

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

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ZECHARIAH.

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INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH.

WE must think of the prophet Zechariah as living and preaching among surroundings the same as those with which Haggai, his companion in responsibility and tribulation and honour, was familiar. The captivity in Babylon had come to an end. The mighty empire, which for seventy years had enslaved God's people, had fallen before Cyrus. The king had authorised and invited the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the Lord. But yet the sanctuary was unbuilt; no place of habitation had been found for the God of Jacob. An unworthy timidity, and a sad failure of trustfulness, and an overweening regard for self combined to promote this lamentable result. It was, then, fully fifteen years after the band of exiles had arrived in Jerusalem that Haggai and Zechariah were raised up to kindle within their countrymen a worthier spirit. Side by side these two servants of the King stood, strengthening each other's hands in God; side by side, until the slumberous eyes had been opened, and the forgetful hearts led back to the path of duty, and the Temple raised out of its ruins. Then Haggai laid down the burden of the prophet, and was gathered to his fathers; and Zechariah bore witness for God alone. I. What we know of ZECHARIAH HIMSELF may be rapidly told. He was priest as well as prophet. His grandfather's name and his own are mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 16), in the catalogue given there of the members of the priestly class. He was the head of one of the families that ministered about God's altar, no less than a preacher of the Lord. He united the two offices just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had done in former days. The patriotic zeal of the prophet for the honour of his country and the glory of God was linked in Zechariah with that tender affection which every true priest must have felt for the shrine in which it was his blessedness to be a servant. Sprung from ancestors who for centuries had gone in and out of the sacred courts, he would have been strangely unmindful of the best traditions of his family if he had not been very jealous for the worship of the Lord God of Israel. God had called him to a task which a pious priest could not but welcome, and to which he could only surrender himself with enthusiasm. He was quite a young man when he stood up first to deliver the Divine message. He tells us that he was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo. The Book of Ezra, in its account of the matter, makes no mention of the father, and speaks, indeed, as if the prophet were sprung immediately from Iddo (Ezra v. 1, vi. 14). Probably Berechiah died at an early age, before he had time to make for himself a name with strangers like Ezra, though his memory could not but be cherished and perpetuated by his own son. It was in the care of his grandfather that Zechariah returned to Jerusalem from his alien home by the banks of the Euphrates. He could not be more than a mere child when the great deliverance took place. For, years after, when he became God's ambassador, he was still too young to exercise the priestly functions. Nehemiah informs us that he did not rank among "the chief of the fathers" during all the days of the high-priest Joshua; not, indeed, until Joiakim, Joshua's son and successor, was put in charge of the worship of

Jehovah ; then only Zechariah was enrolled among those who made sacrifice and intercession for the people. He was a prophet before he was a priest. If Haggai were an old man before his ministry commenced, Zechariah's was begun in the days of his youth ; God has room and work in His kingdom alike for the veteran and for the child. And nothing is pleasanter than to see, as in this instance, the old and the young taking part together in duties that are holy and heavenly. And sometimes the young are inclined to disparage the work of their elders ; they are too self-confident ; they imagine that there are no thoughts so large as their own, and no arms so strong, and no hearts so fervent. It is better when the two join hands frankly, as Haggai and Zechariah did, and Peter and Mark, and Paul and Timothy ; and recognise cordially and ungrudgingly that each has his own place. Probably many years lay between Zechariah's first exercise of the prophetic office and his last. The chapters that close his book are very different both in manner and in matter from those with which it opens—so different that many have concluded that they could not have been penned by him at all. But it may make the difference easier of comprehension if we suppose these later chapters to belong to Zechariah's age while the others are the utterance of his youth. A man speaks in his maturity in phrases and tones which he did not employ when he was younger ; he has passed into another atmosphere. Such was Zechariah, who testified for God in a time of declension and darkness. It was a difficult work. But I can well believe that, when the prophet's heart grew weary and doubtful, he would encourage himself by the strong consolations proclaimed in the very name he bore—a name which many a Hebrew father gave to his child. It spoke of the loving-kindness of the Lord. Zechariah means, "he whom Jehovah remembers." II. Passing to look at THE CONTENTS OF HIS MESSAGE, we find that the prophecy divides itself into three parts, the first inclusive of the six opening chapters, the second of the seventh and eighth, the third embracing the remainder of the Book. After a short introduction, in which the author calls upon his countrymen to repent of their indolence, and selfishness and sin, the first section of the prophecy is commenced. It is a striking and beautiful section. It describes the history of one very remarkable night, that which lay between the 23rd and 24th days of the month Sebat, a month corresponding with our February. The year was the same as that in which Haggai began and ended his brief but fruitful ministry—the second year of Darius Hystaspis. During this night, while Zechariah slept, God presented to his gaze one strange heaven-drawn picture after another. Vision succeeded vision, clear and vivid, till there were eight of them in all. And when the last had gone the prophet awoke, comforted in his own heart, and having learned much regarding the destiny of the nation that was dear to him ; it had been the most blessed night he had ever known. The second part of Zechariah's prophecy—that which occupies the seventh and eighth chapters—was not uttered until two summers and winters had passed away. During this interval the Jews had set themselves zealously and devotedly to the restoring of God's neglected house ; and they had not lacked tokens of His favour and grace. But a question had sometimes been discussed among them which they were anxious to have settled. And to whom could they go with more propriety or with greater likelihood of success, some of them thought, than to the prophet in whom the Spirit of the Lord was, and who had already been inspired to address to them such good and comfortable words ? So, in December of the year 518 B.C., a deputation came to Zechariah from Bethel, one of the cities to which the captives had returned, to propound to him their difficulty. It concerned the national fast-days, which they had kept four times a-year during their exile in Babylon—days on which they had wept when they remembered Zion, captured and shamed and down-trodden. Should they still observe them now that the restoration had taken place ? Perhaps God did not mean them to mourn any longer, and would be displeased if they did not manifest gladness because of the great things He had done for them. But, on the other hand, it might still be His desire that they should humble themselves and sit in dust and ashes, for their Church and nation were feeble and of small account. Zechariah answered his questioners in words which carry us back to some of the noblest sentences of Isaiah (Isa. lviii.), and forward to some of the searching and spiritual utterances of Christ (Matt. vi. 10-18). He told them that God preferred obedience to fasting, faith and holiness to sackcloth and a sad countenance. He reminded them that it was their failure to fulfil the weightier precepts of His law which had lain at the root of all their miseries. He bade them pay most heed to judgment and righteousness and truth. And, to

nerve them for duties so high and broad and deep, he drew aside the veil from the future. God, he said, would make them glad according to the days wherein they had seen evil. He would bless Jerusalem as He had done in former times. Old men and women would move quietly along its streets, or would sit out in the sunshine, talking of the many strange events which had happened since they were young, and none would alarm or disturb them; while troops of happy children, playing together fearlessly the games they loved so well, would make the thoroughfares resound with their irrepressible mirth and gaiety. And where would be the necessity for days of mourning then? Their fasts would be changed into feasts; their "winter of discontent" made glorious summer. That was the reply; and would not Sherezer and Regem-melech and the rest go back to Bethel with hearts lightened and glad? We come to the closing section of the Book. It may have been uttered, as I have hinted, many years later, when the active work of Zechariah's life was almost over, and when at length it was ringing to evensong. No detailed analysis of these six chapters can be given here. Let it be said, however, that they have a distinctly Messianic character. They speak of a King who was to come to Zion in future days, a meek and lowly King, but One invested with singular majesty too, for He would set free the captives of Israel, and would overthrow the enemies of His people. Then the image changes, and it is a Shepherd to whom the citizens of Jerusalem are pointed forward. But they who ought to be the sheep of His pasture deliberately reject Him, and heap contumely upon Him, and go after a foolish shepherd who cannot profit them. It is a sad picture; and the prophet's voice grows tremulous and indignant as he paints it. But, before he ends his message his accents are happier again. He sees Jerusalem lifted proudly on high as the capital of the land. He sees Jehovah Himself dwelling in her as her Ruler and Prince. He sees everywhere a noble purity in the ascendant. There is to be no distinction of secular and sacred, of clean and unclean; for all things, the commonest objects of life, are consecrated to the Lord. When the priest puts the collar on his horse, and goes to his day's work or his day's recreation, he will be as truly at one with God as when he enters the Holy of Holies with the censer in his hand and the fair mitre on his head and the jewels of the breastplate glittering in the sun. Is it not a splendid ideal? Would that it were nearer its realisation even now, after all these centuries of the Gospel! III. I have said that **THE CONCLUDING CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK** have been made the subject of keen discussion. Many opinions have been expressed regarding their authorship; many doubts have been thrown on the belief that Zechariah spoke and penned them. It has been urged that they are altogether different in tone and contents from the chapters which precede them. There we were called to look on one significant vision after another; here there are no visions, only direct predictions, warnings of judgment, promises of succour and salvation. There the unbuilt Temple was always present to our thoughts; here the Temple has vanished altogether from view. There everything was of the profoundest interest and importance to the Jews of the prophet's day; here it is difficult to believe that these Jews could be moved and stirred by much to which they are bidden listen—it seems to deal with events remote from their time, with hostile nations and powers that had been formidable to their fathers, but had ceased to vex and trouble them.¹ The Book of Job and the Epistle to the Hebrews are not less divinely precious to our souls because we cannot be sure what human hand it was that penned them. But in this case there is no sufficient cause why we should alter our old beliefs. We may still regard the prophecy of Zechariah as a unity. Criticism itself, after discovering many stumbling-blocks and throwing out many conjectures, is coming back to that conviction.² If the preacher were far advanced in life before he published the truths contained in this division of the Book, there would be no need for him to refer to the rebuilding of the Temple; the work had long been accomplished; the headstone had been laid years ago, with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And as for the references to nations, which were not then annoying the chosen people, or able to annoy them, these

¹ With Assyria, for example, and with Egypt.

² "The manifest acquaintance on the part of the writer of Zech. ix.-xiv. with so many of the later prophets seemed so convincing to De Wette that, after having in the first three editions of his *Introduction* declared for two authors, he found himself compelled to change his mind, and to admit that the later chapters must belong to the age of Zechariah."—Dr. Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*.

too can be explained in an intelligible and satisfactory way.¹ Then it must not be forgotten that there are strong arguments which tend to show that this section could scarcely have an earlier date. It is filled with allusions to the later writings of the Old Testament. It appears to have come from a man who was familiar not only with the more ancient of those who had preceded him as God's heralds and ministers, but with one like Ezekiel, who had been a contemporary of the Exile. Altogether, while "it is not easy to say which way the weight of evidence preponderates," we may lawfully continue to think of Zechariah as the author from beginning to end of the prophecy which has been called by his name. IV. Only a few words can be added about THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK for ourselves; indeed, these lessons are so many and so weighty that it is hard to select among them. 1. Let the first part, that in which those wonderful visions are recorded, speak to us of the blessedness of being in alliance and friendship with God, the wretchedness of being opposed to Him. It was intended to comfort the feeble Jews, and to tell them that greater was He who was for them than all who were against them. Their adversaries were both crafty and powerful; but they must never dream that the way of the ungodly could prosper, or envy the success of the wicked. That success was destined to be shortlived. 2. The second part of the prophecy, that in which Zechariah answered the question about days of fasting, should remind us of the nature of true religion. Seasons of solemn humiliation and of solemn festival are good if they give outward expression to the penitence and the joy of the heart; they are bad whenever they degenerate into observances of routine and custom, and whenever they are severed from a living and practical piety. Above all things God desires us to be in earnest; beyond all things He abhors hypocrisy—the show and semblance of religion sundered from its reality. 3. Finally, let us fix thought and affection on the Messiah presented to our view in the closing division of the Book. Let us mourn because our sins have pierced God's good Shepherd—mourn and be in bitterness, as one mourneth for his only son, and as one is in bitterness for his first-born. Let us ever be thankful for the "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins," which has been opened to wash away our uncleanness. And let us see that the King, who rides forth in lowly majesty, is King of our hearts and lives. Behold, He stands at the door and knocks; let us hear His voice and open to Him; then He will come in, and sup with us, and we with Him. (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

THE PROPHET AND HIS MISSION.—Zechariah was a common name among the Jews. Of the personal history of this Zechariah we know nothing. There is no evidence to connect him with the man mentioned in Matt. xxiii. 35. His family seems to have returned from Babylon with the first expedition in the reign of Cyrus. He was very young at the time of his return. He had seen the arresting of the erection of the Temple by the successful machinations of the Samaritans in the Persian Court, and the depressed tone of the national character during the time that followed this arrest. He had witnessed the growth of that selfish greed for their own individual interests, and their neglect of the interests of religion, that was so mournful a characteristic of this period. He had also seen the creeping feebleness with which the work of rebuilding the Temple was undertaken and prosecuted, when the edict of permission was again issued by Darius Hystaspis. Now, as the Temple was to them the grand symbol of revealed religion, indifference to it was an undoubted symptom of backsliding and spiritual declension. It was therefore necessary that they should be stirred up to the discharge of their duty as to the Temple, and awakened to a proper estimate of that great plan of mercy to the world, of which the Temple and the theocracy were but symbols, in order that their zeal might have at once a right motive and a right direction. Hence Haggai was first raised up to rouse them to activity in building the Temple, and two months later Zechariah followed, to take up the same theme, and unfold it yet more richly to the minds of the people, by connecting

¹ "Although Assyria was now merely a part of the Persian Empire, it was yet that part of it which had the most important connection with Judah. And as regards Egypt, not only had captive Jews been deported into Egypt, but the relation of Egypt as an unwilling vassal to Persia made the position of Judah precarious in the extreme during the lifetime of Zechariah."—Dr. Marcus Dods, *The Post-Exilian Prophets*.

the poor and passing present, with the magnificent and enduring future. The scope of the prophecy, then, is to produce a genuine revival of religion among the people, and thus encourage them in the right way to engage in the rebuilding of the Temple. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.—1. The Word of God which introduces the prophetic labours of Zechariah (chap. 1. vers. 1-6). 2. A series of seven visions which Zechariah saw in the night, on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, in the second year of Darius (chap. 1, ver. 7, to chap. vi., ver. 8). 3. A symbolical transaction which brought the visions to a close (chap. vi. vers. 9-15). 4. The communication to the people of the answer of the Lord to a question addressed by certain Judæans to the priests and prophets, as to the necessity of keeping certain fast days (chaps. vii., viii.). 5. A prophecy of threatening import concerning the land of Hadrach, the seat of the ungodly world-power (chaps. ix.-xi.). 6. A burden concerning Israel (chaps. xii.-xiv.). All the parts of the Book hang closely together; and the differences which exist between the first two prophecies and the last two, and which have led some writers to ascribe them to two different prophets, are not worthy of notice. It is clear that though the prophecies of this Book have their foundation in the building of the second Temple, it is impossible that they refer solely to that event, or to those times. They point onward to the close of the present dispensation. They fit only into events, and into times, not even yet reached. Only as we bear this in mind throughout the entire Book shall we be able clearly to understand it, and be preserved from a labyrinth of perplexity. And we must guard against the mistake into which so many have fallen, of applying the revelations of the future glories of the Kingdom of God to the Church of Christ. The prophecies of this Book relate to the Jewish nation and their Messiah; and to the Kingdom of God to be set up among them at His second coming in glory, and which is to rule the world. (*Frederick Whitfield, M.A.*)

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ZECHARIAH.

CHAPTER I.

VER. 2. *The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.*—*A call to repentance.*—The prophet being to carry comfortable tidings to this people, begins with the doctrine of repentance, inviting them not to obstruct their own mercy by impenitency; and to make way for this doctrine, he points out to them the greatness of God's displeasure against their fathers for their sin, as might be seen in the horrible calamities that did come upon them, which might teach their children not to expect exemption if they followed their way. *Doctrine*—1. A people are prepared and fitted for favourable manifestations of God by repentance, and mercies are sweetest and most comfortable unto penitents, therefore the Lord permits this doctrine to the following visions, as the only way to fit people for them, and make them truly comfortable to them. 2. No privilege bestowed on any people will exempt them from sharp corrections when they sin; for albeit the Jews were the only people of God at that time, yet "the Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers," which is also a warning to them. 3. Though the Lord do not chastise any of His chosen and regenerate people in pure wrath or beyond the bounds of moderation, yet His fatherly displeasure may be very hot and sad in its effects, and His displeasure against a visible Church, which hath abused mercy, very grievous, and therefore ought to be seriously laid to heart; therefore He calls them to consider how "the Lord hath been sore displeased, or had displeasure on displeasure." 4. Albeit examples of God's anger, especially when they are near, ought to be effectual documents to others, exciting to tremble and repent, yet such is the stupidity of men, that notwithstanding any such warnings, they will be ready to adventure on the same sins, which God hath so remarkably punished; therefore they need stirring up to see and make use of God's anger against their fathers, the effects whereof were very visible to them. (*George Hutcheson.*) *The prophet's exordium.*—Its object is to show the unchanging permanence of God's Word, by contrasting it with the transitory nature of their fathers and the prophets, and it may thus be set forth more fully. Let the fate of your fathers be a warning to you that you avoid the disobedience to the word of Jehovah, which brought upon them evils so desolating. For where are they now? Once they ruled and worshipped here as you do. But where are they now? Some lie in slaughtered heaps, when the banner of Judah was trampled in the dust, and her bravest sons cut down like grass before the mower's scythe, by the fierce cohorts of the Assyrian. Some lie buried in the ruins of the holy city, which they sought to defend from the spoiler. Some are sleeping by the flashing waters of the Euphrates, after weeping out a weary life beneath the willows that bend in the land of the stranger. Whilst some, in the feebleness of tottering age, have returned to lay their bones in the soil that is hallowed by the memories and hopes of Israel. And why has this been their mournful history? Because they refused to listen to the warnings of the prophets. Hence even the prophets themselves were taken away. They warned, and wept, and prayed, but met only with stoning, reviling, and hate. They toiled on to stay the coming judgments, but when their efforts were disregarded by the people, God in mercy took them away from the evil to come. Then the last barrier was removed,

and the torrent of wrath came dire and pitiless in its rush of fury and swept them away in its flood. Now as your fathers and the prophets alike have passed away according to My word; as neither the wickedness of the one, nor the piety of the other, could arrest My threatened judgments, beware lest a like evil come upon you, that your prophets, being disregarded, be also withdrawn, and the judgments you are daring come upon you for your disobedience. This appropriate introduction was probably followed with exhortations to build the temple, and restore the worship of God, that are not recorded, as their interest was local and temporary. Inferences—1. Whilst God is love, and whilst the preachers of the Gospel must preach this glorious truth, they must not conceal the fact that God is a consuming fire, and angry with the wicked every day. It is a sign of sickly piety when men are willing to hear nothing of the wrath of God against sin (vers. 1, 2). 2. If men expect God to return to them in prosperity, they must return to Him in penitence. The flower averted from the sun must turn toward it, to catch its genial smile (ver. 3). 3. What we have to do for God in life should be done quickly, for life is rapidly passing; to evil and good alike come the swift shadows of the sunset (ver. 5). 4. What a man sows, he shall also reap, and the seedlings of life on earth shall be harvested in heaven or in hell (ver. 6). (T. V. Moore, D.D.)

