only way in which fallen man, who is dead in trespasses and sins, can find his life. The greatest thing the blessed Saviour could give for man was life, and the greatest thing He can give to man is life. In giving life Christ gives to men all they stand in need of for time and eternity. There is more in life than correspondence of an organism with its environment. There is a vital, mysterious principle, which manifests itself through the correspondence of the organism with its environment, and reaches its perfection when that correspondence becomes perfect. The highest life is the spiritual, which, said Christ, consists in the knowledge of God and Himself. The spiritual man not only lives and moves and has his being in God and His Son, as the true environment of spiritual and eternal life, but God in His Son must live in him. What is it to *live* according to the sense of the word in the text? It consists of three things—1. Participation of God's nature. Men live in God and unto God by becoming partakers of the Divine nature. 2. Perfect delight in God. We associate enjoyment with all conscious life. God has no way of giving joy but by giving life. 3. Usefulness for God. The crown of every life is its usefulness; its highest end is service. There is no true joy of life possible without life of service. The life which consists

of the knowledge of God in His Son will be eternally progressive. **III. THE CONDITION OF THE BLESSED LIFE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.** "By his faith." Man's highest life is a life of living trust in a living God. Faith in God is the animating and sustaining principle of the life of the righteous. Only a *person* can be an object of *trust*. Faith cannot live but in the constant vision of its object. This living faith in God is given to man to enable him to do his work for God. The only faith worthy of the name is that which enables us to live the truest and highest life. (*Z. Mather.*) *The just* :—When we repent and believe the Gospel, we live—are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. **I. THE JUST.** Behold, his soul that is lifted up is not upright in him. Works which are supposed to merit, naturally puff up the mind with pride. The prophet says, that proud disposition which you think merits, because of your works, is not an upright disposition. Good works cannot avail to justification. You must believe, not work. Good works are evidences of faith. The just are such as God justifies by faith in His own beloved Son. For Christ's righteousness is to all, and upon all them that believe. **II. THEY ARE ALIVE.** Did they not live before? Yes, a natural life. They are quickened to a new and higher life. None are alive till born again of the Spirit. We must experience the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." **III. HOW THE BELIEVER LIVES THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE.** By his faith. The man who is justified by faith is made spiritually alive, and this life is maintained and supported by repeated acts of faith in the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Faith in Christ justifies, and by believing we receive righteousness and strength, and are made holy and acceptable to God. (*R. Horsfall.*) *Nothing better than reliance on God* :—The prophet means to show that nothing is better than to rely on God's Word, how much soever may various temptations assault our souls. He sets the two clauses of the verse, the one opposed to the other : every man who would fortify himself, would ever be subject to various changes, and never attain a quiet mind ; then comes the other clause—that man cannot otherwise obtain rest than by faith. The first clause I would render, "Where there is an elation of mind there is no tranquillity." When the prophet says that there is no calmness of mind possessed by those who deem themselves well fortified, he intimates that they are their own executioners, for they seek for themselves many troubles, many sorrows, many anxieties, and contrive and mingle together many designs and purposes ; now they think of one thing, then they turn to another ; for the Hebrews say that the soul is made right when we acquiesce in a thing, and continue in a tranquil state of mind ; but when confused thoughts distract us, then they say that our soul is not right in us. We now perceive the real meaning of the prophet. "Behold," he says : by this demonstrative particle he intimates that what he teaches us may be clearly seen if we attend to daily events. The meaning then is, that a proof of this fact exists evidently in the common life of men—that he who fortifies himself, and is also elated with self-confidence, never finds a tranquil haven, for some new suspicion or fear ever disturbs his mind. Hence it comes that the soul entangles itself in various cares and anxieties. This is the reward which is allotted by God's just judgment to the unbelieving. The prophet, in the second clause, places faith in opposition to all those defences by which men so blind themselves as to neglect God, and to seek no aid from Him. (*John Calvin.*) *Life by faith* :—In this connection there is a peculiar shade of meaning in living by faith. Immediate reference is to approaching trials of an extraordinary kind. There is a vision of national calamity, an impending invasion of the Chaldeans. It is declared that humility is the only upright attitude of soul, in such circumstances : and contrasted with the proud impatience which cannot wait for God, in His appointed time, is the meek reliance of the just man. "But the just shall live by his faith." **I. ORDINARILY, THE JUST MAN LIVES BY FAITH.** 1. As it is the first act of that new spiritual life which the Holy Ghost produces in the soul. *It is that coming to Christ which the Scriptures make anterior to every other gift or exercise of grace. 2. We live by faith, as it apprehends the plea by which the condemnation of death is set aside, or as it is a justifying instrument. We are said to live by that instrumentality which delivers us, and shields us from the operation of death. 3. We live by faith, as it unites the soul in mystical union with the Head, in whom there is all the fulness of life. 4. We live by faith, as it is in the range of its appropriation the highest and best condition of life. 5. We live by faith, as it is a principle essentially indicative of life, active, operative, and fruitful. **II. HOW DOES SUCH FAITH SURVIVE IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXTRAORDINARY TRIAL ?**

1. Calamity, that which exceeds the bounds of ordinary affliction. Such as war, famine, pestilence, earthquake. 2. Reproach for the faithful maintenance of truth and holiness. 3. The return of infidelity—extraordinary in that no completeness of defeat can prevent its returning invasion. 4. Another trial is apostasy. Faith is first in order; every other grace in the soul implies the precedence of this faith; hope herself must give up the sure and steadfast anchor, before this inner and ultimate life of faith can be destroyed. (*A. T. McGill, D.D.*) *Life is due to faith*:—The prophet here places faith in opposition to all those defences by which men so blind themselves as to neglect God, and to seek no aid from Him. As men therefore rely on what the earth affords, depending on their fallacious supports, the prophet here ascribes life to faith. But faith, as is well known, depends on God alone. That we may then live by faith, the prophet intimates that we must willingly give up all those defences which are wont to disappoint us. He then who finds that he is deprived of all protection, will live by his faith, provided he seeks in God alone what he wants, and leaving the world, would fix his mind on heaven. The prophet understands by the word *amunat*, that faith which strips us of all arrogance, and leads us naked and needy to God, that we may seek salvation from Him alone, which would otherwise be far removed from us. We perceive why Habakkuk has put these two things in opposition the one to the other—that the defences of this world are not only evanescent, but also bring always with them many tormenting fears—and then, that the just shall live by his faith. Faith is not to be taken here for man's integrity, but for that faith which sets man before God emptied of all good things, so that he seeks what he needs from His gratuitous goodness: for all the unbelieving try to fortify themselves; and thus they strengthen themselves, thinking that anything in which they trust is sufficient for them. But what does the just do? He brings nothing before God except faith: then he brings nothing of his own, because faith borrows, as it were, through favour, what is not in man's possession. He, then, who lives by faith, has no life in himself, but because he wants it, he flies for it to God alone. The prophet also puts the verb in the future tense, in order to show the perpetuity of this life; for the unbelieving glory in a shadowy life; but the Lord will at last discern their folly, and they themselves shall really know that they have been deceived. But as God never disappoints the hope of His people, the prophet here promises a perpetual life to the faithful. (*John Calvin.*) *The use of faith in a time of general declension in religion*:—What is a calamitous season? 1. When it exceeds the bounds of affliction, or when the dispensations of God's anger in it cannot be reduced to the head of affliction. 2. When judgments fall promiscuously upon all sorts of persons, and make no distinction. I. HOW WE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; WHAT FAITH WILL DO IN SUCH A SEASON. 1. Faith will give the soul a reverential fear of God in His judgments. 2. It will put the soul upon preparing and providing an ark for itself. (1) This ark is Jesus Christ. (2) There must be a door in this ark. To obtain an interest in Christ is the general work of faith in these days. (3) It will put us upon the search and examination of our own hearts, what accession we have made to the sins that have procured these judgments. The sins which do and have procured these judgments are—open and flagitious sins of the world. And the sins of Churches and professors. These latter include lukewarmness; contenting ourselves in outward order; want of love among ourselves; earthly-mindedness. II. HOW FAITH WILL CARRY IT UNDER OTHER PERPLEXITIES THAT MAY BE COMING ON US. 1. How we may live by faith under reproaches. (1) Faith will give us such an experience of the power, efficacy, sweetness and benefit of Gospel ordinances and Gospel worship, as shall cause us to despise all that the world can do in opposition to us. (2) It will bring the soul into such an experimental sense of the authority of Jesus Christ, as to make it despise all other things. Faith will work this double respect unto the authority of Jesus Christ—as He is the great Head and Lawgiver of the Church, and as He is Lord of lords and King of kings. (3) Faith will bring to mind, and make effectual upon our souls, the examples of them that have gone before us, in giving the same testimony that we do, and in the sufferings that they underwent upon that account. (4) Faith will receive in the supplies that Christ hath laid up for His people in such a season. (5) It is faith alone that can relieve us with respect unto the recompense of reward. (6) Faith will work by patience when difficulties shall be multiplied upon us. 2. How we may live by faith, under an apprehension of the great and woeful decays in Churches, in Church members, in professors of all sorts; and in the gradual

withdrawing of the glory of God from us all on that account. (1) This is such a time of decay among us. A sense of it is impressed upon the minds of all the most judicious and diligent Christians, that do abound most in self-examination, or do take most notice of the ways of God. They recognise the open want of love among Church members; want of delight and diligence in the ordinances of Gospel worship; and our worldly-mindedness, conformity to the world, and security. A sense of this general decay ought to be an exercise and concern to our minds. God is dishonoured by this general decay. The world is offended and scandalised by it. The ruin of Churches is hastened by it. (2) What is the work of faith under this condition? It will remind the soul that, notwithstanding this, Christ hath built His Church upon a rock, that it shall not be utterly prevailed against. It will remind the soul that God hath yet the fulness and residue of the Spirit. Faith will cheer us by saying, "Are not all these things foretold thee?" And it will put every soul in whom it is upon an especial attendance unto those duties God calls him unto in such a season. Such as self-examination; great mourning, by reason of God's withdrawing Himself from us; watchfulness over ourselves, and over one another, that we be not overtaken by the means and causes of these decays; zeal for God and the honour of the Gospel, that it may not suffer by reason of our miscarriages. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *The life of faith* :—

The text may be taken in two ways. In a moral sense, as regards the circumstances of the Jews. In a theological sense, as respects that great object on which believers have fixed their eye in all ages of the Church. The Rabbis give a very curious exposition of the words, "I will stand upon my watch." They translate, "I will confine myself in a circle," and explain that the prophet drew a circle, and made a solemn vow that he would not go out of it, until God had unfolded those dark dispensations to him, which seemed so injurious to His perfections. I. EXPLAIN THE TERMS OF THIS PROPOSITION, "The just shall live by faith."

1. Who is the just or righteous man? There are two sorts of righteousness, according to the law, and according to faith. By righteousness after the law understand that which man wishes to derive from his own personal ability. By righteousness of faith understand that which man derives from his own personal ability. To have faith, or to believe, is a vague expression. Faith is sometimes a disposition common to the righteous and the wicked; sometimes the distinguishing character of a Christian; sometimes it is put for the virtue of Abraham; sometimes it stands for the credence of devils. Faith is a disposition of mind that changeth its nature according to the various objects which are proposed to it. We are inquiring about saving faith, and have to inquire what is its object. It is Jesus Christ as dying and offering Himself to the justice of the Father. We must distinguish two sorts of desires to share the benefits of the death of Christ. A desire unconnected with all the acts which God is pleased to require of us; and a desire that animates us with a determination to participate these benefits. Jesus is proposed to the believer's mind and heart and conduct. There are two kinds or causes of justification. 1. The fundamental or meritorious cause. 2. The instrumental cause. That is the fundamental which acquires, merits, and lays the foundation of our justification and salvation. By the instrumental we mean those acts which it hath pleased God to prescribe to us, in order to our participation of this acquired salvation. If faith justifies us, it is as an instrument, that of itself can merit nothing, and which contributes to our justification only as it capacitates us for participating the benefits of the death of Christ. Justifying faith is a general principle of virtue and holiness. 1. Justifying faith is lively faith, a believer cannot live by a dead faith. 2. Justifying faith must assort with the genius of the covenant, to which it belongs. 3. Justifying faith must include all the virtues to which the Scriptures attribute justification and salvation. 4. Justifying faith must merit all the praises which are given to it in Scripture. 5. Justifying faith must enter into the spirit of the mystery of the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. II. OBJECTIONS MADE AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE. 1. Is it pretended that the design of excluding holiness from the essence of faith is to elevate the merit of the death of Christ? 2. Dost thou say, thy design is to humble man? What can be more proper to humble man than the system we have expounded? 3. Dost thou say, our system is contrary to experience? 4. Or that our justification and salvation flow from a decree made before the foundation of the world, and not from our embracing the Gospel in time? 5. Or dost thou still object, that, although our system is true in the main, yet it is always dangerous to publish it; because man has always an inclination to "sacrifice unto his own net," and by press-

ing the necessity of good works, occasion is insensibly given to the doctrine of merit? (*J. Saurin.*) *Faith, a life-giving power*:—Righteousness has been defined as the fulfilment of relations. But those relations are not primarily relations of earth. The higher relation rests on revelation. It is our relation to God. "Life" is not here, living in the sense of existing, nor in the sense of exercising existence. Three ideas have to be added to the primary idea of existence. This life is conscious, satisfying, everlasting existence. "Faith" is the realisation of a future, the conviction of the invisible. Faith in a person is the realisation of that person, the having him so present to the eye of the soul that the presence is a power. Too often by faith is meant the realisation not of a person, but of a thing; not of Jesus Christ as all that He is, and God in Him, but of one single thing about Jesus Christ—His atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and even this rather in the aspect of the death than in the aspect of the life, rather as a fact accomplished and done with than as a reality having in it the motive of a dedication, and the power of a life. (*Dean Vaughan, D.D.*) *The just shall live by his faith*:—The great Babylonian empire was swallowing up the smaller nations round about. To the prophet who believed in the Holy Almighty God, ruling in the earth in righteousness, this was a mystery. It was a strange problem. He could not understand why that great empire should grow greater, and why the nations round about should thus be turned into their net, and brought under their rule. Bad as the Jewish people were, they were not so far astray from the true God and from righteousness as were the men of Babylon. Why then should this nation control? He stands and looks at this mystery, and finds that he has no solution for it. He is perplexed and baffled. But like a wise and true prophet, he goes aside and stands upon what he calls his watch-tower that he may see what God will say. He will be quiet and still in heart, waiting for the Divine message to come to solve the difficulty. The text is the answer. **I. THE UPLIFTED SOUL, AND ITS PENALTY.** What is it for a man to be lifted up? It is to be proud, haughty, to have a feeling of self-dependence and self-sufficiency. It is to forget God, and to assume that a man's life is in his own hands. There are many things that will produce an uplifted soul. Such as worldly success; intellectual culture; a man's unbelief. There is hardly a step between unbelief in God and a man having a vain, proud, self-satisfied, and uplifted soul. Such a soul is not upright. It is crooked, perverse, froward. That is the penalty. For what is the glory of man? It is to know God, and to live in fellowship with Him. The great glory of man is righteousness. How do those who are "lifted up" carry themselves in times of trouble? They are ground to pieces—broken up. What strength have they for the day of adversity? **II. THE TRUE LIFE FOR MAN.** It is a Divine message spoken to the just man. "Your duty is to live by faith." This faith is the antithesis of "lifted up." It is a spirit of trust in God, a devout belief in God, in the righteousness and the love of God: it is lowliness and humbleness of mind; it is a feeling of true dependence upon the great Father in heaven. All the holy and just men who ever lived a true and noble life, have done so because they have lived by their faith. How will this work? God becomes a reality to the soul that is full of trust and prayer. God draws near to us as we live in faith and spirituality to Him. We make great mistakes in the matter of realising God and the love of God. Try by argument, by subtle process of reasoning, by investigation, to find out God and to know Him, and you are baffled. It is by faith God becomes known. And a life of faith and devoutness gives strength for obedience. Faith brings us into union with the great Source of all life, and causes us to be equipped with power for obedience in righteousness. The path in which Christ walked, and we are called to walk—the path of self-sacrifice, purity, meekness, love to enemies, trust in God, moral courage—this path is one which severely strains and taxes all the powers of a man. Hindrances and temptations throng around you at every step. Christian victory is not so much a stern exercise of resolution as a devout consecration to God; not so much self-straining as self-surrender to God; a loving consent to the guidance and inspiration of the Divine Spirit. The hour of quiet, simple yielding up of self to God, with utter dependence on His moulding touch and strengthening grace, is always the hour of our fullest power for obedience. There is another element that enters into the life of faith—peace, serenity, joy. The outward circumstances of life are never without some kind of discord or pain. If we make ourselves dependent upon the perfect adjustment of outward things for peace, then never will peace be ours. Open the portals of the soul, with lowliness and childlike dependence before God, bow in hushed

submission, and then into the soul, noiselessly, yet with living power, like the calm dawn of a summer day, peace will come. Live the life of faith, and you will find God everywhere, and your character will grow in righteousness, and your peace and joy shall flow and abound like the waters of a great sea. (*Thomas Hammond.*) *Life by faith*:—Take the text as it stands on the page of the Hebrew prophet. This oracle of Habakkuk really means, “A righteous man shall live by his fidelity.” You will best understand the beauty of a Scripture passage when you look at it in its original setting. Habakkuk lived near the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity. In his large insight, in his poetic fire, he claims kindred with his mightier predecessors, Amos, Micah, Isaiah. He was faced by a new and eminently painful problem, he was precluded from holding out to his people any near or direct hope. And he was right. Habakkuk had to face the problem of the strength of the wicked and the humiliation of the just. The aggravations of the problem arose from the struggles of suffering innocence, but hitherto they had mainly presented themselves in individual instances. When the sufferer was a nation, and God’s chosen people, it was natural that terrible misgivings should overcloud the souls of men. In the very moment of repentance and reform came the threat of exile terrible and remediless. The Chaldean power was upon them; there was no remedy, save in comfortless endurance, and a hope yearning but still deferred. In those days of endurance and hope deferred, the lives of men, the life of the prophet himself, the life of that whole generation might ebb away. But the faithful are never utterly forsaken. For the prophet himself and for his nation, for all time, it was granted him to see at least in germ, to set forth at least in outline two of the universal truths on which the consolations of our little human life must rest. The answer that came to the prophet in his watch-tower was this, “The righteous man shall live by his fidelity.” Does this seem obscure, meagre, and unsatisfactory? The prophet caught its meaning. He breaks out, and concludes his book with one of the most splendid poems in the whole Bible. Nothing, neither drought nor desolation, could shake Habakkuk in his inextinguishable trust in God. The soul of the Chaldean is arrogant and wicked. That is enough. Then because God is God, in the pride and injustice of the oppressor lie the certain germs of his final overthrow. “The moral law is written on the tables of eternity.” And the righteous shall live by his faithfulness. Is he faithful? That is enough. Because God is God, righteousness not only contains the promise of life, when rightly understood, it is the only life. The just man, the ideal nation is not under the crushing disadvantage which he imagines. The power to serve God never fails, and the love of God is never rejected. There is the oracle to the troubled prophet, and to the trembling nation. It has two sides. The first is the old law, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” The other is, “The righteous man shall live by his fidelity.” What more would you have? Righteousness may be hated and persecuted. Wickedness may be lapped in luxury; but nevertheless, righteousness is life, sin is death. (*Dean Farrar.*) *Habakkuk*:—The design of this prophecy is to confirm the servants of God in their belief of His power, and reliance on His providence, as the Ruler and Disposer of the universe, notwithstanding the prosperity wherein wicked men are sometimes seen to flourish in the earth, while the pious and godly are tried with affliction and adversity. The practical principle of religious faith is that, let the probable consequences of present advantage or loss be what they may, it is our true wisdom always to hold fast by God, and put our trust in Him. Habakkuk prophesied in the reign of Jehoiakim, son of the pious Josiah. But he, instead of imitating the piety of his father, followed the evil practices of his more distant ancestors, Amon and Manasseh. He and his subjects abandoned themselves to every sort of profaneness towards God, of violence, oppression, deceit, and dishonesty towards each other, and of sensuality and debauchery in their own lives. Such was the state of the kingdom of Judah when Habakkuk saw his “burden.” He first inquires of God why injustice was suffered to prevail in Judah, and the wicked to oppress and get the advantage over upright and religious persons. The answer of God proclaims the speedy arrival of the Chaldeans, as a scourge of God. The mind of Habakkuk was even more disturbed with the expectation of the dreadful excesses of the Chaldeans, than it had been at the sight of the enormities already practised in Judea. He therefore, with all humility, proceeds to ask the reasons of so apparently strange a dispensation. He professes his own confidence in God, and his persuasion that the Chaldeans are not really the favourites of God, but