Vers. 3, 4. **Turn ye unto Me . . . and I will turn unto you.**—*The Divine order of all true progress*:—The first step is at all times to turn to the Lord; the second follows, “turn you now from your evil ways, and from your evil doing.” The motive and the power to forsake evil must be found in himself. Once know Jesus and His love, experimentally, and you possess a motive for holiness, greater far than either heaven or earth can furnish. It is the expulsive power of a new affection. And yet, as in all advance, there is reciprocal action. The first step must ever be to Jesus. When the man is in Christ he possesses the power. But in turning away from evil, new light and life are thrown back upon the starting-point. We see truth more clearly, and embrace it more earnestly. Thus there is growth in grace. To every step of faithfulness on our part the Lord adds new light; and this light is reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. He becomes more known, more loved; and this produces its effect in more likeness to Him. (T. Whitfield, M.A.) *The importance of repentance*:—Urged from—I. **THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE TOWARDS THE IMPENITENT MEN OF THE PAST.** “The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.” “They had shown a mournfully strong and inveterate propensity to depart from God and from His ways. They had needed incessant repetitions of Divine admonitions, entreaties, promises, and threatenings; and many a time all had proved unavailing. Jehovah bound them to Himself with ‘cords of love.’ But ‘they brake the bands asunder, and cast away the cords from them.’ They chose their own ways. They thus provoked Him to anger. Their fathers had by their sins brought that heavy seventy years’ judgment upon themselves.” Now the displeasure of God to sinners of the past is here referred to in order to induce the Jews to repent of the selfish negligence which they had evinced concerning the building of the temple (Hag. iv. 5–7). II. **FROM GOD’S ASSURANCE OF A WELCOME TO ALL THAT TRULY REPENT.** Proved—1. By His invitation to the impenitent. “Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord,” &c. &c. 2. By the experience of mankind. Manasseh, David, Saul, Bunyan, and millions more returned to Him, and He not only received them, but rejoiced over them. III. **FROM THE TRANSITORINESS OF HUMAN LIFE.** By the “fathers” are meant those with whom God was displeased. An argument—1. For the wicked to repent. 2. For faithfulness, and or persevering zeal. For we shall all soon have finished our mission. (Homilist.)

Ver. 5. **Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?**—*The mortality of God’s instruments*:—1. The mortality of the instruments which God employs for carrying on His cause in the world. At the time these words were spoken, the patriarchs of antiquity, the seers of after times, the evangelical saiah, the plaintive Jeremiah, the vehement Ezekiel, all had been gathered to the tomb. There is no exemption from the stroke of mortality for the most valuable instruments of God’s service. Their death subserves the Divine purposes, and the interests of men, as well as their lives. The removal of ministers makes way for a greater variety of gifts and graces to be exercised in the ministry itself; and thus that irrepressible love of novelty which seems to be one of the

instincts of our nature is provided for. How glorious does our Lord Jesus Christ appear, in carrying on His cause, not only in spite of, but in the very midst of, and even by, the ravages of death. It is a bright manifestation of His power, to work by such feeble, fallible, mortal creatures as we are; it is a still brighter display of His wisdom and power to make even their death subserve His cause. There is much in this view of our subject at once to encourage the timid and to repress the vain. Christ can do much with the weakest instrument; and He can do altogether without the strongest. 2. What there is, and how much, which, when these instruments are removed, survives the wreck of mortality, and perpetuates itself through the time to come. It was the proud boast of Horace, "I shall not all die, much of me will escape death"; and it has proved true. What remains of these men? (1) Not only their graves, but their own immortal selves, their deathless spirits. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We are already come to the spirits of just men made perfect. They are assembled in the presence of their Lord, rejoicing with ineffable delight in their mutual recognition, in their sublime intercourse, in their joint adoration. (2) Their names, their character, and their examples still survive. Eminent piety, combined with eminent usefulness, retains, like the rose, its beauty and its fragrance after death. In their characters and examples we have the best part of themselves. The remembrance of departed piety is sometimes more serviceable than even the contemplation of it was while it was yet living. (3) The principles on which these worthies acted survives. These they derived from the Bible, and not from any human theories of civilisation, philosophy, or philanthropy. Your fathers when they died left you an un mutilated Bible. Not a single promise lies interred in their graves. But, in some cases, the Bible is professed, while its truths are denied; it is, in a certain way, held in gross, while it is rejected in detail. Our fathers dealt not in vague generalities, philosophical speculations, or in evasive reserves. (4) Though the founders of the Society (London Missionary) have long since departed, the cause itself survives. 3. The means to be employed to carry on the work begun by our forefathers. Some fear the cause of missions will not live. Others think public attention will be diverted from the cause by the surpassingly great, various, and absorbing events of the times in which we live. It is a most remarkable, instructive, and impressive feature of the times that there is a conspicuous parallelism between political convulsion and social disorganisation on the one hand, and moral action and reformation on the other, between the destructive and the constructive forces, between the shaking and crumbling of the things that were ready to vanish away and the rising up of those things which cannot be shaken and are intended to remain. Shall we suffer this passing age to draw off our attention from the cause of Christian missions? That would be to lose our interest in the cause, when all things seem preparing the world for its full and final triumph. 4. We must unite appropriate and adequate means to our confidence of final success. (1) A more intelligent apprehension, a deeper conviction, and a more solemn sense, on the part of the whole Church, of the design of God in its erection and continuance in this world, as His witness and instrument for the conversion of the nations. In so far as the Church is a missionary Church, she is a true Church. What is the duty of the whole Church is the duty of every section and part of it. But the Church has not yet done, and is not even now doing, her duty. (2) If our zeal be the offspring of our piety, there is necessary for the continuance and extension of the missionary enterprise, an increase of spiritual religion. We want intelligence warmed with holy enthusiasm: a religion of life, of power, of love, and of a sound mind; a religion combining something of the enthusiasm of prophets, the zeal of apostles, the self-denial of pilgrims, and the constancy of martyrs. Eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness. (*J. Angel James.*) *Lessons from the death of our fathers*:—The death of our fathers reminds us—1. Of our own mortality. 2. Of our own obligations. 3. Of our fathers' principles. 4. Of our prospects of reunion with them. 5. Of the grandeur of immortality. (*G. Brooks.*) *Prophetical succession*:—I. THE LAW OF HUMAN MORTALITY AND SUCCESSION IS FULL OF SUGGESTION. Death is the law of all life, vegetable and animal, as well as human. Had man not sinned, the mortality of his human body would probably have been the same. The death to which sin doomed man was spiritual, not fleshly death. He could scarcely have remained permanently in a world subject to the conditions of this. The death of the body is sorrowful enough, because of our human affections and sensibilities. Tho

prophets die. Even their high vocation does not exempt them from the law of death. It may be that God would teach us that He can do His work without the best and greatest. Instead of Stephen God raises up Paul. A prophet's work may seem indispensable to an age, yet he dies. II. IS THERE NOT HIGH BENEFIT IN THE PROPHETICAL SUCCESSION? If the wise and experienced die, they give place to the young and ardent, who, with fresh impulse and newer lights, enter into their wealth of wisdom. Else might the prophet become a stereotype. The wisest may outlive their wisdom, and the most useful their usefulness. Sometimes the greatest are the greatest hindrance. Every generation rises to higher and broader spiritual conception than its predecessor. Whether is the greater evil, the mistakes of impetuous youth, or the paralysis of incapable age; the zeal without knowledge of experience, or the knowledge without zeal of over-caution; the Radical revolutionist, who would make all things new, or the Conservative revolutionist, who stands still in the stream of advancing thought and spirituality—the one too fast for his age, and the other too slow? Have we not a great law of compensation in the succession of God's prophets, especially as the generations overlap each other, and the Church possesses both at the same time? (*Henry Allon, D.D.*) On the instructions to be derived from recalling the memory of our fathers:—It is a tribute which we owe to the memory of our earthly parents, to recall them occasionally to our thoughts. The hope of this was a source of consolation to them amidst the cares of life. 1. By meditating on the fate of our fathers, we are reminded that we too must die. It is a fortunate circumstance in the nature of man, that, though his Maker hath formed him a mortal being, the idea of his dissolution doth not continually haunt his mind. 2. We learn what are the objects that are most worthy of pursuit. The good which our fathers have done remains for ever. It remains to embalm their memory, and to exalt their name. 3. We learn to imitate our fathers. The grave of a good man is a scene of much instruction and improvement. 4. We become reconciled to our own departure. The region beyond the grave is not a solitary land. There your fathers are, and thither every other friend shall follow you in due season. Therefore let your hearts be glad, let your glory rejoice, let your bodies also rest in hope. God will show you the path of life. (*W. Moodie, D.D.*) "Your fathers, where are they?"—Primarily, these words were intended to carry along with them a warning import to those to whom they were originally addressed, as to the folly of following on in the footsteps of those of their ancestors who had been taken away from all connection with time in the midst of careless inconsideration. The prophet does not pronounce as to where the fathers were. He knew that their bodies were consigned to death's dark domain, and reduced to inanimate matter. But where are their immortal spirits? The prophet leaves it as an open question, "Where are they?" We may have forebodings, but we are not the arbiters by whom any case may be decided. It must be left in the hand of Him to whom alone the right belongs to pronounce, and who will "judge righteous judgment." Think now of those of our fathers who lived and died in the faith of the Gospel. 1. They are not where they once were. 2. They are not where we are. 3. They are where they desired to be. 4. They are in the place for which they made preparation. 5. They are where they never would have been, but for the finished work of Christ, as their Representative and Substitute. 6. They are where they will be for ever. 7. They are where they will be very glad to see us. It may be added, and we shall be very glad to see them. (*T. Adam.*) Our fathers:—I. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED. The visible Church, who lived in the typical land of promise, and under the Old Testament dispensation. It was declared or delivered, by the prophet from God, toward the close of the Babylonish captivity and exile. The "fathers" are represented as including those with whom the Lord had been sore displeased, and the people addressed are their descendants in the flesh, who inherited from their births their evil nature, were encompassed with their high privileges, and laden with their proportionate responsibilities. The "prophets" appear to signify those really sent of God, who spake His true Word, and no vision out of their own hearts. II. THE INTENTION OR OBJECT OF THE QUESTIONS PROPOSED. The inquiry is not after the existence of the absent "fathers." It doth not touch the truth of the immortality of the souls of the prophets. It regards the mortal existence of both the fathers and the prophets on earth. The inquiry calls a fact to the recollection of the people addressed, which relates to their immediate or remote ancestors. "Where are they?" Not with you now, to influence you. The Church is suffering the

loss of the benefit of their labours. The questions are put for the health and profit of the souls of the hearers, or for their greater condemnation, if they will not receive warning. III. THE PERMANENT USE OF THE RECORD, AS GOD SPEAKS BY IT TO US, AND IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. We have been a highly favoured people, and we have long possessed manifold means and privileges, of a religious and spiritual nature; and in many cases, it is trusted, have, through distinguishing and sovereign grace, derived from the use of them profit unto eternal salvation. Let us make these inquiries matter of admonition for comfort and profit. (*William Borrow, M.A.*) *The invisible world*:—The difficulty of giving a sort of general reply to the question contained in the text, is much diminished by this particular fact, that the Scripture itself has assigned a fixed and determinate place in the world of spirits to the soul of every human being. Consider—I. THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITHOUT PENITENCE AND FAITH. 1. Those who have died without repentance are gone to a state in which the wicked are no longer the prosperous. In this world guilt is often successful, at least for a season. 2. The impenitent and unbelieving are gone to a state in which they have no longer any hopes of escape, or means of approach to God. 3. Our impenitent fathers are gone into a state in which God is known only as the God of vengeance. II. THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED PENITENT AND BELIEVING. 1. They are no longer in a state of trial and affliction. 2. They are gone into a world where temptation never enters. 3. Where doubt and despondency never come. 4. Where their infirmities and corruptions cannot follow them. Application—(1) If such are the glories of the one state we have been contemplating, and such the miseries of the other, what thanks are due to that Redeemer who has, of His own unmerited mercy, and by the sacrifice of His own life, rescued us from the anguish of perdition, and thrown open to us the gates of the mansion of God? (2) Remember that, very shortly, the question we are to-day putting about others will be put about ourselves. Another generation shall soon arise who will ask, with regard to you and me, "Your fathers, where are they?" (*J. W. Cunningham, A.M.*) *Improvement of death*:—I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS. 1. No distinction which men wear in society can possibly exempt them from the stroke of death. 2. Although our ancestors have departed this life, we are not altogether to entomb them in oblivion. Many reasons may be assigned why we should preserve them in recollection. To many of them we were bound by the ties of natural affection. To others we are allied by official connection. We have entered into their labours. The monuments of their industry lessen our toil. 3. Though these distinguished deceased have left this world, they are still in some state of conscious existence. Probably the souls of the departed enter at once either into bliss or woe. II. THE BEST IMPROVEMENT WE CAN MAKE OF PROMINENT PERSONS' DEATHS. 1. By a serious remembrance. Not merely of their persons, but of their characters, and the labours in which they were engaged during their mortal sojourn. 2. Diligent inquiry, as to whether we have reaped any solid advantage from the ministrations in which they were engaged; and as to the manner in which we treated the servants of God while they were fulfilling their course. 3. Imitation of their holy example. There is always a limitation we must put when speaking of human example: "so far as he followed Christ." 4. Earnest prayer in connection with bereavements. 5. By preparation to follow the devoted servants of God to the place where they now dwell. 6. Cherishing a devout expectation of reunion with the departed servants of God, in a world of future glory and perfection. (*J. Clayton.*) *The death of the old*:—1. The first thing that the words suggest is obviously the great law, under which we receive and possess existence—that we must die; the law of mortality, under which we were born. We will not enter into the curious question, whether man would have died if he had not sinned. It is better to look at death in its moral and spiritual aspect. It is thus continually represented to us in Scripture. It is not a part of God's plan; it is a thing engrafted upon His original constitution. Death is the shadow of sin. This great, black, dark substance, that we call sin, comes in between man and the bright light of God's countenance, and casts its shadow over man. That shadow is death. Death is but the symptom of a spiritual disease; it is not so much the grand disease of our nature, as it is the symptom of a deeper-seated disease. And God applies His remedy to the core of the disorder. He redeems from sin. 2. Apply remarks specially to the death of a very aged person. Note the amazing power of the principle of life in man. It is so wonderful to think that a human body, with its nice and delicate organisation, should go on sleeping and waking, toiling

and working, without intercession and without rest, for ninety or a hundred years. What a thing it would be if any man constructed a piece of mechanism that should go on in that way ! But the individual man, though he is a wonderful, complex machine, considered in himself, is only one little wheel in a greater and a larger structure, that is, the whole species; and the species—such is the wonderful power of life—death cannot touch. However we may talk about death, the power of vitality is greater; even in man, and in the present world, life is stronger than death. Another thought is, that though there be this wonderful power of vitality, old age in general is not in itself very desirable. In general, very great age is only an additional affliction put to the ordinary ills of life. Nature does a great deal, independent of religion, to bring men to be willing to die. But where there is religion, and a “good hope through grace,” and a trust in the Divine mercy, the language and feeling of a man often is, “I would not live away.” The very aged man stands alone. He outlives his friends; and what is worse, he outlives the capacity of forming new attachments. The fact is, that second childhood is very much like the first. The child is interesting but to a few. The aged cannot very well sympathise with new hearts and new persons, new modes of thought and feeling. How different it is with God ! Generation after generation cometh, and He has His fresh and young affection for every generation as it comes. And every generation may come to Him, and look up to Him, with the same cordiality and the same confidence as the first. The last thought is, that we are struck by the death of a very aged person being uncommon. We speak of it as extraordinary. It throws us back upon the general law, that men do not all die at one particular time. There is no day, no fixed date, up to which all men are to live, and beyond which none can survive. If a fixed date for each individual had been assigned, the punishment of sin would have been made unendurable. It is a most beneficent dispensation that there is no fixed date. But the price to pay is that we must be prepared to see death occur at all ages. 2. There are limits to human probation and the Divine forbearance. You will see this by referring to the context. Your fathers and the prophets are dead; their probation terminated. The agents and the objects of the Divine mercy equally die. There is something very affecting in this. Zechariah says, “Remember, you are living under the same law. Probation has limits; forbearance has limits.” 3. The power and perpetuity of God’s truth, in contrast with the mortality of man. This is seen by connecting the words that follow. The prophet lives in his utterances. A true thought is a Divine and immortal thing. What has come from the breast and bosom and mind of God, and has been uttered, lives, and there is power in it. Men change, their feelings change, their minds alter, their sensibilities and sympathies pass away; but the Gospel is fresh to every generation. The Word of God, in its substantial essence, continues, and is the life and food of the Church. (*Thomas Binney.*)