only the executioners of His wrath. Having been allowed to put these questions, the prophet describes himself as anxiously waiting to have them answered. Here the second chapter opens. The "lifting up" in the text means the withdrawing of our trust in God, either through careless arrogance, which makes men forget their dependence upon Him, or through unsteadiness of faith, which leaves them to be tossed about, without stay or foundation, like a feather, a leaf, or any other light and worthless body, that is lifted up and whirled about in the air. "His soul which is lifted up," withdrawn from an entire dependence on God, "is not upright in him," for he murmurs and is discontented at the arrangements of God's providence in things pertaining to this life. A man's "soul is not upright in him," who makes light of the expectation of a future state, and of the rewards and punishments to be therein distributed by the righteous judgment of God. Or who cavils at, and finds fault with any of the commandments of God, as burthens grievous to be borne. Or who trusts to his own performance of the law for acceptance. "The just shall live by his faith." Faith has always been the support and comfort of the humble and confiding servants of God. (*Jas. Randall, M.A.*) *Faith crowned*:—He that believeth God's Word so as to walk worthy of the great things which He has promised to do for him, shall have his faith crowned with a happy accomplishment. From these words we raise the following observations—1. We see the method which God has taken in revealing to us things to come. He has thought it sufficient to reveal to us the things themselves, without notifying the time when they shall be performed and manifested in the world. 2. We see the great sin of infidelity, and how much of the Divine displeasure we incur, when we disbelieve any Word of God, only because the completion of it falls not within the time which we had reckoned upon for the doing of it. 3. We hear the blessing which accompanies our sincere belief and dutiful observance of God's Word. "The just shall live by his faith." This is the only true life that men can live. (*W. Reading, M.A.*) *The life by faith*:—The immediate cause which gave rise to these words was the strong temptation of the prophet to distrust the providence of God, arising from the prosperity of the wicked, and their cruel oppression of the righteous. He points to faith in God as the sustaining, animating principle of the righteous man until his trial should be over. Consider the various ways in which it is true of the just man that he lives by faith. The just man's faith in God is the belief and conviction of his mind of the reality and truth of all that God has been pleased to assure him of. It is the persuasion that all God's promises to him are true, and will be fulfilled—a persuasion so real that he is supported by it, and acts upon it. What is this life of the just man that is spoken of here? Not mere animal life. Not mere intellectual life. It is the spiritual life of the soul before its redeeming Lord. It is a life peculiar to the just, such as none else lives. A life of acceptance with God, of love to God, of obedience and submission to Him. 1. Man is justified, declared just before God, through this great principle of faith. 2. To his faith in God the just man owes the life of obedience and holiness which he lives before Him. 3. Faith represents God as the source of strength in present trial, and of comfort in all affliction. Such a belief is absolutely necessary, in order to stir up man to exertion and perseverance in his spiritual contest with evil. 4. Faith, assuring the mind of the Christian of the glory that awaits him in the future life, prevents the discouragements that he meets with, and the denial to which he submits, from overcoming his patient perseverance in well-doing. (*H. Constable, M.A.*) *The portraiture of a good man*:—Whether the man whose soul here is represented as "lifted up," refers to the unbelieving Jew, or to the Babylonian, is an unsettled question amongst biblical critics; and a question of but little practical moment. I. A good man is a HUMBLE man. This is implied. His soul is not "lifted up." Pride is not only no part of moral goodness, but is essentially inimical to it. A proud Christian is a solecism. Jonathan Edwards describes a Christian as being such a "little flower as we see in the spring of the year, low and humble in the ground, opening its bosom for the beams of the sun, rejoicing in a calm rapture, suffusing around sweet fragrance, and standing peacefully and lowly in the midst of other flowers." Pride is an obstruction to all progress and knowledge and virtue, and is abhorrent to the Holy One. "He resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble." II. A good man is a JUST man. "The just shall live by his faith." To be good, is nothing more than to be just. 1. Just to self. Doing the right thing to one's own faculties and affections as the offsprings of God. 2. Just to others. Doing unto others what we would that they should do unto

us. 3. Just to God. To be just to self, society, and God, this is religion. III. A good man is a CONFIDING man. He lives "by his faith." This passage is quoted by Paul in Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; it is also quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. x. 38). (*Homilist.*) *Justifying faith* :—It is as if the prophet had said, Depend upon it, when this world has done its best and its worst, it will plainly appear that the great question between it and the Church is, whether it is better to trust in one's self, one's own wisdom, and fame, and riches, and high spirit, or to go altogether out of one's self, and to live entirely on the heavenly righteousness which God gives to His own people. The world rests upon itself, the Church lives by faith. Faith is that by which we abide in Christ. The spiritual life within us depends in some special manner on this grace. How impossible that those men should have true faith who allow themselves in self-righteousness. What difference can it make in point of pride and presumption, whether a man trusts in his own faith, or in his own works? In either case he trusts in something of his own. The true faith in Christ leads immediately to the obeying of all His commandments. Faith in Christ will make our fortunes in the world of small consequence: and will help us to endure trials patiently. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *The life of faith in the midst of a self-confident world* :—The subject here is, how they that are just continue to live. The bond of this union, whereby a man becomes just is confidence—trust—faith. What is this living? It is put in opposition to the characters on the other side, who are not upright, the man shall live unto God by this principle of confidence. The very same principle that brings him to Jesus for righteousness that he may be just, works in him when he is in Jesus, and by it he lives. It requires such a principle as this to live consistently. There is no such thing as Christianity made easy. The power of uprightness is in faith, and no man but a man of faith will be found thoroughly upright. (*Hugh M'Neile, M.A.*) *Faith* :—These words were spoken to Habakkuk, to check him for his impatience under God's hand. They are just as true for every man that ever was and ever will be as they were for him. It always was true, and always must be true, that if reasonable beings are to live at all, it is by faith. Because everything that is, heaven and earth, men and angels, are all the work of God. We do not remember enough what we do know of God. All things lie, like a grain of dust, in the hollow of God's hand. Think of the infinite power of God, and then think how it is possible to live, except by faith in Him, by trusting to Him utterly. After all, what can we do without God? The life of our spirits is a gift from God, the Father of spirits, and He has chosen to declare that unless we trust to Him for life, and ask Him for life, He will not bestow it upon us. If we wish to be loving, pure, wise, manly, noble, we must ask those excellent gifts of God, who is Himself infinite love and purity, wisdom and nobleness. And it is by faith in Christ we must live,—in Christ, a man like ourselves, yet God blessed for ever. It is a certain truth, that men cannot believe in God, or trust in Him unless they can think of Him as a man. All that men have ever done well, or nobly, or lovingly, in this world, was done by faith—by faith in God of some sort or other. Without Christ we can do nothing—by trusting in Christ we can do everything. (*C. Kingsley.*) *Living by faith* :—The prophet is speaking of a time of terrible calamity, which was to come upon himself and upon all his people. One event is to happen to all,—to the righteous, and to the wicked. Some of his people shall meet these terrible calamities with the spirit of pride, refusing to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. And, seeing that those who do not bend under God's providences, are invariably broken by them, the prophet contrasts the position of such persons with the position of those whom he describes in the text, and he remarks, "The just shall live by his faith." What is it for a man to *live*, in God's sense of the word, and to live in a time of calamity? Such a man will hear God's voice in the calamity; he will hear the rod, and Him who hath appointed it. The man who really *lives*, in a time of calamity, will see God's face even in that time; he will see the face of God behind the cloud. He will not be crushed by calamity. "The just shall live by his faith" means, he shall be equal to the claims which are made upon him, even in times of calamity, by the support which he derives through the operation of his faith. Faith is not mere assent. It follows belief in a particular kind of testimony. If we believe a worthy testimony, a certain state of heart must follow that belief. It is trust or reliance. Take the word "just" to represent a justified sinner, and that man shall live by his faith. 1. Man is introduced into a new life by this faith. Trusting in God's beloved Son, life is immediately given to him. He no

sooner trusts, than all that is involved in everlasting life becomes his. This is God's free gift to him. 2. Man has support in time of trouble through faith. Hope is closely related to faith. If you would have a stronger hope, you must have a stronger faith. There is a work which faith performs that hope cannot accomplish. Hope has a limited sphere, faith has not. Faith has to do with all that God has said about Himself, and about His Son, and about His Spirit, and about the privileges of the redeemed, and about the destiny of the redeemed. Faith is the principle whose operations render God's descriptions of unseen things real to us, so that His words take the place of facts. One effect of the faith of a Christian is to bring us into an entirely different style of life from that in which those men live who walk by sight. It must be so. Note some of the points of difference between a believer and an unbeliever. One holds the world tight, the other holds it with a slack hand. One orders his life by the will of his fellow-men, the other by the will of God. Then ask yourselves whether you have what the Scriptures call "faith," the faith that saves. (*Samuel Martin.*)

Ver. 5. **Who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied.**—*Moral wrong ; some of its national phases*.—Evil, like good, is one in essence, but it has many forms and phases. The branches that grow out of the root, whilst filled with the same sap, vary widely in shape and hue. I. **DRUNKENNESS.** This is one of the most loathsome, irrational, and pernicious forms which it can assume. Drunkenness puts the man or the woman absolutely into the hands of Satan, to do whatsoever he wills. II. **HAUGHTINESS.** "Is a proud man." Babylon became inspired with a haughty insolence. She regarded herself as the queen of the world, and looked down with supercilious contempt upon all the other nations of the earth, even upon the Hebrew people, the heavenly chosen race. Nebuchadnezzar expresses the spirit of the kingdom as well as his own, when he says, "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?" It is suggested that their love of wine had much to do in the developing of this haughty spirit. We read, chapter 5th, that Belshazzar at his feast drank wine with the thousands of his lords, his princes, his wives, his concubines. III. **RAPACITY.** Two things are suggested concerning the rapacious form it assumed in Babylon. 1. It was restless. "Neither keepeth at home." Not content with its own grandeur, wealth, and luxuries, it goes from home in search of others; goes out into other countries to rifle and to rob. 2. It is insatiable. "Who enlargeth his desire as hell,"—that is, as Sheol the grave,—and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. **Him that ladeth himself with thick clay.**—*Heavy clay*.—It is the glory of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ when it is regarded in its moral aspect, that it is not the religion merely of transcendental and unpractical truths, but that its motives and precepts go down to the minutest details of every-day duty. Note—1. The danger of a false start and a false aim in life. God has given us a complex nature, and He has given us the use of our reason and the other faculties, physical and mental, which He bestows upon men. And the great end of man is to glorify God. If a man uses his powers only to found a family or amass wealth, we earnestly warn that man. He has mistaken the great end of his being. 2. A form in which the lading of thick clay is found is greed of money. Covetousness in some one or other of its forms or specious disguises is one of the besetting idolatries of the day. This greed of money manifests itself in money-getting and in money-losing, and also in money-spending. Comparatively few recognise the principle of stewardship to God in the expenditure of their income. 3. Another form in which this heavy clay is sometimes found is anxiety. What our Lord and His apostles tell us to avoid is the carking, distracting care which turns a man's mind away from God, and keeps him continually on the rack, forgetting the loving Father who is willing to be the bearer of all his cares. 4. Another form of this clay among business men is sharp practice. Sharp practice is in our manufactories, upon the exchange, with lawyers, and not only among the little petty hucksters, but among tradesmen who make a much fairer show in our streets. 5. Another form is a worldly tone and spirit. To be a Christian, there is no necessity to leave your work and to lead the life of a recluse. Go into the world and make your money, but do not worship it. (*Canon Miller, D.D.*) *Under a heap of clay*.—The avaricious "accumulate

on themselves thick clay." Hardly, indeed, an avaricious man can be found who is not a burden to himself, and to whom his wealth is not a source of trouble. Everyone who has accumulated much, when he comes to old age, is afraid to use what he has got, being ever solicitous lest he should lose anything; and then, as he thinks nothing is sufficient, the more he possesses the more grasping he becomes, and frugality is the name given to that sordid and, so to speak, that servile restraint within which the rich confine themselves. In short, when anyone forms a judgment of all the avaricious of this world, and is himself free from all avarice, having a free and unbiassed mind, he will easily apprehend what the prophet says here,—that all the wealth of this world is nothing else but a heap of clay, as when any one puts himself of his own accord under a great heap which he had collected together. The general truth to be drawn from the expression is, that all the avaricious, the more they heap together, the more they lade themselves, and, as it were, bury themselves under a great load. Riches acquired by frauds and plunders are nothing else than a heavy and cumbrous lump of earth; for God returns on the heads of those who thus seek to enrich themselves whatever they have plundered from others. Had they been contented with some moderate portion, they might have lived cheerfully and happily, as we see to be the case with all the godly, who, though they possess but little, are yet cheerful; for they live in hope, and know that their supplies are in God's hands, and expect everything from His blessing. (*John Calvin.*) *Making money*.—Whatever we do to please ourselves, and only for the sake of the pleasure, not for an ultimate object, is "play," the pleasing thing, not the useful thing. . . . The first of all English games is making money. That is an all-absorbing game; and we knock each other down oftener in playing at that than at football or any other rougher sport; and it is absolutely without purpose. No one who engages heavily in that game ever knows why. Ask a great money-maker what he wants to do with his money; he never knows. He doesn't make it to do anything with it. He gets it only that he may get it. "What will you make of what you have got?" you ask. "Well, I'll get more," he says. Just as at cricket you get more runs. There's no use in the runs, but to get more of them than other people is the game. And there's no use in the money, but to have more of it than other people is the game. (*John Ruskin.*)

Vers. 9-11. **Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house.—Covetousness and self-trust**.—I. THE NATIONAL WRONGS here indicated. 1. Coveting the possessions of others. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house." "An evil covetousness"? There is a good covetousness. We are commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts." But to hunger for those things which are not our own, but the property of others, and that for our own gratification and aggrandisement, is that which is prohibited in the Decalogue. 2. Trusting in false securities. So "that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil." The image is from an eagle (*Job xxix. 37*). The royal citadel is meant. The Chaldeans built high towers like the Babel founders, to be delivered from the power of evil. They sought protection, not in the Creator but in the creature, not in moral means but in material. Thus foolishly nations have always acted, and are still acting; they trust to armies and to navies, not to righteousness, truth, and God. A moral character built on justice, purity, and universal benevolence is the only right and safe defence of nations. 3. Sinning against the soul. "And hast sinned against thy soul," or against thyself. Indeed, all wrong is a sin against oneself—a sin against the laws of reason, conscience, and happiness. II. THE NATIONAL WOES here indicated. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house," &c. What is the woe connected with these evils? It is contained in these words: "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Their guilty conscience will endow the dead materials of their own dwelling with the tongue to denounce in thunder their deeds of rapacity and blood. Startling personification this! "Note," says Matthew Henry, "those that do wrong to their neighbour do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads Not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot be proved upon him, let him know that if there be no other witnesses against him the stone shall cry out of the wall against him, and the beam out of the timber in the roof shall answer it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the

house were unjustly gotten (ver. 11). The stones and timber cry to heaven for vengeance, as the whole creation groans under the sin of man, and waits to be delivered from that bondage of corruption. (1) That mind gives to all the objects that once impressed it a mystic power of suggestion. Who has not felt this? Who does not feel it every day? The tree, the house, the street, the lane, the stream, the meadow, the mountain, that once touched our consciousness, seldom fail to start thoughts in us whenever we are brought into contact with them again. It seems as if the mind gave part of itself to all the objects that once impressed it. Hence, when we leave a place which in person we may never revisit we are still tied to it by an indissoluble bond. Nay, we carry it with us and reproduce it in memory. (2) That mind gives to those objects that impressed us when in the commission of any sin a terrible power to start remorseful memories. No intelligent personal witness is required to prove a sinner's guilt. All the scenes of his conscious life vocalise his guilt. (*Homilist.*) *Deceitful riches*:—Usually, when a worldling is dead, we ask how rich he died. "Oh," say many, "he died rich; he hath left a great estate." Alas! the poor man has slept his sleep, lost his dream, and now he awakes he finds nothing in his hand. Where lies his golden heap? Only the rust of that heap is gone to witness against him; his mansion fails him; only the unrighteousness of it follows him; others have the use of it; only the abuse of it he carries to judgment with him; he hath made his friends (as we say), but he hath undone himself; so that I may justly write this motto upon every bag: "This is the price of blood." Shall I then treasure up the price of blood?

Ver. 10. *Thou hast consulted shame to thy house.*—*Consulting shame*:—The prophet again confirms the truth, that those who count themselves happy, imagining that they are like God, busy themselves in vain; for God will turn to shame whatever they think to be their glory, derived from their riches. The avaricious indeed wish, as it appears from the last verse, to prepare splendour for their prosperity, and they think to render illustrious their race by their wealth; for this is deemed to be nobility, that the richer anyone is the more he excels, as he thinks, in dignity, and the more is he to be esteemed by all. Since, then, this is the object of almost all the avaricious, the prophet here reminds them, that they are greatly deceived; for the Lord will not only frustrate their hopes, but will also convert their glory into shame. Hence he says that they consult shame to their family. He includes in the word "consult" all the industry, diligence, skill, care, and labour displayed by the avaricious. We indeed see how very sagacious they are; for if they smell any gain at a distance, they draw it to themselves, night and day they form new designs, that they may circumvent this person and plunder that person and accumulate into their heap whatever money they can find, and also that they may join fields to fields, build great palaces, and secure great revenues. This is the reason why the prophet says that they "consult shame." What is the object of all their designs? For what purpose are all these things? Even for this, that their posterity may be eminent, that their nobility may be in the mouths of all, and spread far and wide. But the prophet shows that they labour in vain; for God will turn to shame whatever they in their great wisdom contrived for the honour of their families. The more provident, then, the avaricious are, the more foolish they are, for they consult nothing but disgrace to their posterity. (*John Calvin.*)

Ver. 11. *The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.*—*Retribution*:—The prophet in this connection is declaring that the Chaldeans shall be punished for their cruel rapacity. Retribution is everywhere assumed as a great first-truth, which nature itself constantly teaches, and to which man's universal conscience as constantly responds. I. THE SIN. What was the iniquity for which the Chaldean monarch is here so solemnly denounced? Not the mere outer act of building a great city, but in the manner and motive of his doing it. "He had built his city in blood, and established it in iniquity." There was sin in the motive, for the monarch only built for his selfish aggrandisement. We perceive, then, glaring ungodliness in both manner and motive of this great work of Babylon. II. THE PUNISHMENT. The Bible does not teach that men are punished eternally for the sins committed in time. Man goes on sinning for ever, and therefore is punished for ever. By a law of a man's own mental constitution, memory and conscience are summoning from the past both ministry

and material of a righteous retribution. This is retribution—a punishment really more dreadful than any material imagery whereby the Bible sets it forth—a retribution which becomes, of itself, eternal torment. We do not say that in this is all of retribution. (*Charles Wadsworth, D.D.*) *The handwriting on the wall*:—Very startling was the vision which appeared to Belshazzar and his courtiers when their feasting and mirth were at their height. But not in terrible omens and supernatural visions alone do we see the Divine handwriting. To thoughtful men on every wall by the wayside appear mystic letters of profound significance. The hand itself is unseen behind the veil of nature, but the words are formed clear and distinct upon the stones of the wall, and they remain as if graven with a pen of iron. Botanists are familiar with a peculiar genus of lichen called *Opegrapha*, from the resemblance which the fructification of all its species bears to written characters. On the surface are numerous dark intricate lines, like Arabic, Hebrew, or Chinese letters. The likeness in some instances is remarkably close. Nature has thus mimicked in almost every wood, and on almost every rock and wall, the latest and highest result of man's civilisation; and in her humblest plant forms has written her wonderful runes. It can, indeed, be said in the highest sense of the whole family of lichens that they are God's handwriting on the wall. Lichens form the nebulae, so to speak, of the firmament of life. Lichens are in the ocean of air that covers the dry land what seaweeds are in the ocean of waters that covers the depths of the sea. They are as the pioneers of vegetation, climbing the bare crag, and penetrating into the lonely wilderness, and planting there the flag of life. As elements in the picturesque, lichens have long held a high place in the estimation of all lovers of nature. What would a ruin be without them? Lichens run through the whole chromatic scale, and show what striking effects nature can produce by an harmonious combination of a few simple lines and hues. Not less worthy of examination is the specialised organ with which the lichen decks itself than the blossom of the brightest flower. Nothing is lost in nature. God's handwriting on the wayside wall and the weather-beaten rock writes no sentence—"Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood.**—*A curse denounced against bloodshed*:—I. THE GROUND OR CAUSE OF THIS CURSE. The crying, crimson sin of bloodshed. In all generations it has been the care of providence, both by civil and religious means, to extinguish all principles of savageness in the minds of men, and to make friendship and tenderness over men's lives a great part of religion. By nothing has this been so highly endeavoured as by the rules and constitution of Christianity. II. THE CONDITION OF THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM THIS WOE OR CURSE IS DENOUNCED. He was such an one as had actually established a government and built a city with blood. As soon as Cain had murdered his brother he presently betook himself to the building of a city. Bloodiness has usually a connection with building, which represents the setting up of government. Nebuchadnezzar seems to be the person here spoken of. III. THE LATITUDE AND EXTENT OF THIS WOE OR CURSE, AND WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN IT. It includes the miseries of both worlds, present and future. 1. It fastens a general hatred and detestation upon such men's persons. Cruelty alarms and calls up all the passions of human nature, and puts them into a posture of hostility and defiance. The tyrant is universally hated and scorned. 2. The torment of continual jealousy and suspicion. 3. The shortness and certain dissolution of the government that endeavours to establish itself with blood. 4. The sad and dismal end that usually attends such persons. IV. THE REASONS WHY A CURSE OR WOE IS SO PECULIARLY DENOUNCED AGAINST THIS SIN. 1. It makes the most direct breach upon human society. 2. Because of the malignity of those sins that go in conjunction with it. V. APPLY TO THE PRESENT OCCASION. All unjust bloodshed is twofold. Either public, and acted by or upon a community, as in a war. Or personal, in the assassination of any particular man. (*R. South, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.**—*The knowledge of God*:—There shall be such a revelation of God's character and attributes as shall win the faith and love and adoration of the human family. Now, where is that revelation made?