An inquiry after dead relations :—By “fathers” is meant fathers of our flesh, the active instruments in the hand of God of our being, the secondary causes of our being. “Where are they ?” Are they here ? No. Are they anywhere ? Yes. We know where their bodies are. Their souls are somewhere. “The prophets, do they live for ever ?” No. (1) They may not, if they would. They come within the compass of the universal decree. They are made up of the same ingredients, they have the same demeritorious cause of death as others, namely, sin. And their Lord and Master will do without them, as He does without others. (2) They would not, if they might. Two things put the saints in general, and ministers in particular, upon a desire to be gone; the happiness they shall then be instated in, and the troubles and miseries they shall then be freed from. Do the prophets live for ever ? Yes. Though not in their persons, they do in their successors. Though not in this world, yet in a better. If prophets and righteous men did not in the other world live for ever, the joys and glories of that world could not be said to be perfect. In the other world they must needs live for ever, for otherwise the virtue and efficacy of Christ’s blood and righteousness would be very much lessened. They must needs live for ever, for the Church of Christ in the other world will still retain the same names and honourable titles of Christ’s body, spouse, and subjects as they have here. He cannot be a Father without children; a King without subjects; a Bridegroom without a bride; a Relate without a correlate. What can put an end to their living in those upper regions of glory ? Sin cannot. Death cannot. Devils cannot. And to be sure, God will not. (*Benjamin Hands.*)

Our mortal character :—Not a year passes away, hardly a week or a day, without some striking monition of our uncertain tenure

of earthly existence. 1. These inquiries of the text seem to furnish a strong intimation of the mortal character of our present existence. The prophet bade the Jews look back, and consider what had become of their fathers. The great and the good, the noble and the mighty, the teacher and the taught, the prophet and the people, have "gone the way of all the earth." There is no exception of age or station, of occupation or condition, to this appointment of the Most High, in consequence of the transgressions of men. There is something painfully affecting in the ravages of death. The fact is painful and humbling, more especially as it is the undeniable proof of the fallen character of our race—of that native corruption which has descended from Adam, who, though created "in the likeness of God," "begat a son in his own likeness," and that a sinful and degraded one. 2. But is the contemplation of death only painful and humiliating? Is there not a light to irradiate the tomb? May we not regard the inquiries of the text as the language of faith and hope? Surely the dark valley will open into the brightness of eternal home. We "sorrow not" as those "who have no hope." A glorious prospect is opened beyond the tomb. Those who have departed in the Lord are in His safe keeping. Our fathers are not taken away for ever. They are only removed before us, and anticipate us in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence. The hope of immortality has cheered many a believing soul amid the pains of life and the sufferings of death. 3. Looking back upon the Christian life of our fathers, we should follow their faith, and act up to their teaching, and pray that a double portion of their spirit may rest upon us. We are responsible for the teaching of Divine truth with which we have been blessed. (*John S. Broud, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. But My words.—*The dying men and the undying Word*.—The text comes from the first of Zechariah's prophecies. In it he lays the foundation for all that he has subsequently to say. He points to the past, and summons up the august figures of the great pre-exilio prophets, and reminds his contemporaries that the words which they spoke had been verified in the experience of past generations. He declares that, though the hearers and the speakers of that prophetic Word had glided away into the vast unknown, the Word remained, lived still, and on his lips demanded the same obedience as it had vainly demanded from the generation that was past. I. THE MORTAL HEARERS AND SPEAKERS OF THE ABIDING WORD. A familiar theme. Look at it from the special angle, to bring into connection the eternal Word, and the transient vehicles and hearers of it. All the past hearers and speakers of the Word had that Word verified in their lives. Not one of them who, for the brief period of their earthly lives, came in contact with that Divine message, but realised, more or less consciously, the solemn truth of its promises and threatenings. Wherever they are now, their earthly relation to that Word is a determining factor in their condition. "Wherefore we should give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard." II. THE ABIDING WORD WHICH THESE HEARERS AND SPEAKERS HAVE HAD TO DO WITH. Just as reason requires some unalterable substratum below all the fleeting phenomena of the changeful creation,—a God who is the rock-basis of all,—the staple to which all the links hang—so here we are driven back and back, by the very fact of the transiency of the transient, to grasp for a refuge and a stay, the permanency of the permanent. It is blessed for us when the lesson that the fleeting of all that can flee away, reads to us, is that, beneath it all, there is the Unchanging. Zechariah meant by the "Word of God" simply the prophetic utterances about the destiny and the punishment of the nation. We ought to mean by "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," not merely the written embodiment of it in this book, or that primarily, but the personal Word, the Incarnate Word, the everlasting Son of the Father. It is His perpetual existence rather than the continuous power of the truth which is the declaration of Himself, that is mighty for our strength and consolation when we think of the transient generations. Christ lives. Therefore we can front change and decay in all around calmly and triumphantly. Since we have this abiding Word, let us not dread changes, however startling and revolutionary. Jesus Christ does not change. There is a human element in the Church's conception of Jesus Christ, and still more in their working out of the principles of the Gospel in institutions and forms, which partakes of the transiency of the men from whom they come. III. THE PRESENT GENERATION AND ITS RELATION TO THE ABIDING WORD. Zechariah did not hesitate to put himself in line with the mighty forms of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea. He, too, was a prophet. Some simple exhorta-

tions. 1. See to it that you accept that Word. Open not only your minds but your hearts to it. Hold it fast. In this time of unrest make sure of your grasp of the eternal central core of Christianity, Jesus Christ Himself, the Divine-human Saviour of the world. Accept Him, hold Him fast, trust to His guidance in present day questions. (*A. Madaren, D.D.*) *The fleeting hearers and speakers and the undying Word*.—I. THE PASSING AWAY OF HEARERS AND SPEAKERS ALIKE. An ingenious exposition of the words of text suggests that they are a brief dialogue, a kind of duel between the prophet and his hearers, in which the first question is his sword-thrust at them, and the second is their return to him. In it they parry and return the prophet's thrust. I prefer to regard the questions as continuous; the remonstrance of the prophet based upon the fact that hearers and speakers alike drift away into the unseen land, and are no more heard of. It is a very familiar and commonplace thought. Try to individualise the thought that is here. Reflect how surely, steadily, stealthily, constantly hearers and speakers of the immortal Word are drifting, drifting into the dark. Did you ever stand in some old cathedral, or ruined church, where for centuries the Word of God had been preached? And did there never come over you, with a strange rush of feeling, the thought, "Where are all the men and women that bowed their knees here, beneath the vanished roof of this place?" II. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FLEETING HEARERS AND SPEAKERS AND THE ABIDING WORD. There is nothing so transient as the words that are spoken by Christian teachers. Even where the Word takes root in men's hearts, how swiftly the speaker of it passes and is forgotten. No workers so soon have their work covered with oblivion as preachers. In another way, too, the prophets fade and perish; inasmuch as new circumstances arise about which they know nothing; new phases of thought which antiquate their teachings; new difficulties in which their words have no counsel; new conflicts in which they can strike no blow. Yet, in all this mingled and fleeting human utterance, does there not lie an immortal and imperishable centre, even the Word of the living God? Much ingenuity is expended nowadays in trying to discriminate between the permanent and transient in Christian teaching. The enduring Word is that story of Christ's incarnation, death for our sins, resurrection and ascension, which by the Gospel is preached unto you. Therefore we have to look beyond the dearest of human teachers, and those to whom we owe most. "They truly were not suffered to continue by reason of death," but this Man (Christ) continueth ever our Friend, our Prophet, Priest, and King. III. THE WITNESS OF PAST GENERATIONS TO THE IMMORTAL WORD. They that heard and he that spake have passed into the silent land; but they passed not thither until they had found, in some measure, that both the warnings and the promises that had been uttered were God's truth, and not man's dreams. God's Word has leaden feet, but steady, and slow, and certain, it overtakes the wrong-doer. Do you take care. The generations that are gone found that the Word of the Lord was true; and if you reject His Word, you too may, before you die, find out, what you will certainly find out when you are dead, that He speaks no vain things. IV. THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THESE SOLEMN THOUGHTS. I want to urge upon my brethren in the ministry that they should, in all their utterances, try to realise that they are prophets, dying, with a message to dying men. There is a great deal of modern preaching clever, eloquent, cultured, ingenious, which seems to have utterly forgotten that it has got a message of forgiveness and of cleansing by the blood of Christ to proclaim to men. And how these thoughts should influence hearers! How you would listen if you knew that this was your last sermon! (*Ibid.*) *The eternity of God's Word contrasted with the mutability of man*.—When Zechariah wrote, the Jews had just returned from the Babylonish captivity, and already, in spite of that severe warning, they were going back into their old habits, and bringing upon themselves fresh displays of the wrath of God. Both judgments and mercies either leave us better or worse. They lead us to repentant watchfulness, or else harden our hearts into utter carelessness and wilful sin. We might naturally have expected that the lessons of a long captivity would have cured the Jewish people of their old disease, but sin is of too deep and treacherous a character for external circumstances to uproot it. The sin of idolatry had, indeed, been cast out, but the sins of luxury and pride, self-righteousness and dogmatism, worldliness and unbelief, had taken its place, and the forecast of their future possession of the Jewish mind appears as soon as the Jews returned from captivity. Haggai and Zechariah were commissioned by God to reprove the selfish and worldly spirit of the people. Here the prophet enforces his exhortation by two considerations. 1. The

mutable nature of man, passive in the hands of God, and thoroughly dependent on God. It is the height of folly for man to oppose God, who has all power to punish sin. All men must die. The Word they bring is eternal as God is eternal, but they themselves must perish. Zechariah would say, "If such be the destiny of man, it is yours. Soon you must fade and fall. Turn ye from your fruitless and evil ways, and think not that ye can resist God." 2. The warning is enforced by considerations drawn from the unchangeable nature of the Divine Word. The prophets had died, but the certainty and stability of their prophecies had been vindicated by an express fulfilment. For the Word of God is eternal and unchangeable. Are you then profiting by it as you ought? (*Joseph Maskell.*)

Vers. 7-11. I saw by night. — *The night vision*. — The anointed One of God and His kingdom are the centre and axis about which the fiery wheel of all Zechariah's revelations and imagery turns. The vision in our text is both beautiful and consoling. Consider—I. THE TIME WHEN IT WAS SEEN. 1. The time. "By night." Primarily he meant natural night, while men slept. At that season the Lord came to him, opening the prophet's spiritual eyes, and causing to pass before him, like a pictured scene in bright and glowing colours, a sublime and cheering vision. The words "by night" may remind us of the circumstances of the time at which the vision was given. Apply the words, by way of accommodation, to the spiritual night of Christendom. For night in a spiritual sense is only dreadful when we are deprived of spiritual vision, when the eyes of the understanding are darkened. It is night, when with sufferings upon us, we do not recognise the hand that inflicts them. There is another kind of spiritual night more fearful still. David feared it when he said, "Hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit." Yet even here there may be vision in the darkness, and this is a favour indeed. II. WHAT DID THE PROPHET BEHOLD? It was a precious vision. Afterwards he hears the explanation of it. The vision was fraught with consolation and promise. Zechariah beholds a man; that man is Christ, the Angel of the Covenant. The times of Zechariah needed a helper in the character of a man, and a "man of war"; for it was a season of war and tumults. Zechariah beholds Him upon a red horse. And Christ, like a man riding upon a horse, stands ready to fly with speed to the help and defence of His people. The prophet speaks of the myrtle-trees. True believers are trees which Christ Himself has planted; trees of righteousness, fast rooted in the ground of His merits, and thriving by the grace of His Holy Spirit. Such are all the children of God here on earth. The man among the myrtle-trees "stood"; the Lord abides among His people. (*F. W. Krummacher, D.D.*) Behind Him were there red horses, speckled, and white. — *Zechariah's vision of the horses*. — I. THE NAME OF THIS PARABOLIC VISION. "The Word of the Lord." Thought is invisible, and must be clothed in some form of words. God's greatest thought about men was revealed to us by His Son in human flesh. II. THE TIME WHEN THE PROPHET RECEIVED THIS "WORD OF THE LORD." "In the night." God has often chosen the night-season to reveal His mind to His servants. At night men are more free from impressions from the outside world. The darkness and stillness of night throw the mind in upon itself. III. THE MEANING OF THE SYMBOLIC WORD. 1. The "red horses" symbolise coming war. 2. White horses symbolise victory. 3. Speckled horses set forth the variety of the Divine dealings, of that mingling of mercy and judgment which had been intended to lift them up to a high level among the nations of the world. Lessons—(1) The Church triumphant is intended to minister to the comfort of the Church militant. (2) The child of light walking in darkness is under the guidance of the angels of light. (3) God's silence at sin is not God's forgiveness of sin. (*A London Minister.*) *The vision of horses*. — I understand that all these horses had riders. There were, then, a troop of horsemen; but the prophet says that one appeared as the chief leader, who was accompanied by others. These horsemen had returned from an expedition; for they had been sent to review the whole world and its different parts. He therefore says that they had returned from their journey, and also that the whole earth was quiet, that men enjoyed peace and tranquillity everywhere. It seemed a very unbecoming and strange thing that the faithful alone should be oppressed with adversities, while others lived in peace and enjoyed their pleasures. There follows at length an answer from God. I regard this as the object—that horsemen were presented to the prophet that he might know that God does not remain

shut up in heaven, and neglect the affairs of men, but that He has, as it were, swift horses, so that He knows what things are everywhere carried on. The prophet here ascribes to God the character of a chief sovereign, who inquires respecting all the affairs of men. It is, indeed, certain that all things were fully known to Him before He created angels, but God assumes the character of man in order that He may more familiarly instruct us. . . . As God did not intend to exhibit in full light what He afterwards in due time taught, the vision appeared in the night. And to the same purpose is what he says respecting the angels, that they were in a dark or deep place, and that they were among the myrtles. Some think that their being in a deep place and thick shade designates the state of the people, being that of sorrow and of joy; for though quietness in part was restored to the people, yet much darkness and much perplexity remained in their affairs. There was one angel more eminent than the rest, and in this there is nothing unusual, for when God sends forth a company of angels, He gives the lead to some one. If we regard this angel as Christ, the idea is consistent with the common usage of Scripture, for Christ, we know, is the head of the angels. With regard to the different colours, the prophet, no doubt, understood that they designated the offices allotted to angels, as some convey God's benefits, and others come armed with scourges and swords. The design of the vision is not doubtful; it is, that the Jews might be assured that the distresses which they at present endured would not be perpetual, that there was a hope of the temple and the city being rebuilt, because God had returned into favour with the people. The prophet teaches at the same time that the building of the temple was not to be expected, but as an instance of God's gratuitous favour, and this doctrine ought also to be extended to the state of the Church at all times, for whence comes it that the Church remains safe in the world except that God indulges us according to His infinite goodness? (*John Calvin.*)

The rider in the myrtle grove.—By the myrtle grove is signified the covenant people, the nation of Israel, and by its being in a low place is indicated their then depressed and sad condition. In the Hebrew mind the idea of modest beauty and freshness was associated with the myrtle; and hence we find this introduced as symbolical of the Church under the reign of the Messiah, when "instead of the briar,"—the symbol of the world under the curse—"shall come up the myrtle-tree." The Jewish nation, though at that time in a state of depression and affliction, was fair in the sight of God, was destined to endure and flourish, and was ere long to be visited by Him in mercy and restored to prosperity. This is specially indicated here by the standing among the myrtle-trees of the mounted rider. He is described as the Angel of Jehovah; no other than God manifest in human form; the same Being who, in the fulness of time, came to our world as the Angel of the Covenant. For the consolation and encouragement of the people, the prophet had to tell them that, depressed as was their condition, the Angel of the Lord, the Leader, the Protector, the Redeemer of Israel, was still in the midst of them. He was ready to ride forth in their defence, and to send judgment on their adversaries. This was indicated in the vision by His being mounted on a red horse, the symbol of war and bloodshed. The Angel of the Lord is with them also as their Intercessor with God. Hence He appears in this vision as making intercession for them, beseeching God to have pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; and now that the time of chastisement was at an end, that He would be gracious to them, and grant them full restoration and establishment in their own land. And through Him also came the comforting answer to the people. In this vision the Angel of Jehovah speaks directly and immediately to the invisible God; but to the prophet He speaks through the angel interpreter. God declares His zeal for His people, His indignation against their enemies, and His determination to do good unto His people, and enrich them with His bounty. He is not an indifferent spectator of what happens to them. He watches over them with a constant jealousy, solicitous for their well-being, and ready to resent all attempts to injure them. His own He will never forsake. When the deepest abyss of calamity seems to be reached by them, when the darkest hour of their sorrow throws its shadows over them, the Angel of the Lord, He who ever encamps round them that fear Him, will suddenly appear on their side, and will deliver them from all their enemies. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

The man among the myrtles.—As the Jewish people are usually regarded by the prophet in their theocratic character, as the form in which the Church then existed, the general doctrines of these visions are applicable to the

Church in every form in which she exists. Some of the doctrines as set forth in this vision are—1. The Church is externally an humble and lowly thing, neglected, often despised by the gay and wicked world, a grove of myrtles, rather than the cedars of Lebanon (ver. 8). 2. She has, however, an unseen glory that the world knows not of; for Christ dwells in her midst, full of love, invested with all power, sending His angel-messengers to do His work, and preparing everything for her final triumph (vers. 8, 9). 3. The hour of darkest desolation to the Church, and of haughtiest triumph to her enemies, is often the very hour when God begins His work of judgment on the one and returning mercy on the other (ver. 11). 4. Christ intercedes for His people when they need it most, and His intercession is always prevalent (vers. 12, 13). 5. God will have all our hearts, for He is jealous of sharing His glory with another (ver. 14). 6. God often uses instruments to chastise His people, which, when He has done with them, He breaks and casts into the fire (ver. 15). 7. The Church of God shall yet triumph over every obstacle and vanquish every foe (ver. 16). 8. The promises and threatenings of God, though slow, are sure. They have eternity for the range of their fulfilment (ver. 17). 9. The head of the Church is at once human and Divine. He is called here "a man" (ver. 8), and the "Angel of Jehovah" (ver. 12). But the Angel of Jehovah is a Divine Person—even Gesenius admits this, and the Babylonish Talmud declares that "this man is no other than the Holy One." But if Divine and human, He must be God and man in one person. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The second vision*.—The next vision was full of comfort. As the little group of returned exiles looked nervously out on the mighty world-empires, which surrounded and threatened them, they were filled with alarm. How could they cope with them? There were Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, of the nations whom Nebuchadnezzar had settled in Samaria; Rehun the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, so ready in their use of the pen to exert influence on the great kings beyond the river, to make the work of temple-building cease; and the reactionary influences at work in the far-distant court, always adverse to the resuscitation of a subdued nation, like the Jews, which had given such proofs of inveterate independence. Beneath the irresistible pressure of these hostile forces the work of temple-building had already ceased for fifteen years, and there was every fear that the new resolve to arise and build would meet with similar opposition and a similar fate. There was singular appropriateness, therefore, in the prophet's vision.—"Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, four horns." In the language of a pastoral people like the Jews, the horn naturally represents the pride and power of the ravager and oppressor of the flock. The number "four" reminds us of the cardinal points of the compass, and indicates that, wherever the people turned, there were foes, which were sworn to resist their attempt to renew their national life. On the north, Chaldaea, Assyria, and Samaria; on the south, Egypt and Arabia; on the west, Philistia; and on the east, Ammon and Moab. And it is probable that the Spirit of God looked beyond these to the four great Gentile monarchies, which have occupied, and still occupy, the "Times of the Gentiles," and which were represented in the four metals of Daniel's vision, or in the four great beasts, which one after another emerged from the sea. As yet Babylon and Medo-Persia alone had arisen; Greece and Rome, the latter including the kingdoms of modern Europe, were to come. We must not forget that God Himself gave these world-powers their authority. He says, in Isaiah, "I was wroth with My people; I profaned Mine inheritance, and gave them into thine hand" (Isa. xlvii. 6, 7). And in Daniel He lifts the veil and shows that the world-rulers represent not flesh and blood merely, but malign and mighty spirits that actuate and inspire them (Dan. x. 13-20). As long as God's people are perfect in their loyalty and obedience towards Him, they need fear the power of no adversary whatsoever; but when there is a break in the holy connection which binds Him and them in an inviolable safety, it seems as though all the forces of evil are set free to bear down on and ravage them, until their chastisement is completed, and they return to their first love. If we were asked to name the four horns which are ravaging the Church in the present day, we should not hesitate to say that they are priestcraft, worldliness, Christian science, and spiritualism. In every life there are similar experiences. Sometimes, when we lift up our eyes, we find ourselves begirt with opposition and threatened by hostile powers. Think of the martyr-host who have witnessed for God in every age, and who could reiterate the words of the greatest

Sufferer of all. "Many bulls have compassed Me, strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round about; they gape upon Me with their mouth as a ravening and a roaring lion." Ignatius, who complains that his custodians were like "ten leopards, who only wax worse when they are kindly treated"; Blandina, the girl slave; Germanicus, the noble youth; the Waldenses, whose wrongs roused Cromwell's wrath and Milton's muse; the Netherlands, in their long conflict with Philip, when the leaders saw their homes covered again by the ocean from which their ancestors had redeemed them; Madame Guyon, beset by husband, mother-in-law, servants, and priests; Samuel Rutherford, and hundreds of his time, harried by the fiercest and most insatiable hate; William Tyndale, the celebrated translator of the English Bible; John G. Paton, beset with savages—these are specimens of a multitude, which no man can number, of every nation, and kindred, and people, who have seen the vision of the four horns. But there is something beyond; and surely it is not without significance that the prophet says, "The Lord showed me four carpenters" (or smiths, R.V.). We have no difficulty in describing the sources of alarm for ourselves; but we need a Divine hand to reveal our assured deliverance. "And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." For Babylon, the "carpenter" was Cyrus; for Persia, Alexander; for Greece, the Roman; for Rome, the Gaul. Very different from each other, very ruthless and unsparing; but very well adapted for their work. Commenting on this passage, the late C. H. Spurgeon said: "He who wants to open an oyster must not use a razor; for some works there needs less of daintiness and more of force; providence does not find clerks, or architects, or gentlemen, to cut off horns, but carpenters. The work needs a man who, when he has work to do, puts his whole strength into it, and beats away with his hammer, or cuts through the wood that lies before him with might and main. Let us not fear for the cause of God; when the horns become too troublesome, the carpenters will be forthcoming to fray them." Remember how in every age He has found His appropriate messenger. Athanasius frayed Arianism, and Augustine Manichæism; Luther frayed the power of the pope in Germany, and rough Hugh Latimer in England; Wesley and Whitefield frayed the religious indifference of the last century. When Haldane went to Geneva, he frayed the scepticism which was destroying the Helvetic and Gallic Churches. The Lord knows where to find His servants, and when the predestined hour strikes, there will stand the workman ready. Oh, child of God! there have been many horns engaged in scattering thee. Year after year they have wrought sad havoc in thy plans, and cost thee bitter tears. But thine Almighty Friend is greatly displeased that they have hurt thee more than His purposes of chastisement required, and He has resolved that they shall be frayed. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

God's government of the world:—Amongst the various manners in which God revealed Himself to men of old, visions were perhaps the most frequent and impressive. He appears to the prophet in six distinct visions. The visions were marked by these four characteristics. They were (1) Mental. Unlike all other creatures on the earth, man has an inner visual organ; he can see with his mind. This is seen in poets, such as Milton, Spenser, &c. Allegorists, such as Bunyan, &c. They were (2) Symbolic. Strange and grotesque objects were seen. These objects were all symbolic; they had a spiritual significance. They were (3) Divine. All men, unless they are utterly destitute of the poetic sentiment, have visions sometimes, not only sleeping but waking visions. But seldom, perhaps, are these visions Divine. They were (4) Prophetic. They point here to the future of God's moral kingdom upon the earth. Men of lofty, sanctified genius, often in their visions have a glance of "things that are to come." This vision seems to give us a glance into God's moral government of the world. It takes us behind the veil of phenomena, and shows us principles and agencies that move, fashion, and control all. I. It is carried on in connection WITH MYSTERIOUS AGENCIES. What did the prophet see? "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and He stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom: and behind Him were there red horses, speckled, and white." Who are these? Unfallen angels and sainted men. These by millions stand near His throne, prompt to obey His behests. In relation to these agents two thoughts are suggested—1. That they are under the command of a transcendent mind. Most expositors regard the man on the red

horse, and who stood among the myrtle-trees, as no less a personage than the Angel of the Covenant, the Great Messiah. This same man appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, to Jacob before his meeting with Esau, to Moses at the burning bush, to Joshua at Jericho, with the sword drawn in His hand. Here He is on the "red horse," emblem of war. He is a great moral chieftain. Another thought suggested is—(1) That there are varied orders. "Behind Him were there red horses, speckled, and white." This is the troop that followed the man. When the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened, he beheld a "mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Horses are emblems of force and fleetness. In Christ's army there are hosts, mighty in power and swift in motion. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" How infinitely varied are God's ministers—varied in kind and measure of faculty, in experience, attainment, and aspect too—thrones, principalities, powers, and dominions. In relation to these agents it is suggested—2. That the whole world is their sphere of action. "These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." (1) They "go to and fro" through the earth. They are ever journeying; some are swift as lightning in their speed; some of them are "full of eyes," and see all things. (2) They know the state of the world. "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." "At rest," not in the rest of righteousness, not in the repose of goodness, but in carnal security and sin. Another fact suggested in relation to God's government in the world is—II. That IT HAS NOT ONLY DIFFICULTIES, BUT AN INTERPRETER ALSO. "Then said I, O my lord, what are these?" 1. The difficulties of God's government. What are these? The prophet understood not these strange appearances; and in amazement he exclaims, What are these? What thoughtful man has not asked such a question as this concerning the Divine government over and over again? "What are these? What are these elements, forces, laws, existences, events? What are they? Are they messengers of mercy or justice? O my lord, what are these?" We are all moving in mystery. 2. The interpreter of God's government. Who answered the question? "The man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they." Some other creature, the angel that talked with them, was asked first; but the answer came not from him, but from the man, Christ Jesus. In Rev. v. 2, "a strong angel" is represented as crying with a loud voice concerning the mysteries of God's government, inquiring who was able to "loose the seals"; but no one was found in heaven, in earth, or under the earth worthy to "open and read the book." There was only One found. "It was the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Christ is the only interpreter of God. He is the Logos. III. That IT IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE. His people are supposed to be here represented by the "myrtle-trees." The Jewish Church at this time was not like a forest of stately cedars, but a grove of myrtles, fragile and obscure. 1. These seem to be the centre of Divine operations on the earth. Now, in the myrtle-trees is the "man riding upon a red horse." And in the myrtle-trees were the "red horses, speckled, and white," the whole troop was there. The "myrtle-trees" seemed to be the centre of all the agents. From it they started on their mission, and to it they returned. The true Church is the temple, the residence of God Himself. 2. The object of special intercession. "Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?" The duration of their captivity in Babylon. Who is the angel that makes this appeal? It was He that "ever liveth to make intercession for us." "If any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 3. The subjects of the Divine communication. "The Lord answered the angel that talked with me, with good words and comfortable words." The prophet is here commissioned to proclaim—(1) God's zeal on behalf of Jerusalem. "Cry thou saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts." (2) His displeasure for the enemies of Jerusalem. "I am sore displeased with the heathen." His merciful purpose was to bestow blessings on Jerusalem. "Therefore thus saith the Lord," &c. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 14-17. I am jealous for Jerusalem.—*Mercy mingled with chastisement* :—"Jealousy is that particular uneasiness which arises in our minds from the fear that some rival may rob us of the affection of one whom we greatly love, or from suspicion that he has already done it." God's jealousy, or zeal, denotes

His distrust of His creatures, His eminent care of His people, and His readiness to punish such as injure them. He is peculiarly jealous for everything whereby He maketh Himself known. Comparatively speaking, God may be said to be but a little displeased with His people, whatever be the manner of His dealing with them in this world. Their afflictions are only temporary and of short duration. They are also designed for their profit, and overruled for promoting their best interests. And though the troubles that afflict the just be great and many in number, the Lord will deliver him out of them all. Let us take the comfort which the good words spoken to Israel are designed to yield, amid all the trials and afflictive dispensations of providence with which we may be visited in this life. You may be in darkness and in doubts, perplexed on every side, and encompassed with difficulties, but still you need not despair. The Lord is jealous for you with a great jealousy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (*Matthew Fraser.*)

Ver. 16. **I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.**—*Returning mercies*.—Jerusalem and Zion are laid waste, it is true, but not in anger, so much as in chastising love. God still loves them, and is jealous of any estrangement of their affections from Him, and when estranged He chastises them to bring them back. This was His object in using the heathen as instruments of chastisement, but the spirit in which they executed this office provoked His wrath. He designed only to inflict a slight chastisement, but they rioted in the sufferings of His people with wanton cruelty. They mocked their sorrows and taunted them with their abandonment. Hence God will punish these heathen, and will bestow mercy on His people, cause the temple to be built, the city to be enlarged, and prosperity to return to the land. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The Divine absence and return*.—1. God seems to absent Himself sometimes from those for whom He hath great blessings in store. By absentsing Himself is meant only the withdrawing His countenance, or sunshine of His favour, when the clouds of adversity or trouble, either spiritual or temporal, sit uneasy on His chosen servants. At such times He seems to “hide His face from them.” Afflictions in this life are like eclipses of celestial bodies, the noblest planet never suffers any, for when we say the sun is eclipsed, it is we are more properly so, we want his cheerful light and influences, whilst he himself is not diminished one ray. The moon is sometimes really eclipsed, and labours under the want of a borrowed light. Thus Divinest constitutions never suffer. The lunar populace are more really affected by that obscurity which can never hurt a being, placed so near Divinity. But if such an one hath been obscured, then this proposition must be granted, that God Almighty doth sometimes seem to absent Himself from those whom He best loves. Joseph, David, and even the Son of God Himself, had more than an ordinary share of this world’s frowns. The reason for such experiences may respect—(1) God Himself. He may permit this for His own Divine sake, that He may be glorified by all that happens to the children of men; that the wise man may see that he hath no reason to glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his strength, but that all things by God’s providence come alike sometimes to all. (2) In respect of those whom He loves, God may sometimes afflict them either by way of admonition or trial. God is that wise and tender physician who never administers any uneasy medicine but when He sees there is an occasion for it. All the dispensations of His providence are the results of Divine wisdom and unchangeable love; therefore they ought most to suspect themselves who have the least share of severe favours. God may design to make trial of the patience, virtue, faith, hope, or charity of any one of His servants. (3) The like reason not only regards the sufferer, but all others who are witnesses and spectators of their sufferings. That they may see the advantages of religion above all other supports and consolations, how useful and effectual it is. 2. Such absentsing of Himself is but for a while, as seems best to His goodness and wisdom. “I am returned” denotes the speediness and certainty of God’s returning with mercies. The fountain of honour can never be impoverished or impaired by making the first overtures of tenderness and reconciliation. He is in great haste for an accommodation; He condescends much to our infirmities. It is His nature and property to have mercy and forgive. 3. When He doth return it is with all the tenders of love and compassion. Not with forgiveness only, or any one species, but with all the instances of mercy. Nor doth it at all interfere with His constancy and justice, because it always supposes conditions performed; at least in His foreknowledge, that His mercy

will move us to repentance. Upon which account His mercy is sometimes termed His justice. His mercy never obstructs His justice, but all His attributes are one simple essence, and proceed in an eternal and unchangeable method. Learn that if the mercies of God toward us are so great, we ought to be tender and compassionate one towards another. (*Samuel Pral, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. My cities through prosperity.—*Zion's prosperity*.—Jehovah's tender care of His living Church seems to be a prominent topic with the prophet Zechariah. Amid all the visitations Zion has experienced from her God in consequence of her departures, His heart has been set upon her eternal interests, and He never can change His mind concerning her. I. THE CLAIM WHICH JEHOVAH LAYS TO HIS CHURCHES, "MY CITIES." They are associated, or organised bodies, not promiscuous multitudes. Distinguished they may be from each other by a variety of names, and a variety of circumstances; but God says to them all, "Ye are My cities." They are all chartered cities. Their charter is unchanging, covenant love. It is written, signed, sealed, and preserved by their covenant God. What is the wording of the charter? "I will be their God, they shall be My people." God's Churches are classified. Separated from one another, not only in their peculiar localities, and their peculiar features of discipline, but in minor points of order and regulation. Each one should know and keep his proper position. And they are all consecrated cities, from the highest to the lowest. Cities are generally noted for their liberties and privileges. And so "if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." Our privileges are most valuable and innumerable. These cities were all designed and also founded by Jehovah, and He rules over them all. II. THEIR PROSPERITY—WHICH MUST COME FROM HIMSELF. "Shall yet be spread abroad." The prosperity of a city is seen in its population, its commerce, and the healthiness of its air. A sign of prosperity in a Church is found in the number of spiritual births. III. THEIR COMFORT. "The Lord shall yet comfort Zion." Her tranquillity is preserved in spite of all that sin and Satan can do; and her honourable associations are kept up and maintained. That will be comfort for Zion. IV. THE GRAND FIRST CAUSE OF ALL, ELECTING LOVE. The Lord "shall yet choose Jerusalem." (*Joseph Irons.*)

Vers. 18-21. Behold four horns.—*The mission of the Church's enemies*.—Three things there are which this age of ours hath brought forth: malignant enemies, special instruments of their ruin, and great endeavours for reformation. Accordingly here are three visions: a vision of four horns (vers. 18, 19); a vision of four carpenters (vers. 20, 21); a vision of a man with a measuring line in his hand (chap. ii. ver. 1). The description of the Church's enemies under the vision of four horns. 1. Their number or multitude; they are four horns according to four parts of the world. 2. Their power and strength. The horn in Scripture denotes strength. 3. Their mischievous and malignant practice; "They scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." In the second vision is the description of those special instruments that are raised up for their destruction, under the similitude of four carpenters or smiths. Their work is to scatter the horns, and to cast out the Gentiles. The third vision presents the endeavours for reformation, under the similitude of "a man with a measuring line in his hand"; which is described in two ways: from the instrument thereof, a man, an excellent man, possibly alluding to Zerubbabel the governor; and from the exactness thereof,—he doth work by line. Attend to three doctrines. 1. When God intendeth any good and salvation to His Churches, He doth first suffer many potent, malicious enemies to rise against them. Was it not so with Israel when God intended to bring them out of Egypt? Then their taskmasters arose and doubled their work. This is God's way still. But what reason is there that God should suffer His people to be thus handled, oppressed, scattered, by cruel enemies? Good reason. So many enemies, so many schoolmasters. Our enemies are our observers, and their observation is our preservation. Hereby they are occasioned to honour God; they are weaned from the world; they are more useful in their places, and even beneficial to their enemies; they carry the truths of God into other parts; they receive a fuller and clearer testimony of their own graces; their enemies themselves are the more convinced; the saints are kept from, and cured of, divisions among themselves; hereby the servants of God may see and know by experience, that it is better to serve God than man; and the servants of God learn the right use of the rod, both in Church and State. Then let no man be

stumbled or offended at God's present proceedings in the world, as if they were very mysterious. 2. Though God suffers the enemies of His Church to be many and great, He will raise up proportionate strength against them. Three enemies there are by whom you are most molested, the flesh, the devil, the world. The flesh brings forth three great evils. Ignorance in the understanding; in opposition to that Jesus Christ is called our Prophet. Rebellion in the will; in opposition to that Jesus Christ is called our King. Guiltiness that arises from ignorance and rebellion; in opposition to that Jesus Christ is called our Priest. The devil, our second enemy, is armed with all weapons of hostility against us. Whatever terms or titles of strength and power there is in Satan, there is somewhat in Jesus Christ that answereth, yea, that over-answereth all. The third enemy, the world, is described in Rev. xiii. 1. Our text speaks but of four horns, here are ten. So that, whatever your enemies are, there is strength enough in Jesus Christ to subdue their strength. Why is Christ thus furnished, but for His Church and people? He is the Lord-keeper of all our comforts; the Lord-treasurer of all our graces; and the great magazine of all our ammunition. The application of this doctrine looks two ways: to the saints by way of consolation and encouragement; to the carpenters, God's workmen, by way of direction and exhortation. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*)