In nature you get only glimpses of God; it tells us something of His wisdom and His power, but it tells us nothing about His mercy and His forgiving love. Every word that nature utters to a sinner is a word of terror. God has so loved us that He has sent His "only-begotten Son," through whom we may learn to know the Father. This knowledge of God in Christ meets every want. It is of this knowledge the text speaks—an experimental knowledge of Christ which brings us to God, and fits us for heaven. This knowledge gives us life. It has a quickening power. The man that knows and receives Christ lives—lives a spiritual life that shall last for ever. This knowledge also produces love. And it produces holiness in the heart and life. It prepares us for heaven, which is the home of love. This knowledge is to be universal! Reason teaches us to expect it. 2. The Bible proclaims it. 3. There are signs of the near approach of this glorious day. The first sign is the decay of idolatry; the second is the decline of popery. A third is the increase of knowledge. A fourth is the uprising of humanity. A fifth is the condition of Christianity. (*Charles Garrett.*) *God's glory universally known*:—The prophet teaches here, that so remarkable would be God's judgment on the Babylonians that His name would thereby be celebrated through the whole world. There is in the verse an implied contrast; for God appeared not in His own glory when the Jews were led away into exile; the temple being demolished and the whole city destroyed; and also when the whole eastern region was exposed to rapine and plunder. When, therefore, the Babylonians were, after the Assyrians, swallowing up all their neighbours, the glory of God did not then shine, nor was it conspicuous in the world. The Jews themselves had become mute; for their miseries had, as it were, stupefied them; their mouths were at least closed, so that they could not from the heart bless God, while He was so severely afflicting them. And then, in that manifold confusion of all things the profane thought that all things here take place fortuitously, and that there is no Divine providence. God, then, was at that time hid; hence the prophet says, "Filled shall be the earth with the knowledge of God"; that is, God will again become known when, by stretching forth His hand, He will execute vengeance on the Babylonians; then will the Jews, as well as other nations, acknowledge that the world is governed by God's providence, as it had been once created by Him. We now understand his meaning, and why he says that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of God's glory; for the glory of God previously disappeared from the world, with regard to the perceptions of men; but it shone forth again when God Himself had erected His tribunal by overthrowing Babylon, and thereby proved that there is no power among men which He cannot control. We have the same sentence in Isa. xi. 9. The prophet then speaks, indeed, of the Kingdom of Christ; for when Christ was openly made known to the world, the knowledge of God's glory at the same time filled the earth; for God then appeared in His own living image. But yet our prophet uses a proper language when he says that the earth shall then be filled with the knowledge of God's glory, when He should execute vengeance on the Babylonians. Hence incorrectly have some applied this to the preaching of the Gospel, as though Habakkuk made a transition from the ruin of Babylon to the general judgment. This is (surely) a strained exposition. It is, indeed, a well-known mode of speaking, and often occurs in the Psalms, that the power, grace, and truth of God are made known through the world, when He delivers His people and restrains the ungodly. The same mode the prophet now adopts; and he compares his fulness of knowledge to the waters of the sea, because the sea is so deep that there is no measuring of the waters. So Habakkuk intimates that the glory of God would be so much known that it would not only fill the world, but in a manner overflow it; as the waters of the sea by their vast quantity cover the deep, so the glory of God would fill heaven and earth, so as to have no limits. If, at the same time, there be a wish to extend this sentence to the coming of Christ, I do not object; for we know that the grace of redemption flowed in a perpetual stream until Christ appeared in the world. But the prophet, I have no doubt, sets forth here the greatness of God's power in the destruction of Babylon. (*John Calvin.*) *The triumph of the Gospel*:—If we seek at all times to trace the providences of God we shall often find that He makes His throne darkness to us; and from the thick darkness we hear a voice saying, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." But in tracing the operations of the word of His grace, and the state of His Church, we find this clearly made known. The eternal fiat has gone forth, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THIS

PROPHECY. The "glory of the Lord" has various meanings. A grand display of it was made when Moses and Aaron and the seventy elders were called up into the mount. Any particular visible display of God's presence was His glory. But the term has also reference to the Gospel. There was a glory attending the law, but this was much more glorious. It is more glorious than the law in its Author, His Person, and His work. The Gospel is peculiarly glorious above the law—1. In its extent. If we look at former times we might perhaps think that God had selected a few—one family—as His peculiar treasure; but now we find this was only that the coming of the Messiah might be more clearly marked. 2. It represents the Divine attributes more gloriously than the law. Majesty, justice, hatred of sin were shown. Here is the richest display both of grace and justice. Here God's glory is concentrated as in a focus. 3. It is more glorious as life and immortality are more clearly revealed. . . . "The knowledge," &c. This word has also various meanings. Sometimes it means "discrimination"; at others, "publication"; and when applied by a believer, it is full assurance. The knowledge in the text implies—(1) Clearness; (2) impression. All the theoretical displays of the Gospel are of no avail without the impression of its truth. The design of the Gospel is to change him who heartily believes it into its own nature. It is the glory of God, and it changes the soul from glory to glory, and makes it partaker of the Divine nature. 3. Performance. Believe and obey the Gospel. The sinner believes; the believer works. 4. This leads us to the universal tendency of this knowledge. Like leaven, it will work its way. **II. WHAT IS SAID CONCERNING THIS GLORY.** The margin of some Bibles reads, "the channels of the sea." 1. Clearness. These channels are very deep; so is Divine science—not superficial. 2. Experience. The waters do touch every surface of land; they wash every shore. The glory of God shall be felt by every people. 3. Universal. The channels are effectually covered; so shall the world be filled. **III. REMARKS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPHET'S DECLARATION.** 1. God's covenant with Abraham. "All the families of the earth were to be blessed in him." 2. It was renewed to Isaac, Jacob, &c.; but especially to Jesus Christ. 3. It was the burden of all the prophecies. 4. See the commission of the apostles. 5. We may refer the accomplishment of this to the promised agency of the Holy Ghost. 6. We argue it from the effects which have been produced. Application—(1) You are interested in this individually. (2) See what God expects from us. (*J. Summerfield, A.M.*)

Vers. 18, 19. What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it.—National wrongs ending in national woes:—I. That men often GIVE TO THE WORKS OF THEIR OWN HANDS THE DEVOTIONS THAT BELONG TO GOD. These old Chaldean idolaters gave their devotions to the "graven image" and to the "molten image" that men had carved in wood and stone or moulded from molten metals. It was the works of their own hands they worshipped. Are men's sympathies in their strong current for God, or for something else? Do they expend the larger portion of their time and the greater amount of their energies in the service of the Eternal, or in the service of themselves? **II. That men often LOOK TO THE WORKS OF THEIR OWN HANDS FOR A BLESSING WHICH GOD ALONE CAN BESTOW.** These old idolaters said to the "wood, Awake, to the dumb stone, Arise." Now, it is true that men do not say formal prayers to wealth, or fashion, or fame, or power, albeit to these they look with all their souls for happiness. Men who are looking for happiness to any of these objects are like the devotees of Baal, who cried from morning to evening for help, and no help came. **III. That in all this MEN ENTAIL ON THEMSELVES THE WOES OF OUTRAGED REASON AND JUSTICE.** "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake, to the dumb stone, Arise." 1. It is the woe of outraged reason. What help could they expect of the "molten image, and a teacher of lies"? What answer could they expect from the dumb "idols" that they themselves had made? How irrational all this! Equally unreasonable it is for men to search for happiness in any of the works of their hands, and in any being or object independent of God. 2. It is the woe of insulted justice. What has God said? "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." All this devotion, therefore, to the works of our own hands, or to any other creature, is an infraction of man's cardinal obligation. (*Homilist.*) *The misapplication of the teaching of art in the service of religion:—*There is some difference of opinion as to the exact time at which the prophet Habakkuk delivered his message. But there is no question that it coincided with the period in which Israel came in contact with the great empires of the East, and was allowed

to be humbled and punished by them. One of the consequences of intercourse with these empires, ending in the Captivity, was to familiarise their minds with buildings and workings of art which, while they marked the absence of a knowledge and worship of the true God, presented marvellous instances of the power and skill of man! The mind of man, in his fallen state, is ever prone to forget God and to reject Him; it is ever prone to corrupt the simple idea of His majesty and power. The idolatry of power was expressed in the architecture and image-worship of this period. The words of the text refer to it. The dumb stone (of the monuments) speaks still; it speaks of abject submission to irresistible power. It speaks of rule and might and iron will; but there is no love, no tenderness, no hope in its utterances. History re-echoes the prophet's denunciation, and extends it to after generations, embracing the later and more engaging forms of art thus employed. The message of works of art addresses itself to the carnal and the sensuous that is in us. It does not bring us into contact with the unseen and the infinite. There is a woe in it. May we not, descending the stream of time, go on to point out that the prophet's woe also lights upon what is called Christian Art—on them who, in the Church of Christ, have said unto the wood, Awake, and have called upon the dumb stone to teach? The woe has taken effect in bringing down a thick pall of dark superstition and loss of spiritual life wherever the practice has prevailed. It is not to the wood or to the stone that we are directed for our instruction in Divine things, but to the Word and to the testimony. And therefore it is that in the arranging of our churches and the adjusting of their ornaments, at the time of the Reformation, it appeared right to those who were charged with this work that the wood and the stone which had been set up to speak and to teach should be excluded from this office; that no attempt should be made, by an exhibition of the passion and death of our blessed Lord, to the outward eye, to move the feelings and to strengthen the faith; but rather that such things were to be removed as a danger and a hindrance to acceptable worship. In place of ornaments and images the Reformers put the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. It cannot be denied that in our day there is some danger lest too much importance be attached to external appearance, to architecture and decoration. While we do not look to the wood to speak, or to the dumb stone to teach, we will not hesitate to make both minister to the comeliness of the sanctuary. In so doing we shall not impede but assist devotion. Holding fast the essential truths, and taught by the Word of the living God, we may rejoice with thanksgiving for the comeliness of the sanctuaries which now cover our land in every direction, and cheerfully do our part, that the wood and the stone may be made worthily to set forth the honour of God's service, and furnish us fitting accompaniment for the prayer and the praise we offer in His name. (*Archdeacon Cooper, M.A.*)

Ver. 20. But the Lord is in His holy temple. — *The Lord in His holy temple*:—What comparison can be formed between an idol which is nothing, and the great God who made heaven and earth? What stronger proof can be given that man is far gone from original righteousness, and inclined to evil continually, than this,—he has chosen idols, and bowed the knee before them, in preference to that Being who is, and was, and is to come? Notwithstanding, however, the indifference and rebellion of His creatures, their neglect and contempt of His word, "The Lord is in His holy temple." The Lord, that is Jehovah, is self-existent. He is indebted to no other for His being, for He has life in Himself. He is accountable to no one. He is indebted to no one. In this vast temple of creation He dwells. Though God is everywhere present, He is present in some places in a more peculiar sense. The Lord's throne is in heaven. In order that we may be worshippers in that temple which is above, it behoves us to be constant in our worship in the Lord's temple here below. In a peculiar sense also the house of prayer is His temple. The Jewish temple was. "Keeping silence" indicates a sense of weakness and unworthiness, reverence and devout attention. It points also to the glory, majesty, and power of the Lord God omnipotent. God, indeed, permits us to speak to Him, whether with the voice of confession, of prayer, or of thanksgiving. Notwithstanding our own unworthiness, God does not reject our sacrifices. Keeping silence is indicative of fear. There is a fear of God without which there can be no religion; a fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and which is productive of much spiritual fruit. There is a fear of God which has respect chiefly to His power, greatness, or majesty. Such a fear is

reasonable. But the fear is tempered with love, and thus it grows into reverence. It is the feeling entertained toward those who are our seniors in age or station, piety or virtue. This reverence of God is the perfection towards which we tend. Keeping silence before God betokens attention. It implies not merely the dread of God's power and majesty, but attention to His words. God speaks to man in nature and in providence. But especially by His Word. He, in a sense, speaks to man by His ministers and through His sacraments. Let me urge upon you the solemn truth that the Lord is in His holy temple, and press upon you the sacred duty of drawing nigh unto Him constantly, and with reverence. If on His throne in the heavens He waiteth to be gracious, here in His temple He ordinarily dispenses His benefits. Let me impress upon you the importance of joining not only heartily, but with your voice also, in those parts of our service which are proper to a congregation. God waiteth to be gracious to us, and ought we not gladly to avail ourselves of every opportunity of hearing His voice and receiving His mercy? (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*)

God in His temple.—I. WHO IT IS TO WHOM ALL EYES ARE TO BE DIRECTED. The "Lord Jehovah." He is the God who seeth. "Thou, God, seest me." The "Lord our Righteousness." The "Lord my Banner." The "Lord my Shield." II. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN HIS PRESENCE. God loves the tents of Jacob, He loves the dwellings of Israel, but He loves His own house above them all, as the place where He makes His honour to be known. Inferences—1. See why it is that some of you have been attending God's house for years and are none the better for it. 2. Though a minister may leave his people, he does not take God away from his flock. (*Thomas Mortimer, B.D.*)

The presence of God in His temple.—This forms—I. THE GRAND ELEMENT OF ITS CONSECRATION. Consecration implies—1. That there are subordinate elements in the dedication, or the setting apart of it as the house of God. A Church is sanctified by the Word of God, prayer, and praise, independent of all other ceremonies. 2. During the dedication we are to look and wait for demonstrations of the Divine presence therein. The "cloud," at the consecration of Solomon's temple, "filled the house of the Lord." This was a visible and special token of the Divine Presence suited to the auspicious event. There were five permanent symbols of God's presence in the temple. (1) The Shekinah. (2) The Ark and Mercy-seat. (3) The Urim and Thummim. (4) Fire from heaven. (5) The spirit of prophecy. These were "shadows of good things to come" in the spiritual temple. 3. Consecration of a church to the service of God should be accompanied with firm resolution and vigilant watchfulness, lest any exercises of common or unclean character be tolerated therein. II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS TEMPLE DEMANDS THE SPIRIT OF ADORATION. A spirit manifesting itself in "reverence and godly fear." Our sole object in coming into the temple should be to worship God. When we attend to our duty in the house of the Lord we may reasonably expect the blessing of God to rest upon us. III. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN HIS TEMPLE JUSTIFIES AND ENCOURAGES THE EXERCISE OF EXPECTATION. Sinners may expect the blessing of regeneration and conversion. Warrants of expectation are God's express promise, the atonement, and recorded instances of God's gracious dealings. IV. BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS TEMPLE WE HAVE SWEET AND HOLY COMMUNION WITH HIM. This is the highest honour that can be conferred upon sinful men; it is an indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of His presence in heaven. (*William Roberts, D.D.*)

God's house.—The conception is partly Christian and partly pagan, partly true and partly false. We find it in the religions of ancient Greece and Rome. For every god there must be a temple or shrine, where that god would be sure to hear the prayers of his suppliants. Even in the purer worship of Israel the same idea prevails, God making His dwelling in the tabernacle, and especially in the awful holy of holies. To the unspiritual the thought would be narrow and misleading. It behoves us to take heed lest the very aids to worship should shut in our thought of God, and make it small and mean. The common idea that God is to be found especially in some building sacred to Him is right, after all. No idea can be universal in which there is not something good. While God is alike everywhere, practically to us He is most present where the soul can most feel Him. We know the power of association. True, God can be found everywhere; and worshipped anywhere. The place, the forms, the times of worship are things of comparatively small importance. Vain are all efforts, and vain all gifts, if we depend upon a place to draw near to God. The temple is holy, not because it has been made so by the skill of man, but because

the Lord is in it. No less holy should be the home of every Christian. But Paul teaches that God is especially to be found in man. God in man we find in Christ. The real temple, where God most certainly dwells, is man himself. Only as we reverence man, then, can we worship God. Because of the life and work and death of the Son of Man, who was also Son of God, every man is to know himself a son of God. Does not this make all life sacred? What principles ought to guide us in worship? 1. That all men are brothers. 2. That we come hither seekers for truth. We are to ask, not what do others believe, what is it politic to believe, what did former generations believe,—but what is truth? What is God's revelation of Himself to-day? (*Walcott Fay.*) *The presence of God in the Churches of His saints*:—The universe is the temple of Jehovah. The idea of the omnipresence of God is calculated to have a commanding influence over the mind, and consequently over the conduct. The feelings produced in a mind rightly affected by it are altogether of a religious nature. In no situation is the influence of this doctrine more felt than when the true Christian is engaged in the more immediate performance of religious duty. Wherever we are, the Lord is there. The text makes known the presence of the Lord in the place appointed for His worship. His presence has been peculiarly with the Church in all ages. The presence of God in His holy temple is felt by all true worshippers as the life of all the services which are performed. It is to be feared, however, that with all that is outwardly becoming, in many there is a total want of all that is inwardly required of those who would worship God. Bodily exercise profiteth little. 1. The Lord is in His holy temple, to receive the adoration of His people and hear their prayers. To worship God is the duty of every rational being. 2. The Lord is in His holy temple, that He may manifest Himself to His worshipping people in the way of gracious communication. In the performance of duty there is always a feeling in itself agreeable. 3. The Lord is in His holy temple, for the purpose of bringing back wandering sinners to Himself. This was the great purpose for which Jesus came from heaven to earth. Seeing that the Lord is in His holy temple, how unbecoming must everything like levity be in His presence! How utterly vain must hypocrisy be in the service of God! Let believers study to improve the privileges of the temple below, that by means of them they may be fitted for the more exalted service of the temple above. (*Archibald Jack.*) *The spiritual temple*:—Heaven is not merely the seat of royal power and grandeur; it is a temple, and as such is the seat of exalted and sacred worship. The Redeemer appears there ministering in His official character. His life there, no less than His death on earth, is necessary to our salvation. By the temple here is meant the Church of the living God. There are particular churches, there is the one Church universal. All who rest by faith on the atonement offered on the Hill of Calvary, and who exhibit by their holy life and conversation their attachment to the Saviour, are members of this Church. Take a survey of this spiritual temple. I. ITS FOUNDATION. It is built upon the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. II. ITS MATERIALS. Countless myriads of saints. There is a beautiful variety, though at the same time a substantial sameness, in the precious stones of this grand superstructure. III. ITS SYMMETRY. The unity of the Church of Christ, when her members are knit together in love, perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. What are the heavenly graces of the Spirit of Christ but the exercises of the mind in a state of moral order? IV. ITS DESIGN. "A habitation of God through the Spirit." V. ITS PURITY. The spiritual temple, the members of the invisible body of Christ are sanctified worshippers, reflecting in the transforming light of the Holy Spirit, the glory and power of the Divine perfections. (*J. C. Edwards, M.A.*) *The Lord in His temple*:—I. A REASON FOR CONSECRATION. Where God is should be holy. God gave symbols of His presence—the Shekinah, Mercy Seat, &c., which were shadows of that which was to come. Consecration is the devoting anything entirely to the service of God, and demands—1. Purity. There should be nothing unholly. 2. Sacredness. There should be nothing secular. 3. Perfectness. Nothing common so far as it is in the sphere of our power to exclude it. II. A REASON FOR ADORATION. 1. The object of going to God's house is to honour Him. Hence we should—(1) Watch our motives; (2) Watch our conduct; (3) Watch our thoughts. 2. To worship Him. 3. To carry out our profession in the sight of the world, and let others take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. III. A

REASON FOR EXPECTATION. God is there—1. To hear His people. 2. To bless His people. 3. To sanctify His people. The Bible is full of promises of this great truth and its reality. IV. A REASON FOR SATISFACTION. How high an honour to meet with God! It is a preparation and a prelude to heaven. (*Homilist.*) *God in His temple.*—This sublime declaration and solemn precept of the prophet, may be considered as relative to the proper worship of God, both in public and private. Indeed, these two kinds of worship are necessarily connected, one being always preparatory to the other. The knowledge of God must be first obtained, before we can have any idea of the worship that will be acceptable to Him. But how is this knowledge of God to be obtained? In vain do we seek for God in arguments and reasonings; the knowledge of His existence and attributes, collected from the works of nature, may satisfy our understandings, but cannot comfort our hearts. His own blessed revelation, without which we could never have known where to look for Him, directs us to our own hearts. There is His holy temple, in which He is to be spiritually worshipped—we must find, we must feel His presence there—till we do so, we cannot be said to have any true knowledge of Him. Every good and virtuous thought; every sensibility of meekness, humility, patience, resignation, and love; every little rising of conscience against the suggestions of vice; every little check or reproach thou feelest for an unworthy thought, or a shameful action,—all bespeak a present Deity, a God and Saviour, seeking to make Himself known to thee in His holy temple. It is true, the first appearances of the Divinity to the fallen spirit of man, are faint and shadowy, like the first feeble ray of morn that shoots athwart the gloom of night. But do thou observe the precept of the prophet in the text. Wait and watch in awful stillness; impose silence on the clamorous calls of every earthborn passion and appetite; stand in meekness and humility, with thine inward eye turned towards these first emanations of Divine light, and thou shalt soon perceive “the day dawn, and the day-star arise upon thy soul.” By this awful silence, and waiting upon the Lord in His temple, we place ourselves, as it were, upon hallowed ground; and if I may borrow an image from ancient superstition, a magic circle of heavenly light and lustre is drawn round us,—nor will the dark malicious enchanter, who only rules in earth and hell, dare to approach its radiant limits. What does this awful silence mean when applied to public worship? Were we all pure spirit, unembarrassed with these gross vehicles of clay, there is no doubt but we might, even publicly, join in silent worship, and catch the fervours of devotion from each other, without the intervention of speech or corporeal sound. “There is a communion which language cannot express, a worship that wants not the aid of words, nor is it to be defined by a harmony of sounds, in which we approach the sacred Author of unutterable love.” There are times when the sanctified soul is constrained, as it were, to offer up the silent sacrifice of the spirit, and when the sacrifice of words must fail. When applied to public worship, the silence here enjoined means that reverential awe and profound submission, which, though due at all times and in all places, from the creature to his adorable Creator, seems to be more immediately so, when we assemble together in places dedicated to His worship, which, according to His own declaration, He favours with His more immediate presence, and where “His honour more particularly dwells.” (*Jacob Duché, M.A.*) *God present in His holy temple.*—I. WHAT THE PROPHET HERE INTIMATES. There are several senses in which we may understand this expression of the prophet, and all equally in accordance with the Word of God. 1. God dwelling in the temple of the universe—inhabiting all space: omnipresent. 2. In the person of Jesus Christ, in whom dwelt “the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” 3. In the congregation of His saints, wherever they meet together; but more especially in those buildings set apart for His public worship. 4. Every true believer is himself a temple of the living God; a holy temple, filled with “all the fulness of God.” II. PRACTICAL LESSON. “Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” It behoves us at all times to cherish such feelings of reverence and submission as become the sinner in the sight of his God, and worms of the dust before the Creator of heaven and earth. In all circumstances of life a ready acquiescence and un murmuring spirit should mark the Christian’s conduct. Attend especially to the disposition of heart and mind in which God should be approached in His holy ordinances. Here the King of kings invites rebellious subjects to meet Him; here He is present and ready to receive the humble suppliant, and to offer him a full and free pardon, and an incorruptible

and heavenly inheritance, secured through the merits of His beloved Son.
(*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*)