Horns and workmen.—This second vision may be regarded as supplementary of the first. There the restoration of Judah was indicated generally; here some of the means by which that was to be effected are presented. Though enemies from all quarters, and on every side, might assail the people of God, the Lord, their protector, would raise up for them adequate defence, would bring into action powers sufficient to discomfit and cast down all their oppressors, however many or strong. What was thus showed for the comfort of the people of God in the old time is no less for the comfort and encouragement of the Church in all ages and places. "The sum of the whole is, though the Church may not be exempt from many troubles, yet the Lord has in His hand resources by which He can restrain all assaults of the wicked, however impetuously and violently they may be impelled against the Church." The Angel of the Lord, the Divine Redeemer, abides for ever with that Church which He has purchased with His own blood. And exalted as He is to the throne of His glory, and having all power in heaven and on earth, He can send forth at any time agencies by which the power of the Church's enemies shall be broken, and all their forces routed. It behoves the Church, then, to have faith in her exalted head, and patiently to wait for Him. In due time He will interpose on her behalf when she is afflicted; He will scatter and discomfit all her adversaries, and will "cause her righteousness to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth." (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

The vision of the four horns.—Some consider the four horns represent the four kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Others look on them as types of the whole of the enemies of Israel coming from the four quarters of the earth. The same general truths are taught in either case. 1. That while the world-powers continue, and the Church of God lives in their midst, the latter will be subjected to opposition and persecution. 2. That whatever number of foes the Church may have, God will take care to provide her with an equal number of friends. 3. That though there will ever be conflict between God's Church and her enemies, there will never be defeat but on one side. The strongest force must ultimately gain the day. We can account for the existence of the Church only from the fact that "God is in the midst of her." (*A London Minister.*)

The purpose of this vision.—I. For INSTRUCTION. The progress of the wicked in their enmity against the Church, is but the prologue to the Church's deliverance. First, the horns arise and play their part; and this brings on the hammermen to act their part. II. For ADMONITION: that God's people be not offended, or dismayed, when they see things go contrary to their deliverance. At such times let us calm ourselves—1. With a consideration of the just aggravation of our own sins, our disunion and security that opened the door to let in the misery. 2. With the consideration of the character of the horns. It is the nature of a beast to do as they do, to push and scatter. A brute will be a brute. A devil will be a devil. But beasts are not made to rule over men. And the devil is the gaoler of the wicked, not our ruler. 3. As the constitution, so the complexion of the last times is indeed the worst; so no better is to be expected for a time, but, though the several hammers make at first but a confused noise, and the pieces of the building lie in the dust, yet, ere long, the new building is reared, and the Great Master of the house comes in and dwells among us in it. III. For EXHORTATION. 1. Let us not judge by sense,

but by faith. 2. Judge not by present action, but by their productive tendency. 3. Judge not by the meanness of means, but by the might of the hand that useth them. (*N. Homes.*) *Destroyers and builders*:—The enemy came upon the land, came upon the hills of Judah and of Israel, laid waste the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, scattered the people, broke up their happy homes, and carried them into captivity. These are the horns of which the text speaks. Wise men were raised up, skilful workers, men willing and able to rebuild Jerusalem, restore the temple, and re-establish the worship of Jehovah there. These be the carpenters spoken of in the text. The first class is characterised by the fury of the *beast*, and the second by the wisdom and skill of the *man*. I. **THERE ARE THE DESTROYERS**—**THERE IS THE POWER OF THE DESTROYER**. The power opposed to God and His purpose is in Scripture often described under the symbol of a beast. The prophet Daniel saw four beasts coming forth in succession to do their destructive work. This symbol teaches us that the power opposed to God is from below, from the abyss. The persecutions that raged against the Church in other ages were eruptions from the bottomless pit, real boiling volcanic floods sent forth from the mouth of "that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Such is infidelity, and the criticism which merely destroys, and the philosophy which ignores God. The power opposed to God and goodness is coarse, rude, vulgar—the power of a beast. What will a beast do if turned into a flower garden? So the power of evil is rude and coarse. Whenever men begin to sneer at religion, at faith, at holiness, at Christianity, that moment they become coarse. The deepest and subtlest wisdom, the wisdom that can create, the wisdom that can construct and build up, is not necessary for the destroyer's work. The rude, clumsy power of the reasonless beast will answer for that purpose. The power of the destroyer is out of harmony with the nature of things. The beasts of Bible symbol are all monsters. Not one of them is harmonious or proportionate. Here is one—he has the body of a leopard to begin with, the feet of a bear, the hungry mouth of a lion; he has seven heads and ten horns, and on each of the heads in flaming letters is inscribed the name of blasphemy. What a dreadful apparition that must have been to St. John! The power of evil being out of harmony with the laws of nature, we can never fall into the order of God's universe while we are moved by the power of evil. II. **THE SKILFUL WORKERS**. These men have a Divine vocation, and are inspired of God—endued of Him for their work. There are very many Divine vocations in this world. There is the preacher, the student of nature, the statesman, the teacher, private Christians. These belong to the class of true workers. And God's purpose shall at last be realised; the work of the skilful ones shall prosper. Refer to the building of the first temple at Jerusalem. It was an idea early started, again and again lost sight of, but at last fully realised. There is an old saying, that in this world every man has believed in his best moments that there is a golden age which belongs to humanity. Man never believes in his present degradation; he believes that it was never intended the world should remain as it is. And I am glad there are so many brave Christian people in this great city who are determined by God's grace to do all that they can to realise this ancient idea. The prophets saw it, and it kindled their souls into rapture. (*Thomas Jones.*) *Four horns and four carpenters*:—This vision presents to us the cause of right in the earth. I. That the cause of right on the earth has **STRONG ANTAGONISTS**. Here are four horns, four mighty powers, all of which are in dead hostility to the covenant people. They are represented as those who have "scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head." The enemies of the true scatter and crush. Though Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome have long since passed away, the horns, or the mighty powers of evil, are still here, and are at work. What are they? Reigning materialism is a horn; practical atheism is a horn; intolerant superstition is a horn; and dominant selfishness is a horn. II. That the cause of truth upon the earth has **DIVINE DEFENDERS**. Here are four carpenters, or smiths, who appear to "fray them, and to cast out the horns of the Gentiles." Mark, the defenders were—(1) Men, not angels. God saves man by man. Who were the first apostles? (2) Working men. Toilers, labourers. It is man as man, not philosopher, poet, king, millionaire, that has to battle for the right. The greatest moral victories have been won by men in the lower walks of life. (3) They were skilled men. These men had a trade; they were craftsmen; they had been trained to the work they undertook. There is a skill required in order to strike effectively at the errors and wrongs of life. Stupid men, however good their intentions, accomplish but little, if anything, in the

noble cause. A man to convert souls must have as much aptitude for the work as the carpenter has to shape the wood to his purpose, or the smith to work the metals. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 20. **And the Lord shewed me four carpenters.**—*The counterbalancing of agencies*:—Evil agencies are counterbalanced by good—for there is a Divine providence always at work in this world. The prophet saw “four horns,” representing the powers by which Judah had been scattered; but at the same time he saw “four carpenters,” the instruments raised up by God to accomplish a Divine work. I. **THE WORLD IS MADE FOR THE CHURCH.** Men read the history of nations without the slightest reference to the Church of the living God. They look at passing events and circumstances without believing that they are the development of a Divine providence at work in the world. It may be thought that the world was made for unfallen man. Was it not rather made to be the scene of man’s trial and probation? It is a fact that the world was mapped out with a peculiar reference to the locality and home of the Church. The world was made for Christ, and therefore for the Church. The world was made to be the school for unfallen intelligences. It was made to be the tabernacle of God. II. **THE WORK GOING ON IN THE WORLD IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE PLAN.** There is a charm in history, since it not only annihilates the distances of time and space, but transports us to other scenes and periods. If you are a devout student of history you will see a Divine hand prescribing the limits of conquest and the extent of a nation’s duration. There is, then, eternal order underlying the world’s disorder, and a Divine will subordinating all human wills. The great chapters of the world’s history have all been written beforehand. We have only seen parts of the plan, some of the first chapters—strange and startling. III. **THE WORK OF GOD IN THIS WORLD IS UNDER DIVINE SUPERVISION AND ANGELIC INSPECTION.** From some brief hints, it would appear as if the government of the world’s provinces had been, in some measure, intrusted to the management of angels in former times. IV. **EVIL AGENCIES ARE COUNTERBALANCED BY GOOD.** In the natural world there are opposite forces, and laws that seem antagonistic, but these agencies are counterbalanced. We have darkness and light—we have night and day. All the forces in this world are adjusted by Divine wisdom, and thus the balance of the universe is preserved. There are opposite powers in the world. There is Satan, and there is Christ. “For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” There is sin; and yet sin is counteracted by grace. There is flesh, and there is spirit. The one seems to be the adversary of the other. Is the law in our members always to bring us into captivity to sin? No. Flesh itself is to be transfigured, to be consecrated and hallowed. There is death in the world. All men die, though Christ has died; all men shall rise, because Christ has risen. Thus evil agencies are counterbalanced by good. If there are powers hostile to the Church and to us, there are powers that are directly opposed to them, and that are at work for us, for said the prophet, “The Lord shewed me four carpenters.” (*H. J. Bevis.*) *Four carpenters*:—I. **THE TRUTH EXHIBITED IN THIS VISION.** 1. The champions of the Church are as numerous as its assailants. 2. They are more powerful than its assailants. 3. They are seasonably provided. II. **THE GROUND ON WHICH THIS TRUTH RESTS.** On the love, power, promises, and dispensations of God. (*G. Brooks.*) *Zechariah’s vision*:—“When God makes the prophet, He does not unmake the man.” Each sacred writer preserves his individuality. Character and circumstance leave their impress on the inspired productions. Zechariah was moulded by the peculiarities of the age in which he lived. He was raised up to incite the Jews’ zeal in building the temple. His mind overflowed with it. He could think of nothing else. Hence we cannot marvel that, when he prophesied, he used architectural figures. At one time he sees a “man with a measuring line,” and anon he says, “The Lord shewed me four carpenters.” 1. God’s works are often unobserved. “The Lord shewed me.” The seer did not behold them at first. Only when Divine help was afforded did he become aware of them. Are there not thousands who resemble him? As regards nature it is so. “Eyes have they, and they see not.” What is true of creation is true with double emphasis and touching revelation. The Bible is dull and uninteresting to some. Others delight in it. Why the difference? The last have Divine teaching. 2. God’s works are creative. “Carpenters.” These are constructive agents. Building, not demolishing, is their proper work. In seeking our own

spiritual and moral welfare, we cannot too often remember this important principle—the true method of destroying is by creating. Get good into your heart, and it will cast out evil. 3. God's works are compensative. "Four." Observe the number. It corresponds with the number of Israel's foes. There is more of equality in men's conditions than is often supposed. A grand law of compensation is in operation. "God hath set one thing over against the other." As regards riches and poverty, adversity and prosperity, there is compensation. Everywhere evil is counterbalanced by good. Our mercies outweigh our miseries. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *The four carpenters*:—The Hebrew word means workman in iron, brass, and stone, as well as wood. They are here the workmen of God. The horn is the instrument of power. The four horns are the symbols of persecutors, of violence and oppression, of the destroyers of the people and State. How were they to be crushed, put to fear, destroyed? That the prophet could never have found out for himself. The Lord showed him four carpenters. They were to fray (frighten) the horns. It would be heart-breaking if there were nothing for us but to realise the evils we have brought on ourselves; if we were left only to all that we could see of our troubles. But there is a revelation for us, and an interpretation of the revelation too. The four horns were met by four carpenters. It was a declaration to Zechariah that there existed—ready to act out of the unseen world, whether by energising human means, or not—a system of counterpoises, and counter-influences, and means of salvation, with Divine intentions concerning them, all of which were there, though man saw them not. God revealed the workers of the spirit-world. Zechariah saw four horns; it was the human apprehending the terrible; and the terrible is not ignored by God; it is emphasised, it is explained. God puts their evil work against His people side by side with the work that He will do in their behalf. There was a matching of four against four. All evil meets its match in every part when God comes forth to work. If there be had influences against you and yours, God can bring counter-influences against them, and He can break the spell of evil already done. Why need you ever despair of restoration, of help, of salvation, be your cause never so low? The "Son of God has come that He might destroy the works of the devil." (*P. B. Power, M.A.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-4. A man with a measuring line in his hand.—*The man with a measure*:—The prophet asks where the man is going, and the answer given is—"to measure"; and then he shows what would be the measure of Jerusalem, that it would hereafter extend beyond the walls, as that compass would not contain the vast number of the people. "God will extend," he says, "far and wide the holy city; it will no longer be confined as before to its own walls, but will be inhabited through all its villages." There is then no doubt but that God intended here to bear witness respecting the propagation of His Church, which was to follow a long time afterwards, even after the coming of Christ. For though Jerusalem became wealthy and also large in its compass, and, as it is well known, a triple city, and heathen writers say that it was among the first of the cities of the East when Babylon was still existing, yet this prophecy was not verified in the state of Jerusalem, for it was not inhabited without its walls, nor did it spread through the whole of Judæa. We hence conclude that the spiritual Jerusalem is here described which differs from all earthly cities. Here is described the heavenly Jerusalem, which is surrounded by no walls, but is open to the whole world, and which depends not on its own strength, but dwells safely though exposed on all sides to enemies; for the prophet says, not without reason, "through the villages shall Jerusalem be inhabited"; that is, it shall everywhere be inhabited, so that it will have no need of defence to restrain or hinder enemies to come near; for a safe rest shall be given to it, when every one shall quietly occupy his own place. Though few returned from exile, God was yet able to increase the Church, and to make it a vast multitude, and this was certain and decreed, for it was shown by the vision that however unequal they were to their enemies, God was still sufficiently strong and powerful to defend

them; and that however destitute they were of all blessings, God was still rich enough to enrich them, provided they relied on the blessing which He had promised. (*John Calvin.*) *The optimism of faith*:—Zechariah was the most uniformly hopeful of all the prophets. He was a young man. His little book is the work of a youthful imaginative mind, richly endowed with poetic gifts, as well as steeped in the diviner fount of inspiration. He saw all things bathed in the glory of the morning. The time in which he wrote was near the end of the Babylonian captivity. The prophet draws one picture after another of the glorious things which were nigh. Here the prophet sees a young man going with a measuring line in his hand, and asks "Whither?" "To measure Jerusalem," is the answer, and straightway he marches on. Then the angels appear, and one says to the other, "Go after that young man, and tell him that his measuring line is too short. Jerusalem will expand beyond all boundaries and all measurements, because of the number of people in it." Tell him that he is going to measure the immeasurable." This allegory contains these two Gospel truths. 1. Faith realises that which does not exist. 2. These Divine things which faith realises are so great that even faith cannot measure them. **I. FAITH REALISES THAT WHICH IS TO BE.** This young man was going to do an apparent absurdity. He was going to measure a city which had not yet been built. All the practical, materialistic, matter-of-fact people of the world would call that the very climax of folly. The Gospel of common sense says, Let us have no illusions. Give us facts, for anything which is not built upon facts is foolishness. Our religion indulges throughout in this foolishness, if foolishness it may be called. Faith realises the city that is not yet built, grasps coming events as though they were already present. All the best and greatest men and women that have ever been upon this earth have lived and moved and had their being in what was called a world of dreams, a world, that is, of fair, sweet hopes, of treasures and of glories that had not yet been created. Illustrated by Abraham, David, &c. It is the source and secret of all our strength and confidence, that where other eyes see only imperfections, we see a city of God which He will most assuredly build. **II. THESE DIVINE THINGS WHICH FAITH REALISES BEFORE THEY COME INTO EXISTENCE ARE SO GREAT THAT EVEN FAITH CANNOT MEASURE THEM.** The angel speaks to the young man, to rebuke him for the presumption of thinking that he can measure the city—it is immeasurable. We cannot measure anything that God builds. You cannot gauge moral influences or tabulate spiritual forces. There is no plummet that can sound the depths of love Divine. You could have measured Giant Goliath, but you could not have measured the faith and the courage of the young man who came up to meet him in the name of the Lord. Illustrated from the company carried by the *Mayflower*; or by comparing the French Revolution with the beginning of missionary enterprise. You cannot measure the Church, the Church of Christ. It is infinitely broader, larger, stronger, than the most flattering statistics show. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The man with the measuring line*:—It was natural enough. We dream of what occupies our waking thoughts; and probably Jerusalem was full of surveyors, engaged in mapping out the new streets and walls. 1. The pessimist comes with his measuring line, and draws the plan of the city within the narrowest possible boundaries. He justifies his forecast by quoting such a text as "Fear not, little flock"; or "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Sometimes he fears that he will not enter, at other times he doubts all others but himself. 2. The bigot comes with his measuring line and insists that the city walls must coincide with his shibboleth, and follow the tracings of his creed. 3. The experimentalist is apt to refuse to consider as Christians those who have not experienced exactly the same doubts, fears, ecstasies, deliverances, and cleansings which he himself has felt. 4. The universalist goes to the other extreme, and practically builds his walls around the entire race of man, including within their circumference every member of the human family. It is not for us to fix the boundaries, or insist on our conceptions. These are secret things which belong to the Lord our God. So shall it be with the saved. We have no right to include in their ranks any who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, who have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. But apart from these, there will be a multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues; as stars in the midnight sky, or the sand-grains on the seashore. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *An interesting future of the world*:—**I. THE FUTURE**