Ver. 20. *Let all the earth keep silence before Him.—Keeping silence:—*Habakkuk commends the power of God, that the Israelites might proceed with alacrity in their religious course, knowing it to be a sufficient security to be under the protection of the only true God, and that they might not seek after the superstitions of the nations, nor be carried here and there, as it often happens, by vain desires. “Keep silence,” then, he says, “let all the earth.” He shows that though the Israelites might be far inferior to the Babylonians, and other nations, and be far unequal to them in strength, military art, forces, and in short, in all things of this kind, yet they would always be safe under the guardianship of God; for the Lord was able to control whatever power there might be in the world. We now see what the prophet had in view; for he does not here simply exhort all people to worship God, but shows that, though men may grow mad against Him, He yet can easily by His hand subjugate them; for after all the tumults made by kings and their people, the Lord can, by one breath of His mouth, dissipate all their attempts, however furious they may be. This, then, is the silence of which the prophet now speaks. But there is another kind of silence, and that is, when we willingly submit to God; for silence in this respect is nothing else but submission: and we submit to God, when we bring not our own inventions and imaginations, but suffer ourselves to be taught by His Word. We also submit to Him, when we murmur not against His power or His judgments, when we humble ourselves under His powerful hand, and do not fiercely resist Him, as those do who indulge their own lusts. This is indeed a voluntary submission: but the prophet here shows that there is power in God to lay prostrate the whole world, and to tread it under His feet, whenever it may please Him; so that the faithful have nothing to fear, for they know that their salvation is secured; for though the whole world were leagued against them, it yet cannot resist God. (*John Calvin.*) *The teaching of silence:—*There is an eloquence that lives not in words. There is an appeal to the heart, ay, and to the reason too, in the language of silence. The child that wakes in the night and listens for a sound and hears none, realises loneliness, and vastness, and the sense of mystery, and cries out for fear. There is a voice in the silence of old associations, as we stand amid the relics of the past. There is a silence too amongst men that speaks most unmistakably,—the silence of deep feeling, whether of sorrow, or rage, or attention, or determination, when men have ceased to talk, because they feel words are out of place, and the time for work has come. The silence spoken of in the text is a silence created by a sense of the present majesty of God. I. THE PRESENCE OF GOD. He has Himself declared His omnipresence. He condescended to dwell in the tabernacle and the temple. In the newer dispensation there were manifest declarations that God is among His worshippers of a truth. It is no relic of a bygone superstition to assert that God is in the midst of us. At the present day, with altered circumstances externally, are we to suppose the reality is changed? Because the temple gave way to the riverside or the catacombs, and they in turn to the Basilica and the Church, are we to think that God has failed His people or broken His covenant? Are we to imagine that God does not now draw near to hear the prayer addressed to Him, or that, while He is present everywhere else, He excludes Himself from those sanctuaries where His people specially desire His presence? We are here for a festival of parochial choirs. But in whose honour is that festival? Our own or God’s? II. THE WORK OF MUSIC. Regard it as an influence. Which of us is altogether insensible to it? And as a means of expression. The influence of music must lead on to something further. If we feel it in any degree, we are bound to make it our own, and employ it till we realise something of the worth of music as a means of expression. When Mendelssohn, as a boy, had seen anything very beautiful, if he was asked to describe it, he would say, “Oh, I can’t speak it, I will play it to you,” and would then sit down and draw out of the instrument tones that expressed the deep impression which the beautiful had made on him. We are not all so. Still we all have some such power in some degree. III. WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH SILENCE? A great deal. For all great works great preparation is needed. For the true preparation of the music of the sanctuary, silence is necessary. The music we have been speaking of is the music of worship, and the music of hearts. Silence is the attitude of listen-

ing and attention. What is necessary in God's house is silent reverence. And it is the condition of real work,—of most work with the hand, of all real work with the head. The silence of preparation is like a dam across a stream. In the silence of thought, in the silence of humility, in the silence of reverence, in the silence of deep feelings, in the silence of earnest determination, we prepare an offering of prayer and praise, which wells forth, not from the noisy utterance of our lips, without influence and without expression, but a strong deep flood from the heart itself, which flows, and will flow on and on for ever, which has God for its object, our own deepest interest for its subject, our whole life for its channel, and eternity for its end. (*G. C. Harris.*) *Sentiments for a great crisis*.—This prophetic book was written in troublous times. I. THE ATTITUDE OF GOD TOWARDS THE EARTH IN THE GREAT CRISIS OF ITS HISTORY. Some think by Jehovah's temple the prophet means the Church; others the universe; others heaven; others the temple at Jerusalem. We understand our text to speak of *heaven* as the temple of the Lord. 1. The fact that the Lord is in His temple speaks to us of the hiding of His purposes. To us, in this lower world, God's face is often veiled. Our vision is not keen enough to pierce the mysteries of that temple into which He withdraws Himself. 2. Indicates the interest which He takes in human affairs. Though the Lord is hidden, He is not unob-servant. It is our consolation to know that our Heavenly Father, though unseen, is all-seeing and all-pervading. And if God care for the most insignificant individual, must He not care much more when the fate of nations hangs in the balance? 3. Intimates His infinite repose in spite of all external changes. No disquiet can be felt by the Almighty. 4. He is ready to interfere effectively at the proper moment. As a rule, He conceals His designs, until the time comes for action. II. THE FITTING ATTITUDE OF MAN TOWARDS GOD IN EVENTFUL TIMES. "Let all the earth keep silence before Him." There should be—1. The silence of humiliation. 2. The silence of adoration. 3. The silence of submission. 4. The silence of expectation. 5. The silence of quiet resolution—the resolution to follow implicitly the guidance of providence, and at whatever cost, to do our duty to our country, the world, and to God. *The expressiveness of devout silence*.—Addison professes to have been wonderfully delighted with a masterpiece of music, when in the very tumult and ferment of their harmony all the voices and instruments have stopped short on a sudden, and after a little pause recovered themselves again as it were, and renewed the concert in all its parts. "Methought this short interval of silence has had more music in it than any one same space of time before or after it." And he goes on to cite from Homer and from Virgil two instances of silence, "which have something in them as sublime as any of the speeches in their whole works." (*Francis Jacox.*) *Silence*.—What is silence? You often use the word, but are you sure that you always use it correctly? or that you are able to discriminate between the literal and the metaphorical use of the word? Strictly speaking, silence is the suspension of articulate speech, though by a metaphor we transfer the term to a cessation of any sound whatever. Thus, we read of the hushed silence which, in tropical countries, precedes the shock of the earthquake; and we have all been awed by the silence which fills up the intervals between the peals in the thunderstorm. But in these instances the word silence, which strictly means the pause of articulate speech, is not used in its primary and literal sense, but figuratively or metaphorically. The Psalmist calls the human voice "man's glory"; and so it is, as sharing with the possession of reason "the glory" of distinguishing between man himself and the beasts that perish. And our Lord warns us against the vain and idle use of this great gift, by the solemn declaration that "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"; and again, that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." But if the faculty of speech be thus wonderful and sacred, and if a responsibility thus strict and awful attach to its right employment, must not something of the like sacredness, something of the like responsibility, belong also to that correlative power—the power of silence? I. THE SILENCE OF WORSHIP, OF AWE AND REVERENCE. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." When we come up to the house of prayer, to meet Christ upon the mercy-seat,—to hear His voice speaking to us in the read and spoken word,—to receive Him into our very souls in the Sacrament of His broken body and shed blood, we are bound to observe the silence of awe and reverence. Except when we open our lips to join in prayer or praise to God,

our attitude within these hallowed walls should be that of silence, of those who are impressed with the sanctity of the place, and who know and feel that the Almighty God is indeed in their midst. Yes; and it would be well, could we put more of this holy silence into all our religious acts. Our religion shares too much in the faults of the age in which we live. It is too public, too outspoken, conducted too much as a business; and so the inner and contemplative element is too much lost sight of. "Commune with thine own heart, and in thy chamber, and be still"; this is the direction of the Psalmist, and it is a direction to which we shall do well to give heed in this busy, noisy, bustling generation. Do not suppose that it is only the clergy, or persons of retired life, or those who have given themselves up to the attainment of a higher sanctity, who must court the silence of prayer and meditation. It is even yet more necessary for you whose lives are spent amid the busy competition of trade, or professional enterprise, or manual labour,—whose thoughts from early morning till late night are almost uninterruptedly engrossed with the cares and riches and business of this life,—it is absolutely necessary for you if, while living in the world, you would live with God and for God, that you make a point each day of withdrawing yourselves, if it be but for a quarter of an hour, from the outer world, and retiring into yourselves, to meditate on your own spiritual state, and on God's great love and goodness towards you. Devotion is possible even in the busiest life. Never plead worldly business as an excuse for irreligion, or for deficient fervour in religion. On the contrary, worldly business will be a great help to your religion if only you recollect that, in order to make it such, you must ever cultivate—educate that inner life of the soul which naturally aspires after God. And how will you cultivate and educate it? You can only do it by diligent seeking, and faithful use each day of a period of silence,—silence for prayer, for penitence, for communion with the Unseen and the Eternal. II. THE SILENCE OF PREPARATION. Every great achievement, whether in the moral or the intellectual world, has been in a sense like Solomon's temple,—it has risen noiselessly, silently, without sound of axe or hammer. Therefore is that great primary act in religion—the conviction of sin—invariably preceded by deep and solemn silence, while the sinner stands before God self-accused and self-condemned. Therefore, also, is silence ever present at all the more solemn passages of our life. Sorrow—real, genuine sorrow—is ever silent. A cry!—a tear!—what relief would these be,—but they must not intrude into the sacred ground of sorrow,—the sorrow of the just-bereaved widow or orphan. And so, too, sympathy with sorrow is ever silent. Idle words, or still idler tears,—these are for false comforters, like those that troubled the patriarch Job: the true sympathy is the sympathy of a look,—of the presence of silence, not of uttered consolation. III. But I must name that last silence,—a silence that we must all experience, and for which, by silence, we must prepare now—THE SILENCE OF DEATH. What exactly the silence of death is, none but the dying can know. When that silence comes upon us, and come upon us it must, with a certainty to which no other future certainty bears the slightest resemblance, may it find us experienced in silence. May we have sought it, may we have profited by it, may we have practised it, while it was still ours to choose or to refuse. May we have known what it was, day by day, to be many times alone with that God who must then be alone with us, to judge or else to save. (C. H. Collier, M.A.) *The religion of silence*.—We all speak too much, and make too much noise. Every one has felt irritated sometimes, when in thoughtful mood he could not escape from people's voices. A panorama of the Alps from a Swiss mountain-top may be spoiled even by the cries of "*Wunder-schön!*" No one can worship rightly, no one can even hear the call to worship, who does not often feel that he must be silent. This is the religious aspect of the modern demand for more leisure time. And one of the things we most of all need to learn and teach, is how to use the leisure that we are demanding, so that our "silences may be blessed with sweet thoughts." For worship, there are three main uses of silence—1. To get rid of evil voices that speak within us. Passion, selfishness, self-assertion, lust, fear, are voices that cry within the souls of most men more than they know. Their cries mingle with the other noises of life, and so escape notice. But when the soul is hushed for worship it can distinguish any such voice, will feel its wrongness, and be at pains to silence it. There are many thoughts we dare not allow when we realise ourselves in God's holy temple. The silence which discovers and banishes these is a means of moral victory. 2. To let the "still small voices" be heard within. Often

busy people feel that there are many things in their mind and heart which they can only half express, even to themselves. Wordsworth describes these in his *Ode on Immortality*. The reason why these are so inexpressible is often our want of silence rather than our spiritual incapacity. There are some scientific instruments so fine that to do their work they must be set at night in a quiet country-house far from traffic. The mind and heart and conscience are such instruments. All that is best in us of thought and feeling exceeds speech. When we try to speak out all that we want to say, we know how true it is that "language is a means of concealing thought." But in reverent silence, thought and love and the sense of right and wrong, in finer shades than language can match, may be drawn out, and the soul attain a richer and fuller being in this temple of God than elsewhere. 3. To know God. For there is more to be had than the quickening of human nature to its fullest life. There is a Presence in the world; one whose thought we share, whose love we feel, and whose voice speaks in conscience. That which the finest spirits prize most in silence and loneliness is the real companionship they reveal. We know ourselves alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with us. The holy temple is the place of revelation and communion for its silent worshippers. (*John Kelman, M.A.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1, 2. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.—*God devoutly addressed*:—This chapter presents to us God in three aspects, as devoutly addressed, as poetically portrayed, and as triumphantly enjoyed. I. IT WAS COMPOSED FOR GENERAL USE. It is not an extemporaneous address; it is a settled form of devotion. Pre-arranged forms of devotion are both scriptural and expedient. There is a set form given to the priests for blessing the people in Numbers vi. 2, 3. Psalm xcii. is called a psalm for the Sabbath, and cii. a prayer for the afflicted. Hezekiah commanded the Levites to "praise the Lord in the words of David and of Asaph the seer," which is Psalm cvi. And Christ Himself gave His disciples a form of prayer. Whilst it is scriptural it is also expedient. To get a whole congregation into the channel of devotion, a pre-arranged form seems desirable. II. IT WAS IN PROSPECT OF A TERRIBLE CALAMITY. "O Lord, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid." Terrible was the calamity now looming on the vision of the prophet. The Chaldean army was approaching; the ruthless troops would soon be in his country, sack Jerusalem its metropolis, and bear his countrymen away into captivity. In view of this the prayer is addressed. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," &c. Surely, if men fully realised the predicted judgments that will fall on this world, prayer would be the habitude of their souls. III. IT WAS FOR A REVIVAL OF DIVINE WORK. "Revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Kiel thus renders the passage—"Jehovah, Thy work in the midst of Thy years call to life, in the midst of the years make it known." This may mean, Perfect the work of delivering Thy people; let not Thy promise lie as it were dead, give it new life by performing it. Do it now, in the midst of the years, when our calamities are at their height, when Thy wrath seems to be at high tide and terrible. Now "revive Thy work." Three thoughts are suggested—1. The work of human deliverance is the work of God. 2. This work of God may appear to decline. 3. This decline of God's work can only be overcome by His intervention. "Revive Thy work." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. O Lord, revive Thy work.—*Revival*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORK OF THE LORD, AND ITS REVIVAL? 1. It may mean the work of creation. Or the preservation and government of the world. At other times it means the works of Christ; or the work of the ministry. 2. What is meant by a revival of this work? (1) A deeper work of grace in the hearts of those who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. (2) When the number of believers increases. When conviction seizes the hearts of sinners, and causes them to become true penitents; when that conviction ends in true conversion. II. WHAT

IS COMPREHENDED IN THIS PRAYER? 1. That the Lord would pour out of His Spirit upon His people, and accomplish in them His gracious promises. 2. That the Lord would have mercy upon sinners. 3. That the end may be answered for which Jesus Christ came into the world, the Spirit was given, and ordinances instituted. III. WHAT INDUCES THE SAINTS THUS TO PRAY? 1. The love they have to the children of God. 2. The love they have to sinners. 3. The hatred they have to sin. 4. A desire that all those evils may be removed out of the world which are the consequences of sin. 5. The promises of God. IV. WHAT MANNER OF PERSON OUGHT HE TO BE WHO THUS PRAYS? In order to ensure a suitable correspondence between his prayer and practice—1. He himself must abstain from every appearance of evil. 2. The person who prays for a revival must use all the means in his power to do good. By example, reproof, speech in season, &c. 3. He must cultivate a spirit of tender affection for all his Christian friends, that love and unity may reign in the Church. (*B. Bailey.*) *Revival of the Lord's work*:—This prophecy was probably written during the reign of the good King Josiah, who attempted a serious religious reformation. It proved to be only partial and temporary. It was reluctant and counterfeit on the part of many of the people; as was evinced by their speedy return to idolatrous practices after the untimely death of the distinguished reformer. What was the "burden" the prophet saw? It was intimated to him that the decree of God was unalterable, and that the day of visitation was at hand; and the very people are named who should be the instrument of God's righteous judgments on treacherous Judah. Turn now to the exercise in which the prophet engaged, in the certain anticipation of national calamity. It was the exercise of prayer. In his prayer there were three special petitions. Although the condition of his countrymen was dangerous, and their banishment inevitable, yet so long as a remnant was preserved, their case was not desperate. If he could not see his friends reformed and regenerated in their native country, he would plead for their conversion in a foreign land. "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years." This is an earnest supplication for the revival of God's work of grace, in the hearts of His people, in the time of outward distress. Do this "in the midst of the years," that is, during the seventy years of captivity. While these melancholy years pass heavily along, let the work of repentance commence; let the tears of godly sorrow flow. The second petition is, "In the midst of the years make known." Make known Thy character, and perfection, and grace, during the years of captivity, to those now estranged from Thee. If they were unmindful of Thee in the time of prosperity; in the day of adversity let them consider. Make Thy faithfulness known as a God still in covenant with them, as still willing to be reconciled to them. The third petition is, "In wrath remember mercy." Wrath is incurred, judgment is threatened, the sword is unsheathed, and vengeance must be inflicted. But see how the man of God perseveres in prayer. If judgment may not be altogether averted, it may be mitigated. We must bear the indignation of the Lord, in submitting to slavery in a foreign land, and in being deprived of the soul-refreshing ordinances of religion. But, gracious Father, "in wrath remember mercy." It were easy to prove that all the petitions in this prayer were literally and remarkably fulfilled. That there was a revival of religion during the captivity, may be proved from the grateful and devout sentiments of the captives in the announcement of their enlargement. "When the Lord turned again the captivity," &c. We find a confirmation also in the character of those who returned from Babylon. God had evidently granted them, in the words of Ezra, "a little reviving"; and their first care on their return to Palestine was to rebuild the temple, which was lying in ruins. And as a decisive proof that the prayer of the prophet had received a gracious answer during the captivity, we find that the Jews were henceforward cured of what may be called their hereditary and besetting sin—the degrading and God-dishonouring sin of idolatry. The second part of the prophet's prayer was not less clearly answered. Was not much made known to Ezekiel, by the spirit of prophecy, during the captivity? Was not much made known to Daniel? Behold then the efficacy and fruit of prayer. The third part of the prayer was as remarkably answered as the other two parts. "In wrath remember mercy." In every circumstance that tended to mitigate the rigour of their bondage, God was fulfilling the prayer of the prophet. Learn—1. That sin incurs the displeasure of God. 2. That prayer is the only way of averting the judgments of God. 3. That the extension of religious knowledge is the only rational means for effecting a

national reformation. 4. That while Jehovah is the Supreme Governor of the universe, religion is His great work in the world. (*James Glen, A.M.*) *On revivals of religion*.—I. WHAT, IN A CHRISTIAN SENSE, IS A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? It cannot better be described than by a representation of its origin and effect in the case of individuals and Christian communities. When is there a revival of religion in individuals? Suppose such as need this revival to consist of two classes. One made up of such as have a "form of godliness." They have a general faith in Christianity, and educational relations with it, and they do not openly violate any of its moral rules. Still, these persons may be examples of a sort of negative religion only. They may be spiritually inanimate and drowsy. If these men are the subjects of a genuine religious revival, their lukewarmness is abandoned. Then there is in them a consistency of character. The other class is formed of the notoriously abandoned and corrupt. In these, there is a general abdication of restraint, both moral and religious. When these are the subjects of a revival, their moral taste is changed. Their hatred of sin is excited. Their respect for Divine ordinances is enkindled. Survey the operation of a revival of religion on Christian communities. Since the first age of the Gospel, Churches and societies have been found in the lukewarm condition of the Church in Laodicea. A more awful state of a Christian community is supposable, a state not merely of lukewarmness, but of positive corruption and wickedness. If a revival of religion take place, there will be an united, vigorous, persevering effort, on the part of the members, to display in all its excellence and worth the Christian character. Nor is this revival manifest in things exclusively religious. It will appear in their worldly and social state; in their habits of industry and sobriety, &c. Give the reasons why the class of Christians, denominated liberal, have not thought favourably of, nor promoted revivals. 1. The means used to bring them about do not appear to be in accordance with the spirit and instructions of Scripture. (1) These means are heated and impassioned addresses to the feelings and passions, tending to produce an unnatural excitement of the imagination, and of the whole man, which interrupts cool reflection, and a sober and edifying attendance on religious duties. What an entire contrast do these means exhibit to those adopted by the Saviour and His apostles! (2) The persons who are held up to the world as having experienced a revival of religion, too often display fruits which are equally at variance with the test of character established by Him who spake as never man spake. Review the lessons of Jesus, enforcing secret devotion, guarding His disciples against ostentation and vain boasting, inculcating upon them humility. We cannot persuade ourselves to believe that a suspension of Christian charity is evangelical proof of advancement in religion. (3) The reason which has equally operated with others, is a knowledge of the unhappy consequences which have followed. Review the state of our Churches and towns. Where such revivals have been brought about, there will be seen a multiplication of religious societies; Christians engaged in bitter contentions and controversies; members of families alienated from each other. II. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH A TRULY CHRISTIAN REVIVAL OF RELIGION MAY BE BROUGHT ABOUT? 1. Every member of society, however ignoble and obscure, may have an agency in this great work. 2. Those more elevated either by wealth, rank, education, &c., have a still greater degree of responsibility. See in this matter the importance of family religion, and the value of attendance on the duties of the Sabbath, habitual piety, and the solemn act of prayer. (*W. Thayer.*) *Revival of the Lord's work*.—The writer of this book mourned over the spiritual degeneracy of his times, and was apprehensive of the entire removal of the privileges which were so much despised. The "years" mentioned were years of spiritual declension and backsliding, and prevailing wickedness, and consequently years of God's righteous displeasure; and therefore he says, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years." 1. In what does this work consist? By the "work of the Lord" we are to understand the redemption and recovery of this ruined world. This is the work which the Holy Spirit, through the medium of His enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influence on the human heart, is ever active in promoting. Surely it is a work of the greatest interest and importance. This work may be said to be making progress in the world, when a general interest is felt in matters of religion. 2. What is the object of the prayer in regard to the work of the Lord? In the moral government of God, there exists an inseparable connection between the offering of prayer and the obtaining of spiritual blessings. In answer to prayer we find that in Scripture

God has often promised the richest manifestations of His grace. But nowhere has He warranted us to suppose that without prayer these blessings can be obtained. The object of the prophet in this prayer was that God would grant a revival to the Jewish Church. And we have no reason to doubt that in answer to prayer, God will yet arise, and plead His own cause in the world, and revive His own work. Whatever be the relationship in which we stand to those around us, we have, as Christians, a message given us to all, and that is the message of God the Father's love, and of God the Son's death, and of God the Spirit's sanctifying grace, a message so plain that none can mistake it, so imperative that none with impunity can neglect it, and so pressing that none can delay it. (*John Lindsay.*) *God's work in the midst of the years*.—Time, like eternity, is full of God, and of the glory of His power. God's ceaseless work in nature is maintained unchanging "in the midst of the years." But there is a work of God to which everything in nature is subordinate. It is His work of grace; His work of redemption and recovery in this lost world; His work of establishing His own kingdom in the hearts of men. In the mind of the prophet, this work of God was identified with the welfare of that chosen nation, that peculiar people, which God had placed in covenant relation with Himself. What lessons may we gather from the prophet's words? In the first and second chapters of his prophecy, the prophet sees God's judgments coming upon Israel, then upon Israel's oppressors. We see what years those were of which the prophet speaks in the text. They were years of declension and prevailing wickedness, and years of God's displeasure. The prophet's first and foremost thought is that of the paramount importance of God's spiritual and saving work. Then he knows—the spirit of faith assures him—that God's great work *will* live, and will outlive every catastrophe. He not only prays that God will make His work to live, but that He will make it known. Learn—1. The prayer for the revival, or the keeping alive of God's work, is the spontaneous utterance of a heart touched by God's Spirit. 2. God's work is often going on in the world when it is not seen or made known, when even His own people are not permitted to discern its progress. 3. Sometimes it is necessary for God to carry on His work by dispensations of wrath. 4. Blessed are the years in which God makes known His work as a work of power and mercy. (*Leonard Bacon, D.D.*) *Revival in the midst of the years*.—The utterance of God made the prophet afraid. The period of chastening must be fulfilled. But one thought fills the prophet's mind: during this period of suffering the work of God might be revived. God in His wrath remembers mercy most when He does not stay His chastening, but deepens penitence, stirs up prayer, creates heart-searching, and earnest endeavours after a new life. I. THE FIRST PART OF THE PRAYER IS THAT GOD WOULD REVIVE HIS WORK. We believe in a God who works, now and always, both in the natural and in the spiritual. God not merely wills, He works. Work occupies a foremost place in the Divine arrangement. God's works on matter illustrate and explain His working on mind. There is one feature common to both the natural and the spiritual sphere, the requirement of human co-operation. God waits on man's working. On account of the sin and sloth and heedlessness of man, God's work declines, and God seems to withdraw. It is here that a place for revival is found. And explanation of it includes both the Divine sphere and the human. God's working in nature goes on in cycles. So does man's working all through. Uniformity of action would not be adapted to man. The fluctuation which covers the regions of politics, literature, science, and art, extends also to religion. Religious earnestness is under the same law. An enthusiasm is awakened at times for the supreme object of religion which it is not in human nature to sustain. The departure of such a period may be either the deepening and broadening of the channels of life, or it may be a period of stagnation. This is true of the individual, as well as of society at large. Revival is a fervour or intensity resolved on the highest aims, a deeper sense of the meaning of life, a determination to subordinate all to God. The fact that such times in a community are often characterised by excitement, and by a kind of contagion in which religion seems to be less a matter of individual conviction than a diffused influence is, again, only in accordance with the laws of human nature. Why should the spread of religious conviction not be aided by the contagion of feeling? May not genuine and deep feeling be aroused in this way? Why may not the surging of a vague enthusiasm through the hearts of men work great things in religion as in other matters? If religion is a genuinely human thing; if it is in the true sense the most human of all, must it not partake

of the usual characteristics of human feeling? What a force there is in the expression of the text, *Make Thy work to live: put life into Thy work.* How often the work seems to have everything but life. Life comes, and all is changed. God's working is the hope of the natural world, and equally of the spiritual. We wait for God. And our waiting utters itself. It is an eager, earnest feeling that pours itself out in supplication. It is in this way that our energy most fully unites itself with the Divine. II. THE PRAYER IS ALSO THAT GOD WOULD "MAKE KNOWN." That is, reveal Himself and Divine truth. The prayer is, that God would not only work but reveal; that God would show men the reality. Clouds lie between them and the spiritual and eternal. It is well that these two things are joined together, reviving of God's work, and making known. III. WHAT WEIGHT IS GIVEN TO THE PRAYER BY THE ADDITION, "IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS"? There is an argument, or plea, in the thought, that many years are gone beyond recall, and that so many years fewer are to come. The irrevocable past, as it rises before us, brings bitter regrets. How different those years might have been! The words seem suggestive of the confusion and darkness of time. And the fleetingness and evanescence of the years rise before us in contrast to the immutable and eternal of the Divine life. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *The necessity of a great spiritual change throughout the world.* :—I. AS TO THE STATE OF THE PROFESSING CHURCH OF CHRIST. 1. Note the ignorance of the Church. 2. The divisions of the Church. 3. The worldly conformity of the Church. 4. The want of activity in the Church. 5. The deadness of prayer in the Church. II. AS TO THE STATE OF THE UNCONVERTED AND UNGODLY WORLD. 1. In relation to civil governments, and to publicly recognised social institutions and authorities. Refer to despotism, corruption, war, &c. 2. In direct relation to religion. Nominal Christians. Note the positive crimes by which the country is stained; Sabbath-breaking, profane-swearing, fraud, drinking, &c. III. CERTAIN SYSTEMS WHICH MUST BE SWEEPED AWAY. Such as popery, Judaism, infidelity, Mohammedanism, heathenism. Surely we may well pray, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years." (*James Parsons.*) *Means of promoting the revival of religion.* :—1. Does the man of sincere goodness observe vice prevalent, and spreading its unhappy influence through all ranks and degrees of the community? This is a powerful inducement to desire and to work for its reformation. 2. The decay of religion is not more owing to open wickedness than to inconsiderate negligence. A good man, who has the happiness of the species at heart, will offer up his most fervent petitions to the Father of Lights, that He would be pleased to spread abroad in the breasts of the people a spirit of prayer and reformation. (*James Rudge, D.D.*) *The revival of the Lord's work.* :—1. The prayer of the text rises to heaven in the time of affliction. 2. The prayer of the prophet is founded upon need. 3. Observe whose work it is that is implored to be revived—it is the work of God. And He alone can accomplish it. 4. Consider the use of certain means for the spread and establishment of the Divine work. He has commanded us to call upon His name, to trust in Him, to seek Him, to repent of our misdoings, to do battle against evil wherever found, and to assemble ourselves together for Divine worship. (*W. Horwood.*) *Nature and origin of revivals.* :—I. THE STATE CALLING FOR A REVIVAL. A revival is a return to life and vigour from a state of languor and decay. The Church of Christ needs revival. It is not in a lively state as to deep and practical godliness. There are comparatively few flourishing Churches. There is much disunion. There is a low standard of devotedness to Christ. This state of things calls for a revival in the Church generally. As individuals is our condition satisfactory? Is there not a state of worldliness, lukewarmness, and formality? The apostle speaks of many in his day as having "the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." This surely is a state calling for a revival. II. THE NATURE OF THE REVIVAL OF GOD'S WORK. What is God's work in the heart of man? It is very different from man's work. It is marked by a new birth. It is marked by Christian graces. It is marked by walking in all good works. It is the work of grace in the heart of man. What is the revival of this work? 1. An increase of zeal on the part of God's people. 2. An awakening among careless sinners. III. THE ONLY SOURCE FROM WHICH IT CAN FLOW. "O Lord, revive Thy work." The Holy Spirit is the great source of the revival of the work of grace in the heart of man. If you desire revivals, the means must be diligently used—reading God's Word, prayer in secret, social prayer, public worship, self-examination; but if you stop at the means you deceive yourselves; this is the proper posture

for the Christian, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." IV. THE TIME IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE SOUGHT. "In the midst of the years." Before the day of sickness comes. Before the day of old age comes. Before the judgments of God come on the world. Before the Saviour appears. Before the final sentence is pronounced. Seek a revival, while the day of grace continues; while God's ministers invite you. While opportunity is afforded. Then—1. Search into the state of your own hearts. 2. Seek revival from God by prayer in private. Devote yourselves afresh unto God. (*E. Bickersteth, A.M.*) *God's work revived*.—I. THE WORK ITSELF. The salvation of the sinner is the peculiar work of Jehovah. It implies the exercise of infinite mercy. It requires Divine care. II. WHY MAY IT VERY PROPERLY BE CALLED GOD'S WORK? Because it glorifies God. III. WHEN MAY GOD BE SAID TO REVIVE HIS PEOPLE? When His people are preserved alive. When His people grow in grace. When His people are led to surmount trouble, affliction, and sorrow. When the backslider is restored. (*Hugh Allen, M.A.*) *Lent, a season of revival to the soul*.—The Christian life has its ebb and flow, like the currents of the ocean, and no one need hope to preserve the same uniform frames and feelings at every step of his earthly probation. If we are ever enabled to do right, it is because the good Lord has helped us. There is a revival which we all need; such a revival as shall lead us to forsake our sins, and crucify our corrupt affections and lusts; such a revival as shall render us more devout and devoted to God's service. I mean nothing akin to the unwholesome modern system of revivals. The Church has a revival system of her own, which has been practised with most abundant success from the earliest days of Christianity until now. Her revival season begins with the four weeks of Advent, when she calls men to repentance and amendment, that they may make themselves ready to welcome the Saviour afresh on the return of His birthday. Another revival season is the forty days of Lent; when the motive appealed to is the love of God, manifested in the gift of His only Son. Throughout the whole sacred season, His life, His teaching, His miracles are kept constantly before us, deepened in its penetrating power by fastings and prayer. (*John N. Norton.*) *Revivals*.—I. THE CHIEF NEED OF THE WORLD TO-DAY IS A GENERAL REVIVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. The preconceptions of most of us are not favourable to revivals. Theories, however, cannot stand for a moment against stubborn facts. There is one fact which renders a revival necessary for a vast number of people. All scientists recognise that retrogression is as much a fact of nature as is evolution or progress. History is full of illustrations of the decay of races and the decline of nations. Only one remedy is open to us, when the decay concerns our religious life. It is a revival—the regaining, by a supreme moral effort, of the spiritual heights which have been lost. II. REVIVALS ARE NORMAL. We are inclined to think that with the world and the Church in an ideal state, a movement closely corresponding to revivals would still take place. Life moves in periods or cycles. III. BOTH THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE CONFIRM THIS VIEW OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS. The Church has always made her great conquests under revival influences. Revival of religion was inaugurated by the Wesleys and Whitefield. Puritanism was a great religious revival. The Reformation began as a revival of religion. The Christian Church was born in a revival which swept three thousand souls into the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. IV. HOW MAY WE PROMOTE A REVIVAL? 1. By earnest prayer. 2. By determined, personal effort. (*J. W. Bashford.*) *Lessons of the Reformation*.—1. The Reformation was providential. It was the handwriting of God visible to men. 2. It was a reformation of the Church. It was a contention raised within, about, and by the Church. 3. It was a reformation of doctrine. It began on a point of doctrine. Its weapons were argument and learning. 4. It was a reformation of public worship. Here, most especially, it came in touch with the people. 5. It was a reformation of personal piety. If it had not led to this, all else would have been of little moment. But this it did. Upon us it devolves not to be heedless of the lessons of the Reformation, but to profit by them, and transmit them to others. (*J. B. Remensnyder, D.D.*) *Religious revivals*.—I. GENUINE RELIGION IS THE WORK OF GOD IN THE SOUL. "Thy work." What is genuine religion? Not theology, not ceremony, but simply this, supreme love to God. The production of this in the soul is the work of God. He produces it, it is true, by means; nevertheless, no one else can or does produce it but Himself. II. THIS WORK OF GOD IN THE SOUL IS LIABLE TO DECAY. There are many things in and outside of man that tend to impair, weaken, and destroy this supreme

love. Carnal impulses, impure associations, social influences, engrossing worldly cares, these are all detrimental. They are to it like a blighting atmosphere to vegetation. III. THIS DECAY SHOULD BE OVERCOME BY A REVIVAL. "Revive Thy work." Revive this supreme love—quicken, energise it, give it more force and influence in the soul! This is the true revival. (*Homilist.*) *The revival of God's work implored*:—I. SOME PARTICULARS RESPECTING THIS WORK. 1. The work itself; or what is meant by the work here spoken of? It is certainly the work of Divine grace in the souls of mankind. 2. Why it may be called God's work. Because no one but God can effect it. 3. When God may be said to revive it. God revives His work when souls are raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and when they grow in grace. II. HOW WE MAY AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ITS REVIVAL. 1. We should labour for it. 2. We should live for it. 3. We should pray for it. III. WHY WE SHOULD THUS INTEREST OURSELVES IN ITS REVIVAL. 1. We are excited to this by piety. 2. We are urged to this by philanthropy, or love to mankind. 3. We are obligated to this by prudence. 4. We are animated to this by a well-supported hope. Applications—(1) The state of God's work among us should excite correspondent affections in us. (2) We should consider and deplore our deficiencies. (3) We should improve our convictions by renewed application to God; for pardoning mercy, and gracious help. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Revivalism*:—Following closely upon Jeremiah, Habakkuk was face to face with the woes which were hastening for the dissolution of the kingdom of Judah. He, more than any other of the prophets, represents the perplexities, not of the nation, but of the individual soul, the peculiar trial which tormented so many exalted spirits of his day. He saw with grief the increasing contrast of sin and prosperity, innocence and suffering—this was his burden. It is essentially personal; he takes it all upon himself. Our text is always a good, a wise, a necessary prayer. The work of the Lord is never so forward that we need not pray for its further advance. But what is to be said about the movement known as "Revivalism"? It begins with, and proceeds upon the assumption that man can only be reconciled to God in one particular way. It recognises but one type of religion, and that the most delusive one. It repudiates the idea that God is ever pleased with a dutiful, earnest, moral life. It regards as positively dangerous a mere intellectual grasp of the Christian faith. Revivalism tells you that, unless at a certain time, and at a certain place, and under conditions that you can recall and define, you have undergone an emotional process which has changed the whole drift of your life, and given you an assurance of nearness to God hitherto unfelt, you are not a Christian at all. Revivalism confronts you like a spiritual footpad, and holds to your head the pistol of modern pharisaism: "Are you a Christian? Is your soul saved? Have you found the Lord?" The answer involves an awful alternative. You must either surrender the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free to the monstrous claims of this pretentious crusade, or consent to be branded as an outcast from the flock of the Good Shepherd. This barrier of separation between converted and unconverted has no sanction to which any follower of Jesus Christ is called upon to submit. We must not, however, cease to pray, "O Lord, revive Thy work." Revive it, O Lord, in politics, in public life, in commerce, in trade, in toil of every kind, so that in all places and at all times men shall realise Thy presence. (*R. H. Haddew, B.A.*) *The law of revivals*:—Are revivals of religion under law, or the result of any previously operating and well-defined cause? By the revival of religion we mean a quickened state of religious activity and prayer, resulting in the conversion of sinners, the increased efficiency of the Church, and all the effect of the Divine Spirit in conjunction with the appointed means of grace. Our position is, that it is a rule of God's economy to bestow His grace or Spirit upon the employment of means, just in proportion as those means are adapted to the result. Observe that the results are predicated, not of the means as a power in themselves, but of the Spirit's conformity to this law of operation. 1. In favour of our position our first argument is from analogy. There is such a law of adaptation in all the world of nature—an established and reliable connection between means and end, and results correspond with the nature—the perfection or imperfection of the antecedent cause. This law is observable in all the world of industry, science, and art. It is fair to infer that the same law is observed in the spiritual world, and that the results—the quickened graces, the conversions, the ingatherings to the Church—will be in proportion to the wise, diligent, and prayerful use of the

means of grace. 2. The second argument is derived from the facts of Christian experience. The early apostles and Christians were successful, in a very remarkable degree, in producing moral changes, in the conviction and conversion of sinners. Everything objective and visible seemed to forbid success. But they were filled with the Spirit. They went forth to their work with an ardour unparalleled. They preached to save, they were wise to win souls. We can trace the connection between appropriate means and the sublimest results. This principle of wise adjustment of means to ends is universally acknowledged. 3. This law must be acknowledged as true, else there is no ground of confidence in the use of Gospel means. Learn—1. As Christian workers, to graduate our success. As a general rule it will be in proportion to the aptness, skill, persistency, and prayerfulness of our labours. 2. The responsibility and guilt of those Churches who reap no fruit of their labour. There must be responsibility and guilt somewhere. (*S. D. Burchard, D.D.*) *Spiritual revival* :—The “work of the Lord” means the salvation of immortal souls, and the extension of our Redeemer’s kingdom. I. THE PROSPERITY OF GOD’S WORK IS THE CHIEF BUSINESS OF GOD’S PEOPLE. The prophet sees into the future, and instead of being overwhelmed by coming calamities, he realises how immeasurably greater is the welfare of the soul than the welfare of the body, and his earnest, heart-prompted entreaty is, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years” II. THE WORK OF GOD IN THE SOUL MAY SO DECLINE AS TO STAND IN NEED OF REVIVAL. Does our spiritual life still retain all the freshness and charm of its birth? Is it, as it ought to be, more real, more intense, more earnest, more fully developed by the lapse of time? III. ALTHOUGH THE WORK OF GOD WITHIN US MAY DECLINE, YET THERE IS A POWER THAT CAN REVIVE IT. God can make the dry bones to live, and God can breathe a new life even into the soul that seems to be dead, so deathlike is its sleep. Why does God every year perform the miracles of the spring-time? That we may have perpetually before our eyes illustrations of His reviving power. Then are you not anxious that a mighty revival of this spiritual life should be experienced in your own souls, and in the souls of those who are dear to you? If you are, pray for it. (*John F. Haynes, LL.D.*) *Revivals* :—Literally, to revive is to live again. It supposes life possessed, life departed, life restored. Sometimes it means to infuse fresh vigour, increased animation, where life is weak and drooping, though not extinct. When Habakkuk says, “O Lord, revive Thy work,” he does not imply that God’s work had died out, only that it was in a low and declining state. Mercy he implores—pardoning, restoring, reviving mercy. This is the object we seek when we ask God to revive His work in us and amongst us. A revival of religion supposes it to exist, but to be in a low and declining state. Let every Church be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain. The Divine favour will be restored, and the Church will be revived. Such a Church God will own and bless. What is necessary to a revival? 1. To recognise the fact that a revival is needed. Well satisfied with our present need, we neither desire nor seek anything better. 2. We must know and feel that guilt is incurred by our lukewarmness and worldly-mindedness. Are we in a declining state? Then it is not simply our misfortune, but our sin, for which God will call us to account. We must see, too, the individual and personal character of our responsibility and guilt. 3. If a better state of things is to be brought about, we must sincerely and heartily repent of our sins, confess and forsake them all, and look to Him who has graciously promised, “I will heal their backslidings.” The invitations and promises of our God are all based on this principle, “Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you.” This humility, this repentance, this brokenness of heart generally precedes a revival of religion in our Churches. 4. There must be faith in God, in Christ, in His Holy Word. Faith in God’s character, His perfections, His excellences. Faith in the promises of God. 5. Faith must lead to prayer. Each must pray, all must pray; only ask in faith, nothing doubting. If there be an increase of real prosperity in the Church, there must be an increase of believing prayer. When once Christian Churches and Christian ministers shall thus wrestle with God in prayer, depend upon it, God is on His way, and soon shall they behold the wonderful workings of His power. (*Thoughts for Week Evening Services.*) *Revival* :—The symptoms and evidences of spiritual life in possession and active operation, on the part of the Church collectively and of the individual believer, are many, and are such as may be easily recognised. I. A DEEP SENSE OF THE NEED OF REVIVAL. It is in this as in regard to personal spiritual concerns. There must be felt need before there can be fervent prayer.