INCREASE OF GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. Two remarks are suggested concerning the extent of genuine religion. It is—1. Measurable only by the Divine. Who had the "measuring line"? Not a mere man, not any created intelligence, but the God-man, the Messiah. Men cannot measure the growth of piety in the world. They attempt it, but make fearful mistakes. They deal in statistics, they count the number of churches in the world and the number of professed worshippers. But piety cannot be measured in this way. Have you scales by which to weigh genuine love? Any numbers by which to count holy thoughts, aspirations, and volitions? Any rules by which to gauge spiritual intelligence? Have you any plummet by which to fathom even the depths of a mother's affections? No one but God can weigh and measure the holy experiences of holy souls. II. THE FUTURE SECURITY OF GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. Who shall penetrate a massive wall of fire? But that wall is God Himself, omnipotent in strength. Omnipotence is the Guardian of the good. III. THE FUTURE GLORY OF THE GOOD MEN ON THE EARTH. Good men are the recipients and the reflectors of the Divine glory. They are the temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, and they reveal more of Him than the whole material universe. Holiest souls are His highest manifestations. (*Homilist.*) *The true glory of the Church:—* 1. Although Zion has not yet lengthened her cords and widened her stakes to her appointed limits, yet the measuring line has gone forth that gives her bounds to be the habitable earth. Hence, if this future extension was a motive to the Jew, in his work of rearing the temple of wood and stone, much more is it to us in our work of erecting the great spiritual temple on the foundation, Jesus Christ (vers. 1-4). 2. We learn here the true glory of the Church. It is not in any external pomp or power, of any kind; not in frowning battlements, either of temporal or spiritual pretensions; not in rites and ceremonies, however moss-grown and venerable; not in splendid cathedrals and gorgeous vestments, and the swell of music, and the glitter of eloquence, but in the indwelling glory of the invisible God. Her outward rites and ceremonies, therefore, should only be like what the earth's atmosphere is to the rays of the sun, a pure, transparent medium of transmission (ver. 5). 3. The punishment of the wicked as truly declares the glory of God as the salvation of the righteous (ver. 8). 4. The wicked shall ultimately be the slaves of their own lusts; those appetites and passions which were designed to be merely their obedient servants, shall become their tormenting and inexorable tyrants (ver. 9). 5. The incarnation of Christ and His indwelling in the Church are grounds of the highest joy (ver. 10). 6. Christ is a Divine Saviour. In vers. 10, 11, we have one Jehovah sending another, and the Jehovah sent is identified with the angel of the covenant, who was to come and dwell in the Church, whom we know to be Christ. Hence, unless there are two distinct Jehovahs, one Divine and the other not, Christ, the Jehovah-angel of this passage, is Divine. 7. The Church of God shall cover the earth, and become in fact, what it is in right, the mightiest agency in human history. Though now feeble and despised, she shall one day include many nations, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (ver. 11). 8. Delay of punishment is no proof of impunity. God often seems to be asleep, but He is only awaiting the appointed time; in the end, when all seems as it was from the foundation of the world, the herald cry shall go forth, Be silent, O earth, for Jehovah is aroused to His terrible work, and the day of His wrath is come. Let men kiss the Son whilst He is yet in the way, before His anger is kindled but a little, and they perish before Him like stubble before the whirlwind of flames. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The man with the measuring line:—*In this vision God presented to the prophet, and through him to the nation at large, the prospect and the assurance of the restoration of Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of the Jewish state as it had been before the captivity. The city should not only be rebuilt, but greatly extended; the temple should be restored, and the worship of Jehovah resumed; His presence should be with His people, and they should enjoy His protection; and whilst they were thus blessed, judgment should come upon those nations that had oppressed them, and they should have supremacy over those by whom they had been enslaved. All this was literally fulfilled. But even in these promises there seems to be a reference to things of still higher import, and of spiritual significance. . . . Who can such a speaker be but that Being who in the fulness of time appeared in our world, uniting in His one person the human and the Divine natures? May we not say, then, that there is here a promise of blessing

to the Church through the advent of the Redeemer? Then certainly was glory brought to the temple of the Lord. The Church of God, under the latter dispensation, may take to herself as her own the comfort and encouragement which those promises, given to the Church in the old times, were intended to convey. Security, protection, glory, grace, blessing, extension, and final triumph are all assured to her by the promise of Him whose word cannot fail. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. Run, speak to this young man.—*Young men* :—The Lord said to me, "Run, speak to this young man," and I asked—I. "LORD, WHICH ONE?" First, this one. He is the son of godly parents, he was nursed in the lap of piety, and cradled in prayer. He is in the general acceptance of the word a good fellow. The home is all the brighter when he is in it. The parents all the happier for his presence. "Is he, Lord, the only one?" No, "speak to this young man." Ah, I see him now. His experience has been a very different one from the last. No prayers ever arose on his behalf; no holy influences ever surrounded him; his earliest remembrances are oaths. "Are there any more, Lord, I have to speak to?" "Yes, this one." He is a young man of considerable mental ability, who is fast making his way in the world. A bright future seems to be opening up before him. Sitting at his right hand I see another I have to address. He is of a very different stamp of character. I thought I heard him say just now, "Well, thank goodness, I'm no money-grub. I don't care so much about getting on in life as seeing life." His motto is, "begone dull care"; aye, by any means so long as it goes. II. **WHY SHOULD I SPEAK TO HIM?** To this question three answers at once came. 1. Speak to him because danger awaits him. The very least we can do for a man in peril is to arouse him to a sense of danger if he be ignorant of it. Humanity itself will dictate this. Never mind frightening the crew, better do that than all be lost, through want of warning. 2. I am bound to speak to you, because one wrong step will lead to many. 3. Speak, for if you do not there are many that will. No one knows the temptations that surround young men, but a young man. If there are but few to lead him right, there are plenty to lead him astray. Godless companions will. Then, too, he has the attractive preacher called the world, who like some fair siren seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles but to deceive. "Speak to him," still my Lord says, "for if you do not Satan will." III. **WHY SHOULD I RUN?** 1. Because he is running. Sinners never creep to ruin. Slow as the tortoise are we on the road to heaven; swift as the bounding stag to hell. The road to perdition is downhill all the way. The natural heart which is so heavy a load heavenward, lends a tremendous impetus to our downward course. 2. Because time is running. Time is a ship that never casts anchor—an eagle that is ever on the wing—a shuttle that always flies—an ocean that never ebbs. 3. Run, because opportunities are running. 4. Run, because death is running. The grim despot is after every one of us, nothing can turn his course, he laughs all bribes to scorn, and every moment he gains upon us; his scythe swings with the speed of the lightning flash, and never grows blunt in its work. 5. Run, because hell is running. We read in the Book of Revelation that death rode forth on a white horse and hell followed after, to every impenitent sinner the two go together. IV. **AND WHEN I CATCH HIM UP, LORD, WHAT SHALL I SAY TO HIM?** Son of pious parents, with many a noble, amiable quality, let me say this word to you, "Your morality will not save you." Unless you are "born again," you will be as much lost as if you never possessed any. Young man, you who have had nought but evil example from infancy, to you let me speak. Do not think that frees you from responsibility. Your parents' sins will not exonerate you from yours. If they led, you have willingly followed. Remember, too, you can no longer plead ignorance as to the way of salvation, for you have just heard it, if never before. Young man, so occupied in getting on in this world, I will just ask you one question, and leave you to give the answer. It is this, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (*A. G. Brown.*) **What to say to a young man** :—1. Tell him he has a wicked heart. 2. He ought to become a Christian. 3. He should improve the season of youth. 4. He should beware of evil company. 5. He should attend to Bible reading and to prayer. (*G. Brooks.*) **The young man's mission** :—Zechariah is, of all the prophets, most remarkable for the simple, practical purpose with which he employs the grandest prophetic symbols. The text is the speech of one angel to another angel in regard of a young man who, in symbolic action significant of Israel's redemption and enlargement, was going forth with a measuring line to take

the length and breadth of Jerusalem. Using the text simply as an accommodation, it may have a twofold direction. I. TO MYSELF, AS PREACHING TO YOUNG MEN. It is an earnest exhortation unto the Christian minister to labour especially with young men. The conversion of young men is so important—1. Because, in most cases, if not converted while they are young, they will never be converted. Divine grace, in its very sovereignty, operates according to the laws of our moral and intellectual nature. Youth is the most favourable period for religious impressions. 2. Because of the peculiar power of young men to accomplish great things for God and their generation. Young men are hopeful; young men are brave; young men are fertile in invention; and thus young men are strong in all qualities that secure earthly success. The foundations of all true greatness must be laid in early life. The energy of youth is the world's mightiest influence; and that influence is especially needful in the Church. II. TO YOU, AS YOUNG MEN AND CHRISTIANS. The words set forth the means, objects, and manner of a great Christian duty.

1. The means. "Speak." Use that grand power of articulate utterance; it is almost man's finest gift. Language is reason, walking forth with tremendous energy amid the vital interests of the race. Consider the wonderful title of the Divine Son—the Word. 2. The objects of your labour. Consider some distinct classes of young men with whom you are called earnestly to labour. (1) Strangers who have just come into your sphere. (2) The young man beginning to associate with evil companions. The pitiful idler. The fashionable young man. The spendthrift. The dishonest employer. The openly profane and impure man. Corruptors of youth, &c. (3) The sceptical young man. (4) The young men whose lives are already practically immoral. The profane man. The Sabbath-breaker. The dishonest. The impure. 3. The manner of their labour. "Run." The extent of your influence over others will depend not so much upon your talents as your discretion. Be earnest, thoroughly in earnest—(1) Because these young men are in imminent and deadly peril. (2) Because the work itself is all-important. (*C. Wadsworth.*)

Sympathy with young men:—At the annual meeting of the Central Y.M.C.A., at Exeter Hall, London, the recently consecrated Bishop of Sierra Leone said that he had been connected with the Y.M.C.A. for about twenty years, and gave the following reason for becoming a member and subsequently taking a great interest in young men: "When I was quite a young man I had some papers put into my hand dealing with infidelity. They troubled me considerably, and I did not know whom to go to for advice and sympathy. At last I went to a minister of the Word, thinking that surely he would sympathise with me. But instead of doing that and praying with me, he took the papers and threw them into the fire and sent me away. This discouraged me so much that I dared not tell my trouble to any one else, but at length I took my difficulties to God, and He gave me an answer, as He has always done when I have gone to Him with my troubles. That day I asked God to give me a heart of love and sympathy for young men. The Y.M.C.A. extends a mutual sympathy to young men which is most helpful and much appreciated."

Speaking to young men:—"Mr. Birch, who did much work in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, was on one occasion going from Cork to Dublin, and at a small wayside station near the Curragh Camp he saw a number of young officers *en route* for a ball in Dublin, who entered the carriage in which Mr. Birch was travelling. Soon the cigars were produced, and one of them, looking at Mr. Birch with a serio-comic face, said, 'I hope you do not object to smoking,' and, without waiting for permission, they lighted up. Mr. Birch took out his Bible, and said to the young man who had addressed him, 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?' 'Shut up!' exclaimed the officer. 'Because,' continued Mr. Birch, 'if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be lost.' 'Do you hear that old stupid?' said another of the officers; 'what shall we do to him?' Quickly the preacher of the Gospel turned to the second speaker, and said, 'Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? for, if you do not, you will be lost.' 'Sit on him,' suggested one. 'Shove him out of the window,' proposed another. 'That would not alter the fact,' said the intrepid servant of God. Just then the train began to slow down, and there was a general cry of 'Oh, let us get out! Let us change carriages!' 'Your getting out will not alter the fact,' again said Mr. Birch. 'Well, good-bye, old fellow!' shouted the officers, as they jumped from the carriage. 'Good-bye,' was the response; 'but remember that does not alter the fact. If you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be lost.' Four years had passed away, and the evangelist was travelling in England, when a tall, military-looking gentleman entered the carriage. As soon as he caught sight of

Mr. Birch, he leaned forward, and said, 'Excuse me, but I think we have met before. Do you remember, some years ago, a party of young men entering the compartment of a train in which you were travelling to Dublin? I was the young fellow who sat next you. We went to our ball that evening; but, despite all our gaiety, I was conscious of that awful sentence ringing in my ears, "If you do not believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be lost." I drank heavily that night, but the champagne did not revive me; and at an early hour I left the ball-room, and went to my hotel, where, in the solitude of my own room, I knelt down and cried to God for mercy. Since that night I have been a Christian, and have striven to bring those under my command to know and to love the Saviour.' " (*John Robertson.*)

Ver. 5. *I will be unto her a wall of fire.*—*Zion's protection* :—I. THE PEOPLE THAT SHALL BE THUS DEFENDED. It is Jerusalem that is to be defended; and that will include three things: the temple, the habitations of the people, and the people themselves. The people of God are spoken of as the temple of God. Do we belong to the temple of the Lord? If we belong to the temple of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ will be our only foundation. There are two things that make the Lord Jesus the foundation—1. As being the end of the law for righteousness. He brings in everlasting righteousness. 2. As being the end of sin. He is spiritually, legally, properly, and entirely the end of sin; His blood cleanseth from all sin. As is the foundation in character, so the building must accord in character with the foundation. The foundation is one of free grace. Therefore we are not only justified by grace, but saved by grace. The first feature given to this building is mercy. Then it is a free-grace building. The third feature is certainty. We may be upon the right foundation, and yet not rightly built. God's people are spoken of as a city; they have habitations which require to be defended. Take these habitations as the truths of the Gospel, wherein God's people dwell. Electing grace; predestination; Christ's righteousness; the atonement; God's promises may all be spoken of as habitations. II. THE DEFENCE. Notice the forms under which the Lord represents Himself as round about His people: all indicative of two things, destruction to the adversary, safety to the friend. The Lord is round His people as a hedge; and as mountains; and as a guard of fire, such as men use to protect from wild beasts. III. THE GLORY IN THE MIDST. He is in the midst, the living God, the life-giving God. He is the glory in the midst by being the temple in the midst. (*James Wells.*) *Protected by God* :—In one of the great cities of the Continent the regalia are not kept behind iron bars as in the Tower of London, but lie upon an open table. It might appear that any ruthless hand could wrench any jewel or diamond from the glittering array; and yet no man dare put out his hand to take one, because that table is charged with a strong current of electricity. You cannot see the protection, but there it is. And so if a man will only live in daily and hourly communion with Christ, the devil can no more touch him than a thief can touch those jewels. (*F. B. Meyer.*) *The wall and glory of Jerusalem* :—In this chapter is a vision of a man with a measuring line in his hand, to show that the Lord was now in readiness to build and restore the city and temple. Two great discouragements the people met with—danger and scorn. The Lord here, by a gracious promise, fortifieth them against the fear of both. Against the fear of danger, by promising to be their protection; and against the fear of scorn, by promising to be their glory. The Lord is to His people whatever good they want. "I will be a wall." 1. A wall of partition, to separate the Church from the world. 2. A wall of conjunction, uniting the parts together in one common interest. 3. A wall of protection and defence. The Lord doth as a wall protect His Church—(1) In a way of promise. (2) In a way of power. (3) In a way of providence. (4) In a way of grace. His protection is like that of a wall. It is near, adequate, and impregnable. Consider the city walled, the subject of His defence. The Church is His property, His rest, His peculiar treasure. The Lord is the glory in the midst of His people—1. By His spiritual residence and gracious presence with them. 2. By His holy ordinances. 3. In glorious privileges and immunities belonging to every citizen of the New Jerusalem. What folly, then, and what wickedness, to oppose the Church of God, briars to contend with flames! We need not make use of carnal wisdom and sinful means for protection. Envy not the glory of the world. Above all, hold fast God and His presence. God will be with you while you are with Him. If God be thus your glory, let your glorying be in Him alone. (*T. Hannam.*) *The glory in the midst of her.*—*Inward glory and outward defence* :—