Let us now consider more particularly what is really needed at the present time, or in what respects revival may be said to be needed. 1. We require a revival of personal religion. The influence and power of personal religion and of well-founded, deeply rooted convictions of the efficacy and power of the Word of God, and of the Gospel of His Son in the hand of the Holy Spirit, cannot be over-estimated. 2. We require a revival of family religion. Let there but be a revival of personal holiness vouchsafed throughout the land, and religion in a more open and public form would be sure to follow. 3. We require a revival of national religion. II. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD AS THE AUTHOR OF THIS MUCH NEEDED REVIVAL. The prophet calls it His work. Yes, the revival of the work of grace in the individual soul, of spiritual vitality in the Church, and of real and lively regard for the glory of God and the supreme authority of His law, in the supreme and subordinate legislative assemblies of the nation, is the work of God. Hence God alone can revive it. III. THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER TO PRODUCE THE REVIVAL OF GOD'S WORK. As well as Zerubbabel, the prophet Habakkuk knew that this great work was not to be accomplished by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord; but clearly as he understood this, no less strongly did he feel his obligation to pray for it. (*A. Stirling.*) *How can a Church be brought into a revival condition?*—This is a very important question; for the conversions in any Church will generally be in proportion to the average spiritual life of the Church. This is the law. Of course, there are exceptions. Men fish through the ice in midwinter and catch a large supply; and so it is possible for a pastor to dip right through the crust of worldliness and formality, with which the Church is covered, and bring out converts by the score. But a fisher of men that can do this must be endowed with a powerful personality and an uncommon zeal. But taking it for granted, then, that the first thing is to bring the Church into a revived condition, how shall we proceed? Now, we remember that in physics it is said, that, in thawing a cake of ice, all the heat which you pour in below the melting point becomes latent and disappears, but that having raised the whole temperature up to the melting point, it takes but little heat to keep it thawing. It is exactly so with a Church. There is what may be called the zealothermal point in the spiritual thermometer. When the temperature of the body is below that point, you may pour in sermons and prayers and pleadings, and all will soon be absorbed and lost. But once bring the condition above that point, and a little effort will keep converts coming constantly. (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *Stimulants not required for a revival:*—Use nourishments instead of stimulants in your efforts to bring up the spiritual tone of the Church. By stimulants, we mean frantic appeals, severe denunciations, stinging rebuke. These rouse for the Sabbath on which they are employed, but their effect is exhausted before the week is over, and the application must be repeated next Sunday, and so on, week after week. By nourishment, we mean the Scriptures unfolded, expounded, and steadily applied. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (*Ibid.*) *Revivals commence with the few:*—Begin with a part of the Church instead of attempting to move the whole mass together. Those of us who were country boys know how impossible it is to make a fire out of green logs alone; but if we can get some dry sticks kindled around and underneath these green logs, we can make a very hot fire with them. Don't begin your revival by trying to rouse the whole unseasoned mass of Church members, but begin with a few of the most spiritual, and from these work out towards the others. Lyman Beecher said, in answer to the question, How can we promote a revival in the Church?—"First get revived yourself, then get some brother Church member revived, and the work has begun." That is practical wisdom. (*Ibid.*) *In wrath remember mercy.*—*The limitations of Divine wrath:*—What the prophet now subjoins is intended to anticipate an objection; for this thought might have occurred to the faithful—"there is no ground for us to hope pardon from God, whom we have so grievously provoked, nor is there any reason for us to rely any more on the covenant which we have so perfidiously violated." The prophet meets this objection, and he flees to the gracious favour of God, however much he perceived that the people would have to suffer the just punishment of their sins, such as they deserved. He then confesses that God was justly angry with His people, and yet that the hope of salvation was not on that account closed up, for the Lord had promised to be propitious. Since God then is not inexorable towards His people,—nay, while He chastises them He ceases not to be a Father,—hence, the

prophet connects here the mercy of God with His wrath. The word "wrath" is not to be taken according to its strict sense, when the faithful or the elect are spoken of; for God does not chastise them because He hates them; nay, on the contrary, He thereby manifests the care He has for their salvation. Hence the scourges by which God chastises His children are testimonies of His love. But the Scripture represents the judgment with which God visits His people as wrath, not towards their persons, but towards their sins. Though then God shows love to His chosen, yet He testifies when He punishes their sins that iniquity is hated by Him. When God then comes forth as it were as a judge, and shows that sins displease Him, He is said to be angry with the faithful; and there is also in this a reference to the perceptions of men; for we cannot, when God chastises us, do otherwise than feel the accusations of our own conscience. Hence then is this hatred; for when our conscience condemns us, we must necessarily acknowledge God to be angry with us, that is with respect to us. When therefore we provoke God's wrath by our sins, we feel Him to be angry with us; but yet the prophet connects together things that seem wholly contrary—even that God would "remember mercy in wrath"; that is, that He would show Himself displeased with them in such a way as to afford to the faithful at the same time some taste of His favour and mercy by finding Him to be propitious to them. Whenever, then, the judgment of the flesh would lead us to despair, let us ever set up against it this truth—that God is in such a way angry that He never forgets His mercy—that is, in His dealings with His elect. (*John Calvin.*) *Habakkuk's prayer*:—Wrath and mercy are here put in juxtaposition the one to the other. The wrath spoken of is the wrath of a holy, omnipotent God. Who can dare to meet that wrath? If we want to know the extent, the fury, the power of that wrath, we have only to look to the Saviour, the very Son of the very eternal God, the Father's co-equal, co-eternal Son, when He stands as the substitute of His people, as the representative of His Church, the sword of God's wrath falls upon Him. This wrath will come upon a guilty and sinful world in the last days. It will come as the messenger of God to purge His Church from its alloy, and its imperfections, and its impurities, and the fire shall burn them up. But in the text there is a word of mercy for God's Church. Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him. Whatever judgments may come upon us, nothing can come beyond what we deserve. What then have we to do? To pray for mercy. Nothing can be done without mercy. (*T. Mortimer, A.M.*)

Vers. 3-15. **God came from Teman.**—*God poetically portrayed and practically remembered*:—The Bible contains many grand songs and odes. But this song of Habakkuk stands in peerless splendour amongst them all. I. **POETICALLY PORTRAYED.** God is here presented, not as the Absolute One, whom "no eye hath seen or can see," nor as He appears to philosophical or logical minds, but as He appears to a lofty imagination Divinely inspired. To the prophet's imagination He appears as coming from Teman and Mount Paran, which refers to the visible display of His glory when He gave the law upon Mount Sinai amidst thunders and lightnings and earthquakes. Then indeed His glory covered the heavens. But whilst we take this as a poetic representation, we must not fail to notice some of the grand truths which it contains. 1. That God's glory transcends all revelations. The brightness of the Shekinah, in which He appeared on Sinai and elsewhere to the Jews, however effulgent, was but a mere scintillation of the infinite splendour of His being, the mere "hiding of His power." All His glory as seen in nature, both in the material and the spiritual universe, is but as one ray to the eternal sun. 2. That God's power over the material universe is absolute. He makes the mountains tremble, and the seas divide, and the orbs of heaven stand still. 3. That God's interest in good men is profound and practical. All His operations, as here poetically described, are on behalf of His chosen people. II. **PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED.** Why did the prophet recall all these Divine manifestations to the Hebrew people in past times? Undoubtedly to encourage in himself and in his countrymen unbounded confidence in Him, in the critical and dangerous period in which they were placed. The Chaldean hosts were threatening their ruin. Under these perilous circumstances he turns to God, he calls to mind and portrays in vivid poetry what He had been to His people in ancient times. 1. He recalls the fact that God had delivered His people in ancient times from perils as great as those to which they were now exposed. From the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, &c. 2. That God had done

this by stupendous manifestations of His power. Manifestations of His power in the sea, in the mountains, in the orbs of heaven, &c. 3. That what God had done for His people, He would continue to do. "His ways are everlasting," or, as Kiel renders it, His are ways of the olden times. The idea perhaps is, that He has an eternal plan, fixed and settled. What He has done for them, He will still do. Thus the prophet remembered the days of old and took courage. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. He had horns coming out of His hand.—*The horn as a symbol*:—The use of the word "horn" as a metaphor to express strength and honour is of very ancient origin. It appears to have arisen from the expression in Exodus xxxiv. 29, Moses' "face shone," or, literally, "emitted rays," where the Hebrew word *karan*—from *keren*, a horn—means "to shoot forth horns," hence applied to the horn-like rays of light. But it was frequently translated, as in the Latin Vulgate, "put forth horns"; and from this absurd translation arose the belief that Moses actually had horns, and, as we know, he is always so depicted in mediæval paintings when bearing the tables of stone, and the grotesque error has been too often followed by modern artists. The horn was naturally a symbol of strength; for in its horns lay the strength of the aurochs or bison, long since extinct, erroneously translated "unicorn" in our version, and which was the strongest and mightiest land animal known to the Israelites. When represented as worn by Moses, horns became naturally an emblem also of honour, and thus of royal power and dignity. One of the daily prayers of the Jews at the present day is, "Soon may the Branch, the Root of David, spring up, and His horn be excellent." This petition may have been in use before the time of Zacharias, and may have suggested this utterance. The metaphor was also used among others than the Jews. An Arabic expression speaks of the sun's rays as the horns of a deer. The horn on either side of the head is employed on the coins of Alexander the Great, and of some of his successors, the Seleucid kings of Syria, as well as by the Ptolemies. From his well-known coins is doubtless derived the Arabic epithet of Alexander the Great, "the two-horned king." In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, as well as in the Apocalypse, the horn is frequently used as a metaphor for a king or kingdom, as in this song of Zacharias; for example, the two horns of Media and Persia, the horn of the king of Grecia, the ten horns or kingdoms, the horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things. In former times, a single horn, generally of silver, fastened over the forehead, was not an uncommon Syrian decoration of great men; but the fashion now lingers only in the Lebanon, where on gala days the married women of rank wear a silver horn about a foot long, fixed upright on the head, over which is thrown the veil. I have only once seen the horn worn, though specimens have several times been offered to me for sale by the villagers. In the vision in Habakkuk iii. 4, "He had horns coming out of His hand," the rendering should be, as in Exodus, "rays of light, or lightnings, darted from His hand." (*H. B. Tristram, D.D.*) And there was the hiding of His power.—*God's reserved power*:—The prayer with which this prophecy concludes is one of the most remarkable pieces of composition ever written with pen, whether inspired or uninspired. The imagery employed is an impassioned setting forth of God's majesty and beneficence as He led His people through the wilderness. The prophet comforts himself in the assurance that the same Jehovah is the God of Israel still. The chief interest of the text lies in its concluding words—"the hiding of His power." The thought is, the Divine concealments which accompany all Divine revelations. I. WHAT DO THE WORDS MEAN, AS APPLIED TO THE EVENTS HE MAINLY HAS IN MIND? The imagery here may have been suggested by the pillar of cloud and flame which led the host. When God's hand was stretched out to work some miracle of deliverance, to feed the famishing multitude, to make rivers for them in the desert, or to smite the foe that withstood them, a glory streamed from it wholly Divine. In the imagery of the prophet, these rays of glorious manifestation were as horns, so often, in the poetical and prophetic Scriptures, used as symbols of power and sovereignty, coming out of His hand. And yet, so far from all these great acts of God constituting a full display of Him as He is, in reality they were but as hidings of His power. If you study closely those manifestations of God's goodness and power which were then and thus made, you will see that this was so. Look at them—1. As His providences on behalf of His people. Behind the providences there was a

grace—more mighty, more amazing than the providences. Incidents then which seemed to intend some present deliverance, or some national institution merely, we find now to have meant far more. Of even the smitten rock we read, "That Rock was Christ." Concerning the manna, we find Christ declaring, "I am that Bread from heaven." And the innocent victim from the flock, brought for sacrifice, led one, in the power of inspiration, to point to Jesus and say, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

II. THIS OF WHICH WE SPEAK CANNOT BE A MERELY ARBITRARY THING IN GOD. Something in His dispensations without an adequate Divine reason. It results partly from the fact that in all the Divine dealings with us, it is God dealing with man. It must be the study of a whole eternity for man to find out God or God's doings unto perfection. He must be full of concealments. And this applies even to the most common events and exigencies. It is impossible that God should, at each stage in our onward course, make us understand all things as He understands them. God leads us blindfold. God's concealments are not arbitrary; they are a necessity; and while they are so, they serve, in a most Divine way, the purposes of human instruction.

III. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY THE HIDING OF GOD'S POWER IS THE KEY TO MUCH OF THE MYSTERY OF HIS DISPENSATIONS, BOTH IN PROVIDENCE AND IN GRACE. It is easy to say that what we see is the result of the operation of instituted laws and conditions. But this cannot be an exhaustive theory of the universe and of man's relation to it. The difficulties of providence have their solution, if not in any of our expedients for accounting for events, still in what we know of God's infinite power and resources. What a hiding of power it was which the world saw in Jesus;—a wonderful manifestation indeed, yet a far more wonderful concealing, with the great reality breaking through only as the fit occasion served. (*J. A. Smith, D.D.*)

The hiding of His power:—They saw marvellous light, exceeding power and magnificence; but, after all, there was even then only a partial display. Omnipotence had not shown itself, more was concealed than was unfolded.

I. IN THE REALM OF NATURE THERE ARE HIDINGS OF GOD'S POWER. When the geologist, physiologist, chemist, have told us all they know, we find they have left wondrous secrets unrevealed. Concerning the world of creation there is more unknown than known. We have not exhausted, and surely we cannot exhaust the resources of God.

II. IN THE REVELATIONS OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH THERE ARE HIDINGS OF GOD'S POWER. The universe is a revelation. But by "revelation" we understand direct knowledge of the character and the will of God, His relation to His creatures, His purposes and work in them, and their future destiny. Revelation, like all other things, has been progressive. While much was given, much was withheld for the "fulness of time." What an enormous difference is perceptible between the knowledge of God which the earliest people possessed and that which shines full-orbed in Jesus Christ! And is it not still true? Do we know all, though we know so much? Are there not fresh revelations to come, through the power of the promised Teacher of the Church in every age?

III. IN HIS PROVIDENCES THERE IS THE HIDING OF HIS POWER. By Divine providence is meant the foresight and control which God exercises over national and individual life. He does not reveal all He has in store for us at any one moment. There are reserves, hidings of Divine help until want presses, then the help will come, and come in fullest measure. As individuals we do not know for what we are now being prepared. God is educating and disciplining us by various processes. What truths should we learn from this? Reverence; confidence; hope. (*William Braden.*)

God's hidden power:—Habakkuk seems to have been wonderfully impressed with a sense of God's majesty and power. And well he might be. We are astonished at the exhibitions of His creative power. But there is an unseen power—an invisible and subtle agent in the Divine arm, and in the Divine government. The Almighty often works in disguise, in a way, at least, in which we do not at the time recognise His hand. He often throws a thick cloud around His plans, and a mask about His operations which even the eye of faith cannot penetrate. Behind a screen He devises His most stupendous purposes. Look at some manifestations of hidden power.

I. AS NATURAL AND PHYSICAL FORCES. Illustrations in nature. Acorn. Corn grains in mummy cases. Elements of gunpowder. Steam, or power concealed in water-drops. Electricity. Telephone.

II. AS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL FORCES. The latent power there is in the simple Gospel of Christ and its institutions. There is power sufficient in the Gospel to evoke a spirit of faith and Christian heroism that will lead a million martyrs to the stake. How

small and feeble in the beginning was the Church! The little mustard seed was the fit emblem to represent it. Is not the thought of the concentration of God's vast powers—His hidden resources, as they shall be developed and brought to bear upon the Church and the world in the next century, well-nigh overwhelming? When art, science, and philosophy shall walk hand in hand with religion, there will be such a revelation of power as shall astonish both men and angels. (*J. L. Harris.*) *The hiding of God's power*:—In this chapter we have Habakkuk's earnest prayer for deliverance from the foes of his people. He describes Jehovah's revelation of Himself at Sinai and at Gibeon as ground for believing that He will again interpose in behalf of Israel. **I. IN THE WORKS OF CREATION GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE IS HIDDEN.** God never makes display; in all His works we have evidences of restrained power. In nature nothing is forced to its utmost tension. All the objects of creation around us show marks of deliberate wisdom and restrained strength. The fruits of the earth. The flowers of the garden, the seasons, &c. Through all nature we see horns coming out of His hand—rays from the central sun of His omnipotence. But with regard to omnipotence, in all its essential grandeur, there is the "hiding of His power." **II. IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH THE RACE THERE IS THE HIDING OF HIS POWER.** There are many wrongs on earth that need righting. All things in providence proceed according to an eternal plan. His worlds circulate, so do His providential dealings. God's worlds circulate quietly and without clashing; so do His providences; issuing from the source of all harmony and light they are gradually evolving light out of darkness, harmony out of discord, life out of death, happiness out of grief. **III. IN CHRIST'S REDEEMPTIVE WORK THERE WAS THE HIDING OF HIS POWER.** Through our Saviour's life there was "the hiding of His power." Two methods are used to impress people with the idea of power. The passive method. The stock in trade of some public speakers is the trick of appearing wise. The demonstrative method of manifesting power is more popular. But how remarkably free from all display was the life of Christ. The death of Christ brings out this idea very forcibly. Lessons—1. The hollowness of mere religious display. 2. That God has no absolute need of man's help in forwarding the interests of His kingdom. 3. Our need to get into sympathy with God. (*Alex. Macfarlane.*) *The hiding of Divine power*:—"It is the glory of God," says an inspired writer, "to conceal a thing." "He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it." Up to a given point all is clearness, beyond that all is mystery. It is revelation so far, it is reservation onward. And *this*, not to keep our curiosity and sense of wonder on perpetual stretch of seeking to pry into the hidden, but out of *pity* to our feeble finite eyes, which would be blinded for ever were the infinite blaze to be outpoured upon us. Concealment is absolutely necessary: the "holding back" is a boon. Full unfoldment would be cruel on the Divine side, and inevitable death on the human side. Mystery, however, is a comparative term: what is mystery to a child is plain to a man. What is mystery to a peasant is intelligible and simple to a philosopher. What is mystery to a philosopher is easy reading to the saint in glory. The finite will never outgrow mystery. The depths of infinity, whether of power, of wisdom, or of love, can never be sounded by any human plumb-line of thought. However vast and rich may be the revelations given, Deity ever must be hidden in the abstract and absolute sense. Seeing God in His works is not seeing Him in His essence; beholding Him in His Word is not beholding Him as He is; even gazing on Him as incarnated in His beloved and sinless Son is not to see Him in the unclouded majesty and mystery of His Being. As the sun conceals more power than it can ever display, so Jehovah hides more might in the abysses of His nature than He can ever show. Bright beamings He gives apportioned to our strength of vision, but beyond that there is gracious reservation, there is merciful "hiding." "POWER!" Habakkuk was awed and impressed by the "horns" and "hidings" of this glorious attribute. "Once have I heard this," says the Psalmist, "yea, twice have I heard it that power belongeth unto God." A God without power—power to will, to think, to act, to create, to conserve, to govern, to reward and punish—would be, could be no God at all. Almightyness is an essential of Godhood. Omnipotence as well as eternity must inhere as an attribute in a Being existing from necessity. Its evolutions are vast, varied, minute, and majestic. In type of careering worlds and wheeling systems Jehovah has written the language of His power on the glorious page of the heavens. And what voluminous emblems and evidences of mightiness we have in the world of mind, and what in the universe

of truth! Next to God Himself, man wields a power almost omnipotent; and through him Jehovah is bringing to bear upon races, tribes, nationalities, soul-worlds, evolutions of His almightiness, which effect magnificent reforms in mind and morals, and lead them up to imperial heights of moral and immortal honour, holiness, and truth, or sink them by wilful obstinacy and rebellion to depths of ruin and woe. Are storms and earthquakes, and rolling seasons and fruitful showers, and quickening sunshine the result of wilful rebellious forces of caprice, or rioting powers of accidentalism? Do they look like it? Is it in the nature of caprice to be so unerringly regular in its freaks and doings as the revolutions of the seasons? Could an unconscious energy—a blind force—which is only another name from the vocabulary of scepticism for “CHANCE”—could it possibly be so transcendently wise in its exploits and infinitely clever in its achievements as the miracles and manifestations of the power to be witnessed on the theatre of our globe? A thousand times no! These are the workings of Omnipotence through the medium of the material by which humanity may learn and receive constant assurance that verily there is a God to whom power belongeth, and that despite the most astounding manifestations thereof there still is and ever will be what the prophet has declared, “the hiding of His power.” But, I am asked, does creation apart from revelation afford proof that this power, the effects of which we see, is centred in and exercised by a *person*? Decidedly so. I would ask, in reply, do the effects beheld show evidences of thought, intelligence, wisdom? “Laws” argue a lawgiver, and a lawgiver argues an intelligent, personal being. Therefore nature does afford presumptive evidence that *power*, the effects of which we see, has behind it personality—that it is wielded by an imperial will, governed by an all-wise mind, and obedient to an infinite spirit. To supplement nature, Jehovah has graciously given us revelation. Power uncentred in an intelligent Personality, supposing it were possible, would be lawless, reckless, ruinous! Power is centred in the Living God. And His presence and power in nature is the source of all force, energy, and law, and the necessary condition of any course of events. While omnipotence in Jehovah is *one* as an attribute, nevertheless it is varied in its exertions and manifestations according to the mediums through which it operates. Seen in creation over matter, it is physical; in prophecy over mind, it is intellectual; in providence over events and circumstances, it is sovereign and judicial; in religious influences on conscience, character, life, it is moral. The seat of power is the WILL. According to the teaching of this sacred book, the infinitude of power has been hidden in Jesus Christ. God, so to speak, has compressed Himself into the limits of the human. Omnipotence, with every other attribute of Divinity, has been presented in mysterious condensation in the person of the Logos. “Christ,” says St. Paul, “is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. i. 24). What demonstrations thereof He gave when tabernacled in human form. From His look and touch and word outbeamed the “horns,” while behind the veil of flesh were the “hidings” of Omnipotence. The Cross is the centralisation of the highest power—the concentrated power of love! Christianity is moral plenipotence. “The Gospel is the power of God.” It creates not new worlds, but clean hearts. It subdues not earthly kingdoms, but rebel wills. Yes; the world is what it is to-day through the living revolutionising power of Christianity. “Without Jesus Christ,” says Pascal, “the world would not even exist; for either it would have been already destroyed, or it would have become like a hell.” Remember, it is not the human, but the Divine through the human, which has produced such effects. It is not the instrumentality, but the God-power through which it has wrought such supernatural changes in all lands where it has had full and unfettered sway. The age of physical miracles may be among the vestige of the past, but moral miracles, perhaps, were never so plentiful and constant as to-day. This, indeed, is the mighty power of God. The power of truth over mind, light over darkness, love over hate, divinity over human sin, sorrow, woe. Nothing can withstand it. What? I am not quite so sure of that. Moral power with Jehovah is powerless to effect a moral change in man if there be no concurrence of will. Physical might with Him is illimitable, nothing can withstand it; but moral might can only successfully work when and where there is voluntary acquiescence on the creature-side in the Divine will. Hence the slowness of Gospel progress of which our sceptical enemies accuse us, far from being evidence of failure, is a glaring and terrible illustration of man’s deep-seated depravity and stubborn unwillingness to accept salvation. Did He proceed on the principle

of coercion in the realm of truth, human hearts and wills would bend in subjection before Him as golden grain before the breeze; but it would be the subjection of trembling slaves, and not the loyal, loving homage of sons. Compulsion makes serfs, but not saints. From "the hiding of His power"—His grand reserve of forces—at His bidding, shall yet rally forth battalions of might to accomplish His purposes and promises of love, or execute His threatenings of wrath; for the "kingdoms of this world" are to become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?—The destruction of forests.—We secure dominion over the forces of nature only through recognition of the laws that govern them. The floods that have made so great havoc in Europe and America this season are the natural results of violated law. 1. The forests of the hills and mountains are God's natural check on the overflow of streams. 2. As a nation we are guilty of violation of this law for protection of the valleys. The plunder of the leafy wealth of the hills has been most wanton. The penalty has been visited upon the valleys. 3. The protection must be secured through the dissemination of knowledge upon the subject, and through the State and national law. Otherwise the floods will augment each year until they become immeasurable calamities. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 9. The bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy Word.—The prophet's closing prayer is that God would, in wrath, remember mercy. For this he is encouraged to hope by a remembrance of God's past dealings with His people, which he reviews in a strain of sublime eloquence. Lifting up his heart to God with devout acknowledgment of past help, he exclaims, "Thy bow was made quite naked," &c. Apply—I. TO THE DEFENCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE AGAINST THEIR ENEMIES. There is allusion to the Eastern mode of warfare. The bow was taken out of its case, and placed upon the string ready to go forth on its errand of destruction against those who assailed the servants of God. 1. The opposition of the ungodly. There has always been a wide distinction between those who serve God, and those who serve Him not. The latter have always set themselves in fierce antagonism against the former. But God's people have never wanted an avenger in God. 2. The designs of evil spirits. We have enemies in the invisible world. One arrow from the bow of the Almighty will put to flight the hosts of Satan. 3. The plague of our own hearts. We often carry our most dangerous enemies within us. If we allow sin to dwell unmolested within us, we carry about with us a combustible material. Until you get rid of these, you can have no abiding peace. The blood of Christ can wash them all away, the fire of the Holy Spirit can consume them all. II. THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S TRUTH OVER EVERY FORM OF ERROR. 1. The abominations of idolatry. 2. The delusions of superstition. 3. The fallacies of human reasoning. Intellect alone is insufficient to guide us in our search after truth without some directing power from heaven. But the issue of conflict with all error is certain. These things will surely be accomplished "according to the oaths of the tribes," that is, the covenant of God with His people, according to His infallible Word. (*W. J. Brock, B.A.*)