Speak of the bearing of the text upon our individual lives. 1. If we choose, we may have the Divine glory in the deepest heart of us. The "glory" of the Old Testament was that material but supernatural symbol of the Divine presence which gleamed above the mercy-seat in the most holy place. That little house on the temple hill was nothing in sanctity in comparison with the temple of the Christian heart. The true habitation of God is man. Spirit dwells in spirit in a profounder sense than it does in space, or in the material creation. Have you got the glory in the centre of your being? We may all have the indwelling of the glory of God if we will. 2. If God be for glory within, He will be a fiery rampart round. He is not only a wall, but a wall of fire. His protection is not merely of the passive sort which shields from evil, but active and preserving. 3. If God is a wall of fire round about us, we do not want any other walls. God is everything that we need, and do not find anywhere else; and having Him, we do not want anything else. But the lives of most of us do not much look as if we believed that the only necessary thing was God, and that, having Him, we required nothing else. Let us cast all our self-confidences down, and rest ourselves on Him, and Him alone. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The city without walls*:—Zechariah was the prophet of the returning exiles, and his great work was to hearten them for their difficult task, with their small resources and their many foes, and to insist that the prime condition to success, on the part of that portion of the nation that had returned, was holiness. And that exuberant promise was spoken about the Jerusalem over which Christ wept when He foresaw its inevitable destruction. When the Romans had cast a torch into the Temple, and the streets of the city were running with blood, what had become of Zechariah's dream of a wall of fire round about her? Then, can the Divine fire be quenched? Yes. And who quenched it? Not the Romans, but the people that lived within that flaming rampart. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." I. "I WILL BE A WALL OF FIRE ROUND ABOUT HER." I need not dwell on the vividness and beauty of that metaphor. These encircling flames will consume all antagonism, and defy all approach. But let me remind you that the conditional promise was intended for Judea and Jerusalem, and was fulfilled in literal fact. So long as the city obeyed and trusted God it was impregnable, though all the nations stood round about it like dogs round a sheep. The fulfilment of the promise has passed over, with all the rest that characterised Israel's position, to the Christian Church, and to-day, in the midst of all the agitations of opinion and all the vauntings of men about an effete Christianity and dead churches, it is as true as ever it was that the living Church of God is eternal. If it had not been that there was a God as a wall of fire round about the Church it would have been wiped off the face of the earth long ago. If nothing else had killed it, the faults of its members would have done so. The continuance of the Church is a perpetual miracle, when you take into account the weakness and the errors and the follies and the stupidities and the narrownesses and the sins of the people who in any given day represent it. It does not become any Christian ever to have the smallest scintillation of a fear that the ship that bears Jesus Christ can fail to come to land, or can sink in the midst of the waters. But do not let us forget that this great promise does not belong only to the Church as a whole, but that we have each to bring it down to our own individual lives, and to be quite sure of this, that in spite of all that sense says, in spite of all that quivering hearts and weeping eyes may seem to prove, there is a wall of fire round each of us, if we are keeping near Jesus Christ. Only, we have to interpret that promise by faith and not by sense, and we have to make it possible that it shall be fulfilled by keeping inside the wall, and trusting to it. As faith dwindles, the fiery wall burns dim, and evil can get across its embers, and can get at us. II. A GLORY "IN THE MIDST" OF US. The one is external defence; the other inward illumination, with all that light symbolises—knowledge, joy, purity. There is even more than that meant by this great promise. For notice that emphatic little word "the"—the glory, not a glory—in the midst of her. Now, you all know what "the glory" was. It was that symbolic Light that spoke of the special Presence of God, and went with the children of Israel in their wanderings, and sat between the cherubim. There was no "shekinah"—as it is technically called—in that second Temple. But yet the prophet says, "the glory"—the actual presence of God—"shall be in the midst of her," and the meaning of that great promise is taught us by the very last vision in the New Testament, in which the seer of the Apocalypse says, "the glory of the Lord did lighten it" (evidently

quoting Zechariah), "and the Lamb is the light thereof." So the city is lit as by one central glow of radiance that flashes its beams into every corner, and therefore "there shall be no night there." Now, this promise, too, bears on churches and on individuals. On the Church as a whole it bears in this way—the only means by which a Christian community can fulfil its function, and be the light of the world, is by having the presence of God, in no metaphor, the actual presence of the illuminating Spirit in its midst. The same thing is true about individuals. For each of us the secret of joy, of purity, of knowledge is that we be holding close communion with God. III. "JERUSALEM SHALL BE WITHOUT WALLS." It is to be like the defenceless villages scattered up and down over Israel. There is no need for bulwarks of stone. The wall of fire is round about. The more a Christian community is independent of external material supports and defences the better. Luther tells us somewhere, in his parabolic way, of people that wept because there were no visible pillars to hold up the heavens, and were afraid that the sky would fall upon their heads. No, no, there is no fear of that happening, for an unseen hand holds them up. A Church that hides behind the fortifications of its grandfathers' erection has no room for expansion; and if it has no room for expansion it will not long continue as large as it is. It must either grow greater or grow, and deserve to grow, less. The same thing is true about ourselves individually. Zechariah's prophecy was never meant to prevent what he himself helped to further, the building of the actual walls of the actual city. And our dependence upon God is not to be so construed as that we are to waive our own common sense and our own effort. We have to build ourselves round, in this world, with other things than the "wall of fire," but in all our building we have to say, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchers watch in vain." But yet neither Jerusalem nor the Church nor the earthly state of that believer who lives most fully the life of faith exhausts this promise. It waits for the day when the city shall descend, "like a bride adorned for her husband, having no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the glory . . . lightens it." (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 6-9. I have spread you abroad, &c.—*Soul-exile*:—This is a call of Jehovah to the Jews in Babylonian captivity to return to their own land. These words may illustrate the moral exile of humanity. The point suggested is, the reluctance of the exile to return. This reluctance is seen—I. IN THE EARNESTNESS OF THE DIVINE APPEAL. "Return," is the word. "Flee from the land of the north." It is the land of corruption and tyranny. II. IN THE POTENCY OF THE DIVINE REASONS. Reasons for return are—1. The greatness of their separation. 2. The tender interest of God in them. 3. The opposition of the Almighty to their enemies. Conclusion—Why should sinners be so reluctant to return to God? What made the Jews so reluctant to break away from Babylon? Was it indolence? Was it love of the world? Was it old association? Do not all these act now, to prevent sinners from coming out of moral Babylon? (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 7. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.—*Separation from the world, the duty and privilege of a Christian*:—Zechariah prophesied at Jerusalem after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon; and one great object of his ministry was to stir them up to a more lively sense of the peculiar duties and privileges which their deliverance brought with it. In the text he is addressing that part of the nation which were still remaining in the land of Chaldea. As their dispersion had been the effect of God's righteous displeasure, so the way now opened for their return was no less clearly an evidence of His returning mercy and favour. But many were unwilling to return; the real cause of their so deciding was their indifference to religion, their distrust of God's Word, and their backwardness to obey Him and to show themselves His servants. To them came the admonition of the text. Can we make application of this passage to present times, and point out its spiritual sense? The world is now, to Christians, what Babylon was then to the Jews. By the world, is meant this world, in respect to its moral state; to its habits, maxims, and practices; to its principles, fashions, and ways: the world as it is now corrupted through the depravity of man. By Christians is meant all who are so called; all who, by name and profession, are Christians. They are born and grow up in the midst of the world's sin and iniquity. From their earliest infancy they are surrounded by its examples, exposed to its allure-

ments, and made familiar with its practices. What they are taught to admire and covet most, are the things of the world. But they belong, not to the world, but to Christ. They are professedly the subjects of that spiritual kingdom which Christ has established in the world. They cannot possess and enjoy their privileges while living in the world. The Jews must return home to Judea before they could rejoice as Jews. And what must Christians do, if they would rejoice as Christians? They must arise, and turning their backs on the world, must comply with the proclamation of the Gospel. "Come out and be separate." It is one part of the salvation of the Gospel, that it "delivers us from this present evil world." If persons would sincerely come to Christ for deliverance, He would surely set them free. The persons with whom we would plead are those who, under the garb of a Christian profession, manifestly retain a worldly spirit, and by their conformity to the fashions and follies of the world, betray its influence over their hearts. Consider—1. The inconsistency of such a state with your profession of Christianity. 2. The shamefulness of it. 3. The danger of your present state. If you walk not as a Christian now, you will never be owned as a Christian at last. 4. The happiness which will result from complying with the admonition in the text. (*E. Cooper.*)

Ver. 8. **He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.**—*The Divine interest in His people*:—1. While we disown the reference of the former portion of the vision to Gospel times, and to the spiritual or New Testament Jerusalem, we are very far from disowning the applicability to the latter of what is said in the former. Whatever sayings are here respecting the extension, the security, and the glory of the literal Jerusalem are equally true of the spiritual and heavenly. 2. The people of God may now, as well as of old, and even more emphatically, appropriate the Divine assurance, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." He identifies Himself with His people, and His own interests with theirs. What a spring of consolation to believers in every hour of darkness! 3. We ought to be earnest in persuading God's people to "come forth," and "flee" from the mystical Babylon. (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) *A figure of speech with a gracious meaning*:—It is expressive of—1. Intimate union. 2. High appreciation. 3. Earnest attention. 4. Intense sympathy. 5. Watchful care. (*G. Brooks.*) *The Church and unjust criticism*:—In a religious paper there appeared a symposium on "The Church and the Kingdom of God." In it we are told that "one of the most dangerous of current heresies is the identification of the kingdom of God with the Church." "The kingdom of God can never embody itself in an institution." "I am reluctantly coming to believe that Christianity, as it is organised, is the most serious obstacle in the way of the realisation of the Christianity of Christ." Similar criticisms fill the air everywhere. These strictures must be met. 1. The first thing to be said in reply is, that although the kingdom of God is spiritual, nevertheless it and the external organisation which we call the Church are practically identical. There is very little of the real spirit of the kingdom outside of that institution. When men become imbued with the spirit of God's kingdom they are generally ready to go into the Church. The reason they stay outside is because they have not caught that spirit. Where are the much-talked-of philanthropies, charities, establishments, colleges, seminaries, asylums, homes, refuges, founded by men or societies outside of the Church of God? When septs and other devotees of the world give a thousandth part as much for the advancement of morality, and the elevation of mankind, as members of the Church give, then it will be time enough to lampoon the Church. 2. Spirit in this world needs body through which to work. Man is a spirit, but he can do nothing here without a body. It is so with God's kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom, but it must be embodied in an institution for its propagation. When one becomes so spiritual that he wants soul to work without body, and God's kingdom to advance in the world without a temporal organisation, he is altogether too ethereal for this mundane sphere. He ought to take on his wings and go. What if Jesus does use the word "church" only twice? He founded the Church, and evidently instructed His disciples to rear it with scrupulous care. And if Churches are "in a struggle to keep themselves going," what of it? Would that prove they were utterly useless? That sort of talk will not help on God's kingdom. The work is slow, it is true; that is partly, at least, because it is a prodigious undertaking. To cleanse this planet from sin. What audacity for finite beings to attempt such an infinite enterprise! But the Church is accomplishing much when it merely exists

in this world. But it really looks as if the Church was doing something more than simply existing. Who can measure the influence of the Church upon society, business, legislation? If politics is so bad with Christianity, what would it be without it? Who can measure the abysmal depths to which all Christian governments and peoples would plunge without the upholding and preserving influence of the Church? (*F. B. Perry.*)

Vers. 10-13. **I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee.**—*The restorer of Israel and Judah.*—Note that the name of "the Lord," or "Jehovah," is applied to two distinct persons; to Him who sends, and to Him who is sent. Note also that in this prophecy the future restoration of the Jews is spoken of, as well as their settlement at Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity. The words of the text evidently relate to the future restoration. A period is yet to come, of glory to God, and of prosperity to the people of Israel and Judah; and that the Son of God, the Messiah, will dwell among them, acknowledged and honoured as the Lord of hosts. Note some of the circumstances which will mark that season of the fulfilment of God's promises to His people. 1. The conversion of the people of Israel and Judah. 2. The restoration of all the tribes to their own land. 3. The people of God will be restored to their native land in the midst of wars and tumults. Their return will be preceded by violent convulsions, and by a season of disaster and tribulation, such as the world has never yet witnessed. 4. The first and most remarkable circumstance in the condition of God's people after their settlement in their own land, is His immediate presence among them. 5. God will make a new covenant with them. It will involve a much higher degree of religious knowledge. 6. The pardon of sin is mentioned as one of the promises under the new covenant. 7. The consequence of this abundant pardon and superior knowledge is the greater practice of virtue. This superior degree of purity and holiness in the people of God, is the gift of God Himself, the effect of that abundant effusion of the Spirit which will adorn the Church under His own immediate care. 8. The advantages will not be confined to Israel, but will flow out to other peoples. 9. Jews and Gentiles being united as one body of faithful worshippers, a pure and holy service will be paid to God in Jerusalem. The people will enjoy all worldly and spiritual blessedness. Let us seek to attain a share of these coming blessings. (*T. Bowdler, A.M.*) *The joy of the Divine presence.*—1. No difficulty or strait can take away from the Church the true cause of her joy, nor excuse her for not rejoicing in it, for when the Jews are now a contemptible handful, deserted by their brethren, vexed by their enemies, and some of themselves conspiring against them, yet she is called to this duty, "Sing, and rejoice." 2. The Lord's own presence in and with His people, is His choice and matchless gift, which He is willing to give before any other thing, and which, as He will not disdain to bestow in His people's lowest condition, so it is a gift that should occasion much joy and refreshment to them. 3. As the Lord's presence with His own chosen people is perpetual, and will bring intimate familiarity and love; so Himself will be at all the pains to make up this union, He will not, by sin putting Him, as it were, away for a time, be provoked to stay away, and will have this communion still upon the growing hand till they come to full fruition, for He will dwell constantly and familiarly "in the midst of thee." 4. It is the great ground of the Church's encouragement, and the fountain of all other manifestations of God, that the Son of God became man, that her Redeemer is God, that He came and dwelt in our nature, and was like us in all things without sin; and that we may trust with God in the man Christ, and know our tender-hearted Surety to be also God over all blessed for ever, and able to save to the uttermost. This incarnation of Christ is it which this promise ultimately points at as the ground of their joy. "Sing, for I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah." (*George Hutcheson.*) *The joy of the millennial Church.*—The words point to the bright periods when Messiah's kingdom shall so extend as to embrace "many nations." Three remarks are suggested concerning this joy. I. It is **RIGHTEOUS.** It is not only Divinely authorised, but commanded. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." Often we are informed by religious teachers that joy is a privilege, but seldom told that joy is a duty. It is as truly a sin against heaven to be spiritually gloomy and sad, as to be socially false and dishonest. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion." Similar commands are found elsewhere on the pages of Holy Writ. "Break forth into joy, sing together" (*Isa. lii. 9*). "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion" (*Isa. xii. 6*). Gratitude is joy; and ought not gratitude to fill every soul? Admiration is joy; and ought not

every soul to be filled with admiration of the Divine excellence? Love is joy; and ought we not to love all creatures with the love of benevolence, and the Creator with the love of adoration? II. It is REASONABLE. But here are reasons suggested for this joy. What are they? 1. The presence of God. "Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." The highest happiness of an intelligent creature, is the presence of the object it supremely loves. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." 2. The increase of the good. "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." Is not this a good reason for joy—to see the clouds of error in the human sky breaking, dissolving, vanishing, and the Sun of Truth rising, spreading, and penetrating the whole earth with its lifegiving beams? Is not this a sublime reason for lifegiving joy—"Many nations shall be joined to the Lord," as the branches are joined to the roots of the tree, as the members of the body are joined to the head? 3. The restoration of the Jews. "For the Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." III. It is REVERENTIAL. "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation." "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." The profoundest emotions of the soul are always mute. Superficial feelings are noisy and chattering. The shallow stream rattles amongst the hills. The deep river rolls by unheard. Deep joy is silent as the stars. It is so with the godly soul. In the presence of the supremely beautiful, it is filled with a joy that cannot speak. If we are loyal subjects of the great spiritual empire, we might well be happy. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 12. **The Holy Land.**—*Those holy fields*:—There is no place on the face of the globe so attractive as Palestine. There is no abatement of the interest which the peoples of the world have always taken in it. I. WHAT MAKES IT ATTRACTIVE? How comes it that this land has such a hold upon the hearts of men of varying religions and different races? Is it because of the excellence of its government? Is it because of the might and power of its arms? Is it because of its size, its colossal proportions? II. ITS CONNECTION WITH JESUS CHRIST. The Holy Land is endeared to the hearts of men because the Son of God walked its streets, and made it for ever sacred by His holy life and sacrificial death. There the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made known to perishing man the love of God for a lost world. III. THE HOLY LAND IS STRIKING AND INTERESTING IN MANY OF ITS ASPECTS. Its climate is the most remarkable in the world. Its position is not less striking. In ancient days it was believed to be the very centre of the earth. And so it is in a higher and better sense. It was there the great mystery of the Incarnation was enacted. Mount Calvary is the central point of the world's religious life and thought. If ever that universal brotherhood of man, for which the world longs, is to be realised, it will come in proportion as men climb Mount Calvary, and meet in love at the Cross of Christ. (*Charles Leech, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. **Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for He is raised up out of His holy habitation.**—*Flesh silenced by God's arising*:—1. The vision itself. The man with a line in his hand. 2. The interpretation of the vision. Jerusalem shall be built, and the city shall be inhabited. 3. A threefold apostrophe that the Lord infers from this—(1) Directed to the Jews that yet continued in Babylon. The Lord calls them. It is barrenness and lowness of spirit not to accept deliverance. "Deliver thyself." (2) The news is to the enemies that were their neighbours. (3) To both. Let the enemies silence their murmurings, silence their slanders. Let the saints silence their frettings, silence their doubtings. In the words of text are two things. I. A PROPOSITION. "The Lord is raised up out of His holy habitation." The expression "habitation of His holiness" is used two ways in Scripture. It is sometimes put for heaven; sometimes for the temple, the place of God's presence among His people, manifested in ordinances. How is God said to be "raised up"? It is such a rising as is after an awaking out of sleep. But how can God be said to sleep? The cessation of acts of providence is God's sleep. The putting of them forth is God's arising, awaking. The meaning of the sentence is this,—When the Lord doth appear for His people as a return of their prayers, when the Lord ariseth gloriously for them, for their deliverance, and their enemies overthrow, then it is said, "The Lord is raised up out of His holy habitation." Two observations—The great comfort of the saints in all their straits and difficulties lies in this, when they see God ariseth for them.

Experiments of God's rising in acts of providence are great grounds to His people to stay their faith, that God will go on, He will bring His work to perfection. Open this under three heads—1. There is a time when God seems to sleep. 2. The great labour of the saints in all their straits is to awaken God, that God may arise. We knock at heaven's gate; we environ God; beleaguer God by our prayers; we as it were wrest mercy out of His hands. 3. The consolations of the saints must needs be very great from the arisings of God for them in His providential dealings. When the Lord doth arise, whatsoever standeth in opposition must fall. When God ariseth, He overruleth the spirits of men, so as they shall effect and accomplish the end. When God ariseth, He hath abundance rise with Him. When, by our spiritual eyes, can we discern that God is raised up? 1. Prayer is God's way by which He is raised up. 2. When the Lord defeateth the counsels of the enemy, turns their plots upon their heads. 3. When the Lord takes away the heart of His enemies. 4. When the Lord acteth the spirits of His people unto high and noble and invincible resolutions. 5. When the Lord goes on in ways of mercy, and draws out His loving-kindness. The experiments (experiences) which the saints have of the rising of God are a sure pledge to their faith that He will go on; He will not leave the work till He hath brought it to perfection. The inference is,—then “be silent all flesh before Him.” Some men keep silence in policy, because they would not discover themselves till a convenient time. But all the people of God that would approve themselves, must keep silence in duty. There is a silence of shame, and a silence of fear and astonishment. The Lord says to these Jews, silence your doubtings, and silence your frettings. (*W. Strong.*) *God raised up out of His holy habitation*.—I. THE SENSE OF THE PHRASE. Expressions concerning the locality of the Divine presence arose out of the circumstances of His dwelling in the tabernacle of Moses; of His resting when the camp rested, and marching before them when they advanced. When God thus arose, He came forth from His holy habitation. When God is spoken of in human language, local and bodily ideas must enter into it. The conception of our minds, as to the operations of God, are aided by such phraseology. It may be applied generally to the dispensations of providence. When wickedness prevails, when error spreads, when the Church is wasted, then the Almighty is represented as shutting His eyes, turning away His face, withholding His hand, and resting in His holy place. But when He makes Himself manifest in judgment or mercy, when He has nations to punish or to bless, when His Church calls for protection and help, then He is “raised up out of His holy habitation,” and “all flesh” is commanded to “keep silence” before Him.

II. THE OCCASIONS WHICH PROCURE THIS INTERPOSITION OF GOD. 1. He is raised up by the incorrigible vices of men. When wickedness abounds, for a time He appears to disregard it, or He interposes by gentle corrections; but there is a limit to His patience and forbearance. 2. Pride and oppression raise Him up out of His habitation. “Those kingdoms that walk in pride He will abase.” Every power that is opposed to the laws of God must be overthrown; and the more proud and oppressive it is, the more certain, speedy, and marked is its downfall. 3. God is raised up for the manifestation of His truth. To every people God originally gave a saving system, and all nations might have preserved it. That they have not, is a proof of human depravity. Had it not been for special interpositions from God, the truth would have wholly perished; and with it all the hopes of the world must have ended for ever. Here is the mercy of God. 4. God is raised up by the prayers of His saints. Prayer moves Him that moves the universe. Everything encourages prayer. That which is our privilege is made our duty. You know the efficacy of prayer. It is prayer that calls down His visitations, interests Him in your cause, and secures to you grace to help in every time of need. Nor less essentially is it connected with every plan for the spread of His Gospel, and the prosperity of His Church. 5. The performance of His promise to Messiah raises God up from His holy habitation. He had said, “I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance.” This decree is not yet fully accomplished. God has been raised up partly to accomplish it; but He will ere long put forth His power in a still more glorious manner. Even now is He raised up for this purpose.

III. THE IMPRESSION THESE EXTRAORDINARY DISPENSATIONS SHOULD MAKE. Silence is commanded; but silence in such a case is the result of powerful mental impression. 1. It is the effect of deep and intense interest. 2. Reproof produces silence. 3. Satisfaction produces silence. All flesh, as well as the Church, is commanded to keep silence before God. IV. BUT IS THE WHOLE

TO ISSUE IN EMOTION? Certainly not. God is raised up out of His place, to raise us up from ours. We are to be fellow-helpers to the truth. It is our encouragement that God is "raised up out of His holy habitation"; and this will render us inexcusable if we refuse to co-operate. If God is thus raised up, we have many encouragements to exertion. We have the Divine sanction. Prayer must be heard. We shall not want co-operation. We cannot want success. We shall be inexcusable, if we refuse to espouse His cause. (*R. Watson.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-7. And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing.—*Joshua the priest*.—We learn from the Book of Ezra (ii. 36-39) that among the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon, were Joshua or Jeshua, and 4289 priests. But they were in a sorry plight—their character is described by the prophet Malachi; and it was in sad contrast, as he suggests, to the original type of the priesthood represented in Phinehas. As a judgment on the priesthood, the whole body had fallen under great reproach (Mal. ii. 9). The sense of shame becomes more acute when we stand before the Angel of the Lord. "He shewed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord." In the world's twilight much may pass muster which, in the light of that sweet, pure face, must be utterly condemned. Garments which served us well enough in the short, dark winter days are laid aside when spring arrives; they will not bear the searching scrutiny of the light. In the ordinary life of our homes, we are less particular of our attire than when, on some special occasion, we have to undergo the inspection of stranger eyes. Thus we are prone to compare ourselves with ourselves, or with others, and to argue that the habit of our soul is not specially defiled. Alas! we reason thus in the dark. But when the white light of the throne of God breaks on us, we cry with Job: "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet wilt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." The more we know of God, the more we loathe ourselves and repent. What is to be done under such circumstances? Renounce our priesthood? Disclaim its God-given functions? No: remain standing before the Angel. He knows all—we need not shrink from His searching eyes—but He loves infinitely. He has power to make our iniquity pass from us, and clothe us with change of raiment—that white linen which is the righteousness of saints. It is at such moments, however, that our great adversary puts forth his worst insinuations. "Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary." Since he was cast out of his first estate, he has been the antagonist of God, the hater of good, and the accuser of the brethren. He discovers the weak spots in character, and thrusts at them; the secret defects of the saints, and proclaims them upon the house-tops; the least symptom of disloyalty, inconstancy, and mixture of motive, and haunts it before God's angels. He is keen as steel, and cruel as hell. Ah, it is awful to think with what implacability he rages against us! When we pray, he is quick to detect the wandering thought, the mechanical repetition of well-worn phrases, the flagging fervour. When we work for God, he is keen to notice our desire to dazzle our fellows, to secure name and fame, to use the Cross as a ladder for our own exaltation instead of our Master's. "Is this," he hisses, "the kind of service which Thy chosen servants offer Thee?" And when, like Job, we do bear trial patiently and nobly, the great adversary suggests that we do it from a selfish motive—"Doth Job serve God for nought?" Satan cannot reach the Son of God now, save through the members of His body; but he misses no opportunity of thrusting at Him, as he accuses them. Let us notice the intervention and answer of the Angel of the Covenant. 1. It is spontaneous and unsought. Before Joshua had time to say, "Shelter me," his faithful Friend and Advocate had cast around him the assurance of His protection, and had silenced the adversary. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." As the Aaronic Priest, He died; but as the Melchizedek Priest, He ever lives to make intercession on our behalf; and as the torpedoes of the enemy are launched against us, He catches them in the net of His intercession, and makes them powerless to hurt. Before we call, He answers. 2. It is founded

on electing grace. For He says: "The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." Before ever He chose her, He must have foreseen all that she would become, her backslidings and rebellions, her filthy garments, her wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; but, notwithstanding all, He set His heart upon her. Satan could allege nothing which the Advocate had not weighed in the balances of His Divine prescience. He had realised the very worst before making His final choice. Yes, thou gr. at adversary, thou canst not tell our Lord worse things about us than He knows; and notwithstanding all, He loves, and will love. 3. Moreover, it has already done too much to go back. The point of the metaphor which follows is very reassuring. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" You have been writing all the morning at your desk, answering letters, assorting papers and manuscripts, destroying much that there was no need to keep. After two or three hours of work, there is a heap of papers which you wish to destroy, and you place them in your stove or fireplace, the fire kindles on them, and they begin to blaze. Suddenly, to your dismay, you remember that there was a cheque or note amongst them, or a letter with an address, or a paper which has cost you hours of work. As quick as thought you rush to the kindling flames, and snatch away the paper, and attempt to stay the gnawing edge of flame. But what an appearance the paper suggests! It is yellow with smoke, charred and brittle round the edges, scorched and hot, here and there are gaps—it is a brand plucked out of the fire. Would you have snatched it out if you had not valued it? And, after you have taken such pains to rescue it, is it likely that you will thrust it back to destruction? And would Jehovah have snatched Israel out of Babylon, and expended so much time and care over her, if at the end He meant to destroy her? The fact of His having done so much, not only proved His love, but implied its continuance. What depths of consolation are here! As we look back on our lives, we become aware of the narrowness of our escape from dangers which overwhelmed others. We have been involved in companionships and practices which have ruined others irretrievably; but somehow, though we are charred and blackened, we have escaped the ultimate results. We have been plucked out of the burning. What can we infer from so gracious an interposition, except that we have been preserved for some high and useful purpose? (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Help and opposition.—I. THE POSITION OF THE HIGH PRIEST. 1. He stands before the Angel of the Lord. 2. He stands before the Angel of the Lord as an accused person. 3. He stands before the Angel of the Lord as an accused person, to pray.

II. THE OPPOSITION OF SATAN. 1. It was prompt. 2. It was directed against Joshua. 3. It assumed the form of accusation against Joshua. 4. It was intended to interrupt or thwart Joshua in his prayer. (*G. Brooks.*)

Joshua and Satan.—Israel was then what Christendom is now; and the prophet in this chapter must be considered as instructing not the house of Jacob alone, but the whole family of God in Christ. The vision of Zechariah is a solemn picture of what is now going on. Taking the vision to refer to the Christian Church, inquire into the truths which it involves, and how it tallies with external events. Trace its reality in the dispensation of the Gospel. Illustrate from the manifestation of Christ to the Gentile world. The Church ever comes before us as a community enlarging its borders, absorbing into itself human belief, supplanting other modes of worship. But there is another side of the picture. The Christian history is full of the opposition and violence with which the onward march of the Cross has been uniformly encountered. The lives of Christian missionaries are ever lives of risk and pain. Such is the external history of the propagation of the Gospel. Where lies the cause that after eighteen hundred years Christianity has not conquered a majority of the human race? The cause of Christianity is the cause of Christ. The resistance of the devil has been partly open, but his resistance has been secret and stealthy: it has mainly sought to undermine rather than cast down; to weaken from within rather than assail from without. A chief cause of the slow progress of the Gospel among men has been, the want of unity. This is seen in sectarian separation, and in diversity of doctrine. The history of the world, of the Church, yea, of every individual soul, is but the outward result of the mystic vision of Joshua the high priest, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. (*J. R. Woodford, M.A.*)

Joshua the high priest before the Angel of Jehovah.—This vision is of less obvious interpretation than the preceding, perhaps for the reason that its truth lies nearer the deepest throbbings of the human heart. A sense of sin and a feeling of hopeless ill-desert are among the deepest emotions of a heart that has been touched by the Holy Spirit. This is the ever-recurring

state of the heart both individually and collectively, because it rests on the ever-during relations that connect man with God. A sense of sin fairly awakened produces despair if we are thrown back on the resources of reason. We cannot hope in God, for we tremble before His justice. Thus it was with the Jewish Church at this time. They felt that they had sinned, and hence had no ground in themselves to hope for God's favour. They knew that their priests had also been unfaithful, and hence they had no hope in them. Why, then, go forward with the temple, when both priest and people must defile rather than hallow its courts? These were the suggestions of Satan, to deter them from their work. God will not accept so vile and faithless a heart, so lame and mutilated a service as you render Him, says the tempter, therefore you had better abandon it all, and enjoy sin at least, if you cannot enjoy holiness. This brings us to the heart of the vision. It is designed to show the people of God that their personal demerit is no ground for distrusting the mercy of God, for He receives them not because of their own righteousness, but that of Another; and that at this particular period the unworthiness of the priesthood was no reason for their destruction and the overthrow of the temple, as they were typical, and the end of their instruction was not yet served. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *Christ the advocate of His Church and people*:—

This part of the vision has respect to Joshua and his accuser. It exhibits Joshua—I. WITH RESPECT TO HIS CONDITION. View him—1. In his office. High priest. One part of his duty was to consult the Divine will in matters of difficulty. Another part was to intercede on behalf of the nation. Possibly he was now before God, confessing the sins of the people, and pleading for that pardon which a God of mercy is ever ready to bestow. 2. In what place was Joshua executing his office? The temple was not built, and the particular place is not named. He was "standing before the Angel of the Lord." This was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of the Covenant. II. HIS ENEMY. Satan means adversary. Look at—1. The actings of the adversary. Satan stood at Joshua's right hand. But why? To resist him. But he might do this either by tempting Joshua or by accusing him. The right hand was the usual place for accusers in public. 2. What were his motives for accusing Joshua? His motives as a tempter we can well understand; but what were his motives for accusing Joshua of negligence in the work of God? Did Satan then wish that the work of God should go on vigorously? III. HIS ADVOCATE. Jehovah Himself. The Lord's defence of Joshua is grounded—1. In His love toward the Church. 2. On His past mercy to Joshua. The defence which the Lord Jesus makes for His people now is substantially the same as it was then. Past mercies are grounds of Christian confidence, and should be viewed as pledges of future blessings. IV. THE APPAREL OF JOSHUA. "Filthy garments." Probably the garments worn in the time of captivity. 1. His dress was unsuitable. 2. Suitable apparel was provided for him. "I will clothe thee with change of raiment." The righteousness of Christ is to all, and upon all, them that believe. Ask—(1) Are we attending to our duties? (2) Are we sensible of our defects? (3) Are we confiding in an Almighty Advocate? (*J. G. Breay, B.A.*) *The great contention*.—I. JOSHUA'S MINISTRY AND DEFENCE. 1. He stood to minister before the Lord. Whereby we learn—(1) That as ministers of the Lord have their mission from Him, so they ought to receive instruction from Him. (2) Having received instructions, they ought with all readiness to obey them. (3) That they are always in the eye of God, to counsel them in their duties, to search them in their performances, to hear them in their petitions, to protect them in their dangers. 2. He stood as a defendant, as one accused, to answer for himself and others. The sins of the age were then general, such as, neglect of building the temple, marrying strange wives, &c. II. SATAN, AND HIS WORK AGAINST JOSHUA. 1. He withstands us as a tempter. If we do our duty, Satan is at our right hand to hinder us; if we do not our duty, he is there to accuse us. He stands at the working hand. Usually, the more work the more temptation, and the more public the work the more sharp and eager the temptation. 2. He opposes as an accuser. He resisted Joshua by stirring up the Samaritans to hinder the building of the temple. He resisted him in his ministry, by accusing him of his failings. What these were we may guess. (1) He ministered not in the priest's robes, but in filthy garments. (2) He delayed the building of the temple. (3) His sons were, some of them, defiled with strange wives. III. THE ADVOCATE—THE LORD. Christ is the Church's Advocate. Satan is at our right hand; Christ is at God's right hand. Joshua does not plead his own cause; he answers by his Counsel, his Advocate pleads for him. IV. THE DOUBLE FOUNDATION OF THIS VICTORY.

1. God's gracious election. "The Lord which hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." The doctrine of adoption by free grace is the strongest weapon that we can wield against the malice of Satan. 2. Joshua's past deliverance. "Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Past mercies are pledges of more. If God snatch out of the fire, He will bring unto His temple: if He lay a foundation, He will bring forth the head-stone. (*Bishop Reynolds.*) *The vision of Joshua*:—1. The representative characters of the high priest and of Satan. Joshua represents the Jewish nation, especially the godly people in it. His filthy garments were emblematic of the moral defilement of the nation, and of their low and poor condition. Satan is the representative of all evil forces. He represents the majority of this world, but the minority of the universe. 2. The motives which at this time brought them into God's presence. It is implied that the high priest was there to plead for his nation. Satan was there to oppose this restoration to God's favour,—to bring forward reasons why it should not be granted. 3. The reason why the promise and the symbol should have their perfect fulfilment. One life, or one act in a life, is sometimes of such a nature or character as to send down a blessing to future ages; it seems to gather within itself all the wisdom or all the goodness of the past, and to bring them all into a centre of blessing for the present and the future. The life of God's Son, and especially His death upon the Cross, gathered up all that had been shadowed forth in the prophets and priests of old. His perfect life and sinless death and intercession were sureties that the promise given to the Hebrew people, through Joshua, should certainly be fulfilled. The vision embodies the blessed results of Divine forgiveness through the life and death of Christ, which are so beautifully set forth by the greatest of Old Testament prophets, Isaiah (see chaps. xi. and xii.). Learn—(1) Evil spirits may plead with God against men, as the good plead for them. Many human beings send up desires against the prosperity and happiness of their fellow-men. 2. The man who would be a benefactor of his fellow-creatures must be an intercessor for them. 3. The elect of God are those who fulfil the conditions of fellowship with God. Divine forgiveness springs from Divine grace, but the proof that it has reached us must be found in the fact that we fulfil the only conditions upon which it is granted. (*Outlines by a London Minister.*) *God's method of salvation*:—1. Joshua, before the Angel of the Lord, represents a sinful people. (1) Sin is impurity. What dress is to the body, moral character is to the soul. Impure garments are the symbol of sin. Iniquity is described by the most loathsome objects in nature—an infant uncared for; the vomit of the dog; the wallow of swine; the exhalations of the sepulchre. A Greek philosopher said, "Evil destroys us like a wild beast." 2. God saves through instrumentality. There are two classes: the good, who stand by all beneficent influences; and Satan, all that hinders good, evil spirits, bad men, corrupt hearts. The day of Gospel grace is neither day nor night. It is a conflict of contending forces. We live between Ebal and Gerizim. Every one who undertakes anything good will find agencies obeying the command, the Angel of the Lord assisting. And He will find Satan standing at his right hand,—the place of power—to resist him. Reflections—1. We observe the same method of work in the natural world, and in civil society, as in the Church. All are the work of one God. 2. Why does God permit sin