Ver. 16. And I trembled in myself.—Horror of God.—I. IT IS AN ABNORMAL STATE OF MIND. The benevolent character of God, and the moral constitution of the soul are sufficient to show that it was never intended that man should ever dread his Maker or be touched with any servile feelings in relation to Him. Unbounded confidence, cheerful trust, loyal love, these are the normal states of mind in relation to the Creator. How has the abnormal state arisen? The history of the Fall shows this. "I heard Thy voice in the garden and was afraid." II. IT IS AN UNNECESSARY STATE OF MIND. God is not terrible. There is nothing in Him to dread. His voice to man—I. In all nature is, "Be not afraid." 2. In all true philosophy. Things show benevolence of intention. 3. In all true Christianity. The Christianity of Christ reveals Him as love, and love only. III. IT IS A PERNICIOUS STATE OF MIND. It is pernicious to the body. Horrific feeling is inimical to physical health. But dread of God is even more pernicious to the soul. 1. It destroys its peace. 2. It depresses its powers. 3. It distorts its view. It is fear that has given men that Calvinian Deity which frightens the millions away from the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. (*Homilist.*)

I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.—*Trembling into rest* :—We know things which do tremble that they may rest—the magnet, the planet, the bird, the heart. Do not regard this text as any melancholy and prophetic foreboding. It is a wise repression of a too vehement self-consciousness—the assurance that our labour is not guaranteed by our present exuberance, but by a wise and thoughtful fear. Wise fear is forethought and safety. This prayer of Habakkuk grounds the hope of future mercy on the remembrance of the past; it is the history of a state of humbled feeling, and a hope from this to rest in the day of trouble. I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FEAR IS EXCITED BY THE SENSE OF GOD. Job said, “When I consider, I am afraid of Him.” When we think wisely and thoughtfully of God we may well tremble. It is the dictate of natural religion. II. THERE IS A USE IN THIS TREMBLING WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT RECOGNISES. The apostle says, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men”; and this is ever the effect of this. Fear not to paralyse. There is a wise and healthy trembling. We are often shaken by undefined terrors. There seems nothing to make us afraid; but the spirit is overwhelmed—all within us sinks. You may tremble beneath some highly wrought sermon; but this is different to trembling beneath the Spirit’s touch of power. III. WHAT IS THE ISSUE? Rest in the day of trouble. Holy fear is the guardian of the soul; it bears us into real life, into a soothed life. This trembling is a sense of the soul, the vision and knowledge of the soul,—it is all the soul,—it is within, it is ourselves. And as we tremble so we rest. Rest in the day of trouble means that a kingdom of peace is set up in our soul. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The prayer of Habakkuk* :—1. Unfold the maxim which these words contain. Fear, excited by the threatenings of God, issues in “rest,” followed by the mercies of God. As a moral proverb only this maxim is susceptible of much powerful and practical illustration. The maxim presents itself in accordance with the whole Gospel of Christ. 2. The use which the Holy Spirit makes of the threatenings of the Word—the sinner is brought to tremble in himself. It was never designed that the threatenings of the Word should seize on a man with a paralyzing grasp. They were intended to subserve the purpose of solemn and salutary warning. Threatening preaching is not in general effective preaching. He who trembles beneath the Spirit’s teaching, trembles in himself. It is an internal shock. There may be no outward sign. The converted man is one who must have trembled in himself. 3. The state into which such trembling conducts a sinner. There is a close connection between the “trembling” and the “resting.” Let the empire of Satan be overthrown, and the empire of Christ is instantly set up. “The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” And must there not be resting then? (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 17, 18. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c.—*United prayer for removal of temporal afflictions* :—We are called in a special manner to humble ourselves before God, on account of a great national calamity—an outbreak of cattle plague. So far as we can see, it comes directly from God. Some will say that the remedy is proper attention to the conditions of the disease, and not humiliation or prayer. But shall we admit the uselessness of prayer? Shall we say prayer must be confined to spiritual things? Surely we may ask what we need, “both for the body and the soul.” We must not ask God to alter the laws of nature, or work miracles for our deliverance. God does not take away a plague, either from nations or from individuals, simply because they asked Him to do so. In relation to such a plague, human endeavour can find appropriate spheres, and yet room be left for prayer. Our praying, and humbling ourselves before God, is sure to do us good, if we engage in it with sincerity of heart. (*G. G. Lawrence, M.A.*) *Hard times* :—It is easy to understand how a soul should, in poverty and great straits, be induced to seek after God; indeed, the goad of want more frequently drives men to Him than the enjoyment of plenty draws them. There is no doubt that if, in times of want, either an individual or a nation desires to find Him, and secure His help, He will hear their prayer and deliver them. We shall never get forward until we see what Habakkuk saw—that God is our strength, and that He will uphold us through the trial by which we shall come into the possession of our purer blessings. No experience is so uniform among the people of God, as that they enjoyed more of the presence of God in their trouble than at any other time. But there is more than the experience of the nearness of God, more than a vision of His glory and grace. There is deliver-

ance out of our straits. (*J. P. Gladstone.*) *Man facing calamity* :—This passage sets down the entertainment which the prophet gave to a sad prediction. He entertains it with fear, and with faith and confidence. A sweet combination. These are the two blessed entertainments of any threatened judgment. A deep humiliation, and a steadfast faith and consolation. 1. The supposition. The strength and comfort of the creatures may fail us. In their production and breeding there is a great deal of uncertainty. And also in their use. And the very being and substance of these natural helps, carry with it this condition, that they are vanishing and fading. When scarcity and want come as a judgment from God, then it is extreme and extraordinary, and beyond the course of nature. God's displeasure oft breaks out in this kind of judgment. God sometimes vouchsafes a special exemption to His Church and children; but the saints have their share and portion in these calamities upon divers reasons. The privileges of God's people are not temporal, but spiritual. The saints are members of those societies and people who are thus punished. The servants of God are often contributors to the common heap of sin that brings down judgments. 2. The resolution. "Although," forecasts the misery. "Yet," forelays the remedy. The piety of the prophet appears in two degrees. Here is the low degree of the affliction, and the high degree of the affection. He will suffer patiently and meekly. He will not only be content with it, he will be well pleased with his condition. He knows how even to rejoice in affliction. (*Bishop Brownrigg.*) *The possibilities in the life of a good man* :—I. The GREATEST MATERIAL DESTITUTION is possible to a good man. It is possible for the fig-tree not to blossom, &c. Man lives by the fruits of the earth. They may fail from one of two reasons. (1) From human neglect. It is the eternal ordination of God, that what man wants from the earth for his existence he must get from it by labour—skilful, timely, persevering labour. They may fail (2) From Divine visitation. The mighty Maker can, and sometimes does wither the fruits of the earth, destroy the cattle of the fields. II. The HIGHEST SPIRITUAL JOY is possible to a good man. "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "Spiritual joy," says Caleb Morris, "is a free, full, and overflowing stream, that takes its rise in the very depth of the Divine Essence, in the immutability, perfection, abundance, munificence of the Divine nature. While there is a God, and that God is happy, there is no necessity that there should be any unhappy Christians." What is it to "joy in God"? 1. It is the joy of the highest contemplation. The joys of contemplation are amongst the most pure and elevating which intelligent creatures can experience. These rise in the character according to their subjects. The highest subject is God, His attributes and works. 2. It is the joy of the most elevating friendship. The joys of friendship are amongst the chief joys of earth; but the joys of friendship depend upon the purity, depth, constancy, reciprocity of love; and friendship with God secures all this in the highest degree. 3. It is the joy of the sublimest admiration. Whatever the mind admires it enjoys, and enjoys in proportion to its admiration, whether it be a landscape or a painting. Moral admiration is enjoyment of the highest kind, and this in proportion to the grandness of the character. Admiration of Divine excellence is the sublimest joy. "I will joy in God." III. The highest spiritual joy IN THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST MATERIAL DESTITUTION is possible to a good man. "Although" every material blessing is gone, "I will rejoice." Good men have always been enabled to do so. Like Paul they have "gloried in tribulation," &c. All things have been theirs. In material destitution they felt—1. In God they had strength. "The Lord God is my strength." "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." 2. In God they had swiftness. "He will make my feet like hinds' feet." The reference is here perhaps to the swiftness with which God would enable him to flee from the dangers which were overtaking his country. It is, however, a universal truth, that God gives to a good man a holy alacrity in duty. Duty to him is not a clog or a burden, but a delight. 3. In God they had elevation. "He will make me to walk upon mine high places." "They that wait upon God shall renew their strength, and shall mount as on the wings of eagles," &c. (*Homilist.*) *Habakkuk's faith* :—I. THE APPREHENSION OF GREAT SUFFERING AND WANT. Our apprehensions concerning the future are of a totally different character to the prophet's. Ours are not national, but personal and relative afflictions. II. THE EXPRESSION OF THE PROPHET'S CONFIDENCE AND JOY. Here is a very wonderful exhibition of a devout and holy character. This language of hope and joy is a striking contrast to three things—1. The language and conduct

of idolaters. 2. The low, dull, heavy feeling of the man who does not believe in the providential government of God. 3. The faint and feeble feelings of confidence in God which distinguish many real Christians. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *On the influence of religion under privations and afflictions* :—We may learn that nothing should withdraw us from our trust in God and the consolations of His Divine Word. I. **CHERISH A PROPER SENSE OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND OUR OWN DEPENDENT STATE.** Perfect and unbounded confidence in God, in the wisdom, power, and mercy of God, must be the ground of all our religious hope. II. **ADMIRE THE CHEERFUL HOMAGE OF THE PROPHET, AND CONSIDER SOME OF THE PRACTICAL USES OF ADVERSITY.** 1. Consider it as opening to us a new field of virtue and of knowledge. 2. As effectually curing the insolence of pride and the follies of prosperity. 3. As proving the sincerity of some, and laying bare the treachery and baseness of others. 4. As teaching us to estimate, as we ought, the many blessings which the Divine love has showered upon us. (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) *The great calamity* :—I. **THE DIVINE RULE IS TO MAKE AN ABUNDANT PROVISION FOR MAN'S PHYSICAL WANTS.** The Great Creator gives him the fig-tree, the vine, the olive, the fields, the flock, and the herd. Observe—1. The vastness of God's wealth. 2. His supreme regard for man's comfort. II. **THE GOOD MAN RECOGNISES THE POSSIBILITY OF A TOTAL FAILURE IN THIS PROVISION.** "Although the fig-tree," &c. Such a failure is fearful to contemplate. III. **THAT IN THE VERY FACE OF THIS GREAT CALAMITY THE GOOD MAN TRIUMPHANTLY CONFIDES IN GOD.** "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord." The wisdom of this conduct is seen in two things—1. In the Divine immutability. 2. Great calamities afford scope for the development of great principles. Trials, if very heavy, kill little men, but make great ones. Just as an Atlantic billow bears the reeling ship aloft, so does the mighty wave of trouble lift to notice a true son of God. Trials strengthen and develop love and faith. IV. **THAT THIS SUBLIME CONFIDENCE IS EXERCISED BY THE GOOD MAN BECAUSE HE HAS EXPERIENCED A GREAT DELIVERANCE.** "I will joy in the God of my salvation." 1. This is a deliverance from the greatest evil. 2. This is a deliverance to the possession of the greatest good. This man has in him the elements of immortality. He is a King's son, and an heir of heaven. Heaven is his future residence, and the universe his estate. (*Homilist.*) *A daring faith* :—I. **A MOURNFUL SUPPOSITION.** Every sentence in this verse is pitched in the minor key. Every symbol is fringed with mourning. 1. The prophet supposes a condition in which he is deprived of the common luxuries of life. The Jews were a favoured people. God had made special provision for their welfare. But the prophet foresaw that He who gave these possessions could take them away. All the agencies of nature and providence were in God's hand. 2. The prophet supposes a condition in which he will be deprived of the common necessities of life. Some of the fruits of the earth are for enjoyment, and others for our support. We can do without the former, we cannot do without the latter. The prophet supposes a time when not only the luxuries but the necessities of life might fail, when the tree should be without fruit, the fields without pasture, and the stalls without herd. It is foolish to brood over imaginary troubles, and to magnify the evils of life. Fear not only weakens our strength, but it intensifies our misery. But it is wise to consider how uncertain all material possessions are, and to fortify the heart against the probable calamities that may overtake us. II. **A CHEERFUL RESOLUTION.** "I will rejoice in God." How could there be inward joy amidst so much outward sorrow? 1. This was a Divine joy. "Rejoice in God." There is a great difference between a human and a Divine joy. One arises from without, the other from within; one comes from the creature, the other from the Creator. If our joy depended upon our wealth, it might fail; if upon our friends, it might change; if upon our health, it might be broken. But it depends upon God, and we know that "He will supply all our need according to His riches in glory, through Jesus Christ." 2. This was an experimental joy. It refers to the present, and includes forgiveness, fellowship, and expectation. III. **A DELIGHTFUL EXPECTATION.** "The Lord God is my strength." That is experience. "He will make my feet like hinds' feet." That is expectancy. The Christian life is both a service and a hope; an experience and an expectation. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *Faith triumphant in the day of calamity* :—The text exhibits a season of peculiar distress, and the exercise of a gracious heart in the time of calamity. I. **A SEASON OF PECULIAR DISTRESS.** 1. Such seasons are effected by the hand of God. He is not a mere spectator, He is the great agent in bringing these things to pass. 2. Such seasons are the

consequence of man's sin. Sin introduced this and every other misery. 3. Such seasons are designed by Infinite Wisdom to answer some important end. To manifest His absolute right over all creatures and things. He claims them all as His own. And He makes it manifest that they are His own, by taking them away at His pleasure. To convince us of our entire dependence upon Him for all our temporal enjoyments. Without the Divine blessing, all men do is ineffectual. To prove to us that earthly comforts are uncertain and perishing. The design of God, in bestowing temporal benefits, is to help us through life, not to make us too much in love with it. To lead us to the exercise of gratitude, when temporal blessings abound, and for the exercise of Christian graces in the hearts of His people. Now is the trial of their faith, patience, and resignation.

II. THE EXERCISE OF A GRACIOUS HEART IN TIMES OF CALAMITY. 1. Gracious souls have a source of joy, when those of the ungodly are all dried up. 2. This rejoicing in God, in the midst of calamity, is the fruit of our Divine faith. If the promises were not believed, the soul would not rejoice. 3. It is a view of the gracious character of God, as a Saviour, that causes the sinner to rejoice in Him. Improvements—(1) God can as easily take away the whole of our possessions as part of them. (2) You will continue strangers to true happiness, while you remain strangers to the spirit of the prophet. (3) In such seasons beware how you endeavour to add to your own enjoyments at the expense of any others' comfort. (4) Let the oppressed poor remember to whom vengeance belongeth. (5) If you can rejoice in God, you shall soon be in a country where neither famine nor scarcity can ever be experienced. (*T. Hannam.*)

The triumph of piety over adversity:—Pleasure and pain are the alternate companions of every man through the journey of life. Surrounded by uncertainty, prudence would suggest the propriety of being prepared for calamities which cannot be avoided, so as to contemplate them without alarm, and to bear them with becoming fortitude. Religion proposes no exemption from sorrow, but promises that support under the troubles of life, which reconciles the mind to every event. The prophet's anticipation of evils proceeded not from a melancholy disposition, but was intimated to him by the sins of the people,—the complexion of the times,—and above all, by the Holy Spirit, which dwelt in him. I. THE EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. He supposes, in the first instance, the fig-tree to fail in its accustomed produce. The failure of the vines is the next calamity. Then the usual supply of the oil-olive trees is cut off. Then the "fields may yield no meat," and as a consequence, the "flocks may be cut off from the field." Merciful God! In the midst of distress like this, where shall the wretched flee? The prophet's ardent soul breathed the trustful language of our text. II. REFLECTIONS SUGGESTED. The text reminds us of the uncertainty of temporal enjoyments, and of the peculiar felicity of a good man. The text reminds us of the insecurity of our temporal enjoyments, as it respects the produce of the earth. It is the privilege of good men not to be wholly dependent for happiness upon temporal things. Joy in God is the peculiar and the supreme delight of a pious mind. Let us learn that it is of unspeakable importance that we stand prepared for trials which cannot be avoided. (*S. Lowell.*)

Joy in the face of adversity:—I. THE OBJECT OF OUR JOY. Our God in whom we rejoice. He is Lord. Jehovah is both His name and His description. He is "God of salvation." He is the God of my salvation. Our joy is spiritual joy; it comprehends in its object the characters and offices of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the administration of redemption. The essence of this joy is complacency in its object. The joy is nourished and increased by the Spirit, with scriptural discoveries of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And joy in the Lord God of our salvation hath little in it which is vehement, but much that is operative and practical. II. FORMING RESOLUTIONS TO ABOUND IN THIS JOY. Such resolutions have been formed. Such resolutions may be formed. Such resolutions should be formed. They are always formed under spiritual influence. Bold professions are founded on the revealed glory of God's faithfulness and all-sufficiency. He is the Almighty God, and His faithfulness is engaged to support the people of His love and care. These bold resolutions look out of countenance all the evils that would intimidate and shake the confidence of God's people. Of these bold resolutions we have some eminent and illustrious scriptural examples. Such resolutions are neither formed nor executed without a conflict. Then suffer the word of exhortation. Be not surprised that the word is, "Rejoice evermore." Nothing in the subject should hinder our joy. And the honour of our profession

callethe us to rejoice. Attend to the following instructions—1. Be well assured of the solidity of the foundation on which the joys of faith are built. 2. Seek to attain clearness concerning your interest in the God of salvation, through union with Christ in effectual calling. 3. Be followers of that which is good. 4. Look to the Lord in the administration of providence, and submit to His will manifested in it. (*A. Shanks.*) *Rejoicing in God*:—Mr. Garrett preached again in the afternoon. The text was Psalm cxxviii. 12. Again the preacher drew several lifelike pictures. He took his hearers to the mansion of the rich, to the study of the learned, and to the palace of royalty, in search of true happiness, but found it not. Then we were conducted to a little straw-thatched cottage, the lowly home of a humble Christian toiler, who had a sick wife and child and no work to do. As we approached it, the preacher paused and cried, "Hark! he is singing. What is it?" Just before we reached the cottage door, the preacher again cried, "Hark!" We listened, and heard the verse beginning, "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath." The effect was simply overpowering. (*Memoir of Rev. C. Garrett.*)

Constant joy:—Bishop Tucker, on the occasion of his recent visit to Toro, ordained a native of Uganda who has worked for five years on the edge of the great pigmy forest. "This remarkable man," says the bishop, "has been beaten, imprisoned, put in the chain gang, had his house burnt down, and all his property destroyed; and yet he has borne it all with a smile upon his face and a song upon his lips!"

Opalescent men:—In ancient times, before men learned how to cut the diamond, the opal was the most fashionable stone, most highly prized, and most costly. There are not lacking men in modern times who still hold to this ancient estimate of that beautiful stone. No jewel, in all the range of precious stones, displays a finer range of splendid colours—the brightest tints of the rainbow, softened as if seen through a silver haze. As you look at it from different angles, or as you turn the stone, there come glimpses of the richest azure, the deepest emerald, the most fiery ruby, yet all of them mellowed by the opal's own charm, and very different from the dazzling brilliancy of the diamond and sapphire. Whence comes this beautiful play of colour that takes its name from the opal, and is called "opalescence"? It is not in the stone. Hold the opal up to the light, and it has nothing but a yellowish tinge. Besides, the colours shift and vary, as the stone is changed in position. Let me tell you the secret of the opal's beauty. The stone is filled with fissures—minute rifts in its substance, too small to be seen by the eye, yet not too fine to be seen by the light. These fissures catch up the light, beat it back and forth between their sides, and break it up into its constituent colours, very much as a prism would do. And so the stone, out of what might seem to be a flaw or blemish, draws its wonderful crown of beauty. Have you ever seen opalescent men and women? They are all around you, shining with loveliness in many a Christian home. They are men and women whose lives are fissured with poverty, seamed with sickness, cleft with some deformity, shattered by blindness, or deafness, or ugliness; and yet these opalescent Christians make the very shattering of their body, and the flaws in their fortune, a trap for God's sunlight. They catch in these clefts of misfortune the rays that come from heaven. They toss them back and forth and from side to side of their seamed and fissured lives, and lo! we see them glowing with a beauty far more wonderful than any opal of earth, or any rainbow of heaven. (*Amos B. Wells.*)

Satisfied with the best:—"I was going down town in a car, one day," says a New York merchant, "when I heard somebody cry out, 'Hallo, Mr. Conductor, please stop your car a moment; I can't run very fast.' The car stopped, and presently there hobbled into it a little lame boy, about ten or twelve years old. His face told such a tale of suffering, and yet he was bright and cheerful. He put his crutch behind him, and placing his leg in an easier position, he began to look round. A happy smile played over his pale face, and he seemed to take notice of everything. Presently I got a seat next to him, and had a little talk with him. I found that he knew and loved the Saviour, and it was this which made him so contented and cheerful. He told me that the doctor said his leg would never be any better. 'Well, my dear boy,' I said, 'how can you be so happy and cheerful?' His reply was, 'Jesus, my Saviour, has sent this trial for me to bear. Father tells me He would not have sent it, unless He knew it would be best for me. And don't you think, sir, that I ought to be satisfied with the best?' When I said good-bye to the boy, I thanked him for the lesson he had taught me, which I shall never forget." Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.—*Joy in being in God's hands*:—The prophet

teaches us what advantage it is to the faithful assembly, seasonably to submit to God, and to entertain serious fear when He threatens them, and when He summonses them to judgment: and he shows that, though they may perish a hundred times, they yet would not perish, for the Lord would ever supply them with occasions of joy, and would also cherish this joy within, so as to enable them to rise above all their adversities. Though the land was threatened with famine, and though no food would be supplied to them, they would yet be able always to rejoice in the God of their salvation; for they would know Him to be their Father, though for a time He severely chastised them. We now perceive more clearly, that the sorrow produced by the sense of our guilt is recommended to us on account of its advantage: for nothing is worse than to provoke God's wrath to destroy us; and nothing is better than to anticipate it, so that the Lord Himself may comfort us. We shall not always escape, for He may apparently treat us with severity; but though we may not be exempt from punishment, He will give us reasons to rejoice; and then in His own time, He will mitigate His severity, and by the effects will show Himself propitious to us. During the time when want or famine, or any other affliction is to be borne, He will render us joyful with this one consolation, for relying on His promises, we shall look for Him as the God of our salvation. We may hence gather a most useful lesson,—That whenever signs of God's wrath meet us in outward things, this remedy remains to us,—to consider what God is to us inwardly; for the inward joy, which faith brings to us, can overcome all fears, terrors, sorrows, and anxieties. (*John Calvin.*) *Religion the secret of contentment*.—There is nothing here of the exuberance of Oriental imagination. It is absolute matter of fact, capable of being proved by countless witnesses. Various lessons are to be drawn from it, but the most valuable of all for these times is the overwhelming testimony borne by it to the religious nature of man, and to the high degree of probability of the existence of a God of love who can inspire such absolute trust in Himself under the most crushing temporal misfortune. It places the efforts to uproot all faith in God in the light of an inexpressible folly, not to say of a flagrant crime. Is it not folly to take away from any man the power by which he becomes able to behave in a more manly way than he could have done without it? Viewed even from atheistic ground, mankind at large are all the better for the calm and resigned behaviour of those who suffer adversity. We go further, and say, it verges closely on criminal blindness to the interests of humanity to proclaim an atheism which, if accepted, would leave the souls of the afflicted absolutely without anything to cling to, without consolation, without hope; worse still, to deprive them of that conviction by which all the nobler part of their nature is sustained and called into vigorous exercise. How shall we bear the storm of adversity when it breaks upon us? Shall we prove our sovereignty over things of time and sense, or shall we disclose our shame in exhibiting ourselves as their slaves? The alternative depends upon what is the ground of our daily hopes. Not in Stoicism is to be found the normal type of manliness under adversity. Contentment is a virtue of soul which, when healthy, exercises itself in various ways. A great deal of so-called contentment is nothing more than physical indifference or mental inactivity. Habit is the parent of such contentment, and where the habits have been always moderate and temperate, contentment with a small portion is easy and natural. But the virtue of contentment is something much higher than this. Virtue is always active; when it is passive it ceases to be virtue, and becomes only an admirable quality, or enviable habit. Contentment, to be virtuous, must spring from opposition to our wills and desires, can only exist in circumstances which are trying and painful. It is our task to show how certain virtues can best be attained by those who are deficient in them, to point out by what spiritual forces the native weakness of our nature may be justified, and what relation true religious faith bears to the necessities of our lot, and the exigencies of our moral character. I would show, if I could, whence the blessed springs of virtue can be drawn; to whom we may look for the light and warmth needful for its birth and fertility. If a discontented man would fain possess the virtue of contentment, he will never get it by altering the conditions of his lot, but by the elevation of his soul above them, by finding, in a will higher than his own, complete and boundless satisfaction. This virtue is largely begotten and cultured by faith in the living God. But what is this faith in the living God? It is not merely the assent of our intellect to certain propositions about God, though it must be such as the reason entirely endorses. First,

it implies the possession of a soul which cannot be satisfied with earthly good or animal pleasured. He who believes in God has a life of conscious existence, of hopes, and fears, and appetites, which find activity and satisfaction in a purely spiritual region of its own. To such a soul God is not less a reality than the earth on which the body treads, or the sun shining in the heavens. Out of this conscious communion with God grow two important constituents of faith—perfect acquiescence in the Divine will, and a supreme desire to obey its behests. The former of these is the essence of contentment. It differs by a whole heaven from the contentment of the fatalist. No supreme power has a right to demand the assent of man to wrongs and injuries which are the result of blind chance, or inflicted by caprice, still less to wrongs which will not issue in final good. But how different must be the feeling and conduct of man, when the power which seems to crush him is invested with all the attributes of justice and fatherly love. He promptly surrenders, because he knows, at least, that there is a higher wisdom than his own which guides the forces of pain and destruction; more perfect goodness than his own is the cause of misfortune, and best of all, that a love infinite in its benevolence, is the impulse from which every motion in the universe has sprung. This is faith; to see what is invisible to the senses, or to the immature mind. God does not wish us to bear a single sorrow that we can by righteous means avert; all He asks is that we will trust in His wisdom and greater love when trouble comes which we cannot prevent. And if faith consoles us, still more does it purify and refine us. (*Charles Voysey.*) *Joy in God* :—Worldly men do not rejoice in God. I. JOY IN GOD IS WELL GROUNDED.

1. Because it is a joy in God considered as the God of salvation. If a man were found joying in an absolute God, he might well be esteemed foolish; for he would be rejoicing in the contemplation of a strong and irresistible enemy. It is in the God of salvation that the believer greatly rejoices. There is the best of all reasons for holy satisfaction. He perceives in Him justice satisfied, and truth magnified; he discerns that, instead of fury, there is overflowing love, and mercy to pardon all his transgressions; he sees in Him omnipotent power, not armed for his perdition, but engaged to preserve his soul through faith unto salvation; he beholds eternal faithfulness to be to him a shield and buckler; he perceives also, that God is omniscient to see all the dangers which may threaten him, and all-powerful to protect in every case. Who is the God of salvation? The Triune God, the one God subsisting in three persons. 2. Joy in God is well grounded, because God is on the side of the believer. This was not always the case. Since he has been justified by the blood of Jesus, there is no longer any condemnation for him. If God acquits, who shall condemn? If God defends, who can injure? 3. Joy in God is well grounded, because of what God has done for the believer. Do we not delight in a deliverer? Here is an unspeakably great Deliverer; and has He been so at little expense? Following the great deliverance are many lesser deliverances; both temporal and spiritual. 4. Joy in God is well grounded, because of what God is now doing for the believer. Do we not rejoice in a healer? 5. Joy in God is well grounded, because of what God will yet do for His people. He will make all things work together for their good. 6. Joy is well grounded, on account of what God has provided for the believer, and on account of what He is to the believer. He has righteousness in Him, and also strength, counsel, provision, and promises. And He is the portion of the believer; a sure portion; an enduring portion; a never-failing portion; an unchangeable portion; and a satisfying portion. II. TO POINT OUT SOME PROPERTIES OF JOY IN GOD. 1. It is a supernatural joy. It springs not from the world, but is derived from above. 2. It is a real joy. Earthly joys have no substance. They cause a momentary flow of spirits, but they only skim the surface of the heart, and do not take full possession of it. There are degrees in the Christian's joy. 3. It is a joy which this world can neither give nor take away. 4. It is a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. 5. It is an everlasting joy. In consideration of the nature and grounds of joy in God, we invite believers to lift up the hands that hang down. Be not cast down on account of the trials of life. (*A. Ross, M.A.*) *Religious joy surmounting temporal adversity* :—That the world is insufficient for our happiness, who does not confess, or, at least, who does not feel? The insufficiency of external objects to furnish the soul with rational fruition or exercise, is demonstrated in the disappointment of those who have made the acquisition of those objects the chief study of their lives. Were they ever content? Things earthly are too fluctuating to be built on with

assurance. They want stability, and leave those who rely on them, in a little while, destitute and spoiled of peace. The Christian has something more solid and unchanging on which his soul reposes. Let none imagine that these sentiments were peculiar to Habakkuk, or may be entertained only by an eminent few among the saints; by prophets, apostles, or men favoured with special distinctions from above; for there is not a reconciled sinner at this day upon earth, who, in the exercise of faith, love, and hope, may not and will not cherish and express sentiments essentially similar. Ye on earth who have known the Lord, fail not to exercise your souls in the same way as the prophet. (*J. Sieveright, A.M.*) *Joy amidst earthly sorrow*.—The sentiment is—That no extremity of earthly sorrow should prevent the Christian rejoicing in the God of his salvation. 1. There is implied in the adoption of this truth, a firm belief in the superintending providence of God. Could we set aside the doctrine of a particular providence, the circumstances of life would change their character. Affliction would double her sorrows, and prosperity lose half her joys. 2. There is also implied a well-founded hope of interest in the God of salvation. The doctrine of providence would be a poor substitute to perishing sinners for the grace of the Gospel. Why should the Christian rejoice in God under affliction? It is not necessary to rob the world of any of its beauty, or to disparage the happiness it is capable of communicating. But it is the nature of riches to take to themselves wings and flee away. 1. Consider the sanctifying tendency of afflictions. Sometimes they are sent for the purposes of trial; to prove the integrity of our principles, and to bring into exercise our latent virtues. But for the most part afflictions are corrective, and not for purposes of discipline. They are either to preserve or to extricate you from danger. 2. Affliction does not injuriously affect our best interests. We live for a higher and nobler object than worldly wealth. 3. The Christian may rejoice because he knows his afflictions will have a happy issue. The transitory character of suffering is powerfully calculated to sustain the mind under it. 4. In every conceivable extremity of woe, God is an all-sufficient portion. The enjoyment of God will constitute the happiness of heaven. 5. The joy of the Christian in the season of affliction is the fruit of the Saviour's mediation. It was in the God of salvation that Habakkuk rejoiced. It is only in this character that He is an object of confidence and joy to us. The mediation of Christ is the ground of our hope towards God. But for His interposition, afflictions would have been unmixed evils. They would have possessed no ingredient of mercy, nor given any indication of kindness. (*S. Summers.*) *Spiritual joy*.—Spiritual joy does not consist in mere placidity; it is not like the water, which in fertilising showers descends, and does not depend on our volition or agency; but it is like the water we draw from the well, there must be activity and labour. There can be no happiness without thought. Habakkuk thought of God, of His nature, His moral perfections, His covenant, His promise; he not only thought of God generally, but in the particular relation which He sustained to him. "I will joy in the God of my salvation." I understand Him in some measure, I feel an interest in Him and He in me. The mere fact of the existence or benevolence of God cannot make any creature happy; it is the conviction, the intelligent, deeply rooted, legitimate conclusion that He is our God, can produce joy. This was the case with Habakkuk, and must be so with every true believer. I. TRUE RELIGION (i.e., ITS DOCTRINES, PROSPECTS, EMOTIONS) DOES IMPART JOY. Because—1. True religion gives decision to the mind. Indecision or dubiousness is always painful, and painful in exact correspondence to the value of the object to which it refers. 2. True religion imparts true liberty to the mind. While bodily bondage is a great evil, spiritual bondage is greater; religion alone imparts to man the charter of freedom—the moment man receives true freedom he is happy, and not before. (1) Freedom from eternal punishment. When we are brought under the influence of religion, we are led first to perceive our liability to it, and then to accept of deliverance through Christ. (2) Freedom from the government of depravity. The moment a man feels that he is dependent for happiness upon God, he feels desirous to know, love, and please that Being. (3) Freedom from the evils of affliction. Afflictions in themselves are evil, they make a man morose, unkind, bitter, despairing, devilish: it is only when applied by God that they become useful to the believer's mind. 3. True religion imparts exercise and expectation to the mind. In order to be happy, there must be a right end in view—the glory of God; proper rule to guide—the Bible; and right motives to actuate—love to God and love to men. II. THE NATURE OF

THIS JOY. 1. It is always pure. When does the soul experience it? Only when it is pure. This is a question not only of facts but of degrees; not only the pure mind can be happy, but it is happy in exact proportion to its purity. When is it enjoyed? When the soul is raised to contemplate holy objects. 2. It is personal and progressive. It is secret, "I will rejoice in the Lord"; and when seen, seen only in its effects. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Rejoicing in God*:—The language is that of faith, hope, patience, and fortitude. I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY. 1. It is spiritual. Arising from saving knowledge of God: from pardon: from adoption: from the habitual indwelling of the Holy Ghost. 2. It is satisfying. The Almighty is suited to our capacities; adequate to our necessity; durable as our existence. II. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REJOICING. 1. In the perfection of His nature, we rejoice in God. 2. In His works of creation, providence, and grace. 3. In His Word. 4. In His ordinances. III. THE PARTICULAR SEASONS WHEN A TRUE CHRISTIAN CAN REJOICE IN THE LORD. 1. In seasons of poverty. 2. In seasons of persecution. 3. In seasons of national commotion. 4. In the season of death. (*Homilist.*) *The prophet's joy*:—1. The sombre background from which the joy of the prophet sprang. 2. The sublime height to which the joy of the prophet leaped. Habakkuk supposes the loss of all things, and yet he had unwavering faith in God, and supreme love to God. (1) We may rejoice in the works of God's hand. (2) In the bounties of His providence. (3) In the amenities of society. But the highest joy we can know is to "joy in the Lord." His loving-kindness is better than life. (*Ibid.*) *Christian rejoicing*:—1. The conditions. "Yet." In spite of what verse 17 describes—apparent failure of our efforts for God, or apparent desolation of His cause around us. Deep reality of such trials. Success is to be sought and prayed for; we are not to ask for the discipline of failure. But it may come, and in one degree or another it will, in every deep Christian experience, whether as personal failure or as a sense of surrounding failure. On its external side the Lord Jesus Christ's work partook of the pain of failure. 2. The resolve. "I will rejoice in the Lord." The will is called up. Believers "will to do His will" only by His special grace preventing them; but they do really will, the act of willing is their own. We must not sit down passive, and wait for a sensible impulse. It will come through our own will when it comes. Let us, in this spirit, cultivate the habit of holy resolves, as well as holy desires. It is the joy of personal appropriation, of objective pardon and peace—"my salvation." Comp. Micah vii. 7 for a rich parallel. The soul, outwardly tried and tired, goes to Him who is "my hiding-place," and there is "compassed about with songs of deliverance" (Psalm xxxii. 7). 3. The result. Not selfish sloth. Some say "personal enjoyment of present salvation is selfish." On the contrary, it is the spring of deepest sympathy with souls, and of love-animated efforts for them. Personal joy compels affectionate work. (*Handley C. G. Moule, M.A.*) *Cheerful spirits*:—A woman who had had many sorrows and heavy burdens to bear, but who was noted for her cheerful spirits, once said in explanation: "You know, I have had no money. I had nothing I could give but myself, and so I made the resolution that I would never sadden anyone else with my troubles. I have laughed and told jokes when I could have wept. I have always smiled in the face of every misfortune. I have tried never to let anyone go from my presence without a happy word or a bright thought to carry with them. And happiness makes happiness. I myself am happier than I would have been had I sat down and bemoaned my fate." *Cheerfulness*:—Cheerfulness is a duty we owe to others. There is an old tradition that a cup of gold is to be found wherever a rainbow touches the earth, and there are some people whose smile, the sound of whose voice, whose very presence, seems like a ray of sunshine, to turn everything they touch into gold. Men never break down as long as they can keep cheerful. "A merry heart is a continual feast to others besides itself." The shadow of Florence Nightingale cured more than her medicines; and if we share the burdens of others, we lighten our own. (*Sir John Lubbock.*)

Ver. 19. *The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet.*—*Strength, buoyancy, elevation*:—The expressions are of a highly metaphorical and imaginative character, but they admit of being brought down to very plain facts, and they tell us the results in heart and mind of true faith and communion with God. It is to be noticed that a parallel saying, almost verbatim, the same as that of my text, occurs in the 18th Psalm. I note that the three clauses of our

text present three aspects of what our lives and ourselves may steadfastly be if we, too, will rejoice in the God of our salvation. First, such communion with God brings—I. GOD TO A MAN FOR HIS STRENGTH. The 18th Psalm gives a somewhat different and inferior version of that thought when it says, "It is the Lord that girdeth me with strength." But Habakkuk, though perhaps he could not have put into dogmatic shape all that he meant, had come further than that, "The Lord is my strength." He not only *gives*, as one might put a coin into the hand of a beggar, while standing separate from him all the while, but "the Lord is my strength." And what does that mean? It is an anticipation of that most wonderful and highest of all the New Testament truths which the Apostle declared when he said: "I can do all things in Christ which strengtheneth me within." "My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness." Ah! do not let us deprive ourselves of the lofty consolations and the mysterious influx of power which may be ours. That is the first blessing that this ancient believer, out of the twilight of early revelation, felt as certain to come through communion with God. The second is like unto it. Such rejoicing communion with God will give—II. LIGHT-FOOTEDNESS IN THE PATH OF LIFE. "He makes my feet like hinds' feet." The stag, in all languages spoken by people that have ever seen it, is the very emblem of elastic, springing ease, of light and bounding gracefulness, that clears every obstacle, and sweeps swiftly over the moor. And when this singer, or his brother psalmist in the other psalm that we have referred to, says "Thou makest my feet like hinds' feet," what he is thinking about is that light and easy, springing, elastic gait, that swiftness of advance. What a contrast that is to the way in which most of us get through our day's work! The monotony of trivial, constantly recurring doings, the fluctuations in the thermometer of our own spirits; the stiff bits of road that we have all to encounter sooner or later; and, as days go on, the diminishing buoyancy of nature, and the love of walking a little slower than we used to do; we all know these things, and our gait is affected by them. It is the same thought, under a somewhat different garb, which the apostle has when he tells us that the Christian soldier ought to have his "feet shod with the alacrity that comes from the Gospel of peace." We are to be always ready to run, and to run with light hearts when we do. That is a possible result of Christian communion, and ought, far more than it is, to be an achieved reality with each of us. Of course, physical conditions vary. Of course, our spirits go up and down. Of course, the work that we have to do one day seems easier than the same work does another. Unless that is true, that Christianity gives to a man the Divine gladness which makes him ready for work, I do not know what is the good of his Christianity to him. But not only is that so, but this same communion with God, which is the opening of the heart for the influx of the Divine power, brings to bear upon all our work new motives which redeem it from being oppressive, tedious, monotonous, trivial, too much for our endurance, or too little for our effort. All work that is not done in fellowship with Jesus Christ tends to become either too heavy to be tackled successfully, or too trivial to demand our best energies; and in either case will be done perfunctorily, and, as the days go on, mechanically and wearisomely, as a grind and a plod. If we live in daily communion with God, another thought, too, will come in, which will, in like manner, make us ready "to run with" cheerfulness "the race that is set before us." We shall connect everything that befalls us, and everything that we have to do, with the final issue, and life will become solemn, grave, and blessed, because it is the outer court and vestibule of the eternal life with God in Christ. The last of the thoughts here is, communion with God brings—III. ELEVATION. "He will make me to walk upon my high places." One sees the herd on the skyline of the mountain ridge, and at home up there, far above dangers and attack; able to keep their footing on cliff and precipice, and tossing their antlers in the pure air. One wave of the hand, and they are miles away. "He sets me upon my high places." Communion with God does not only help us to plod and to travel, but it helps us to soar. If we keep ourselves in touch with Him we shall be like a weight that is hung on to a balloon. The buoyancy of the one will lift the leadiness of the other. Are you and I familiar with these upper ranges of thought and experience and life? Do we feel at home there more than down in the bottom, amongst the swamps and the miasma and the mists? It is safe up there. The air is pure; the poison mists are down lower; the hunters do not come there; their arrows or their rifles will not carry so far. It is only when the herd ventures a little down

the hill that it is in danger from shots. But the elevation will not be such as to make us despise the low paths on which duty—the sufficient and loftiest thing of all—lies for us. Our souls may be like stars, and dwell apart, and yet may lay the humblest duties upon themselves, and whilst we live in the high places, we “may travel on life’s common way in cheerful godliness.” So we may go on until at last we shall hear the Voice that says, “Come up higher,” and shall be lifted to the mountain of God, where the living waters are, and shall fear no snares or hunters any more for ever. (*A. Macdaren, D.D.*) **And will make me to walk upon mine high places.**—*High places* :—“High places” are the best things in life and experience. They lift a man up to God. I. **HIGH PLACES OF VISION.** On a mountain we see more clearly. There are seasons when we get clear views of Divine truth, when they appear in a new glory. True, the revelation is made,—it is all in the book. But so the landscape exists. Yet unless your feet ascend the high places it is as though it were not there. So the revelation is in the book, but you must get up the mount of vision to see it. II. **THE HIGH PLACES OF FAITH.** On “high places” we see things farthest, and so the mount of faith. Not only is there nothing between you and the distant object, but through a rarefied atmosphere there is the least possible obstruction. Moses on the heights of Pisgah saw the goodly land of promise spread out before him. It is a beautiful type of faith. Gazing upon the land which lies across the “narrow stream,” a man may take out his title-deeds and contemplate his possessions. III. **THE HIGH PLACES OF ENJOYMENT.** In “high places” men breathe more freely, so pure and exhilarating is the rarefied air. So it is with the soul. Drink in the quickening, inspiring influence of the Spirit. “Yield yourselves to God.” “If you live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit.” Be spiritually minded. IV. **THE HIGH PLACES OF EXERTION.** On the heights a man can do more than on the low places of ordinary life. This is an image of spiritual life. God makes a man’s feet like “hinds’ feet”; that is, He makes the heavy, sluggish mortal into a light active being. To reach these heights we must climb. God will lead, but we must walk. If we would be great or high we must bear in mind they must depend on our own labour. (*Hemilist.*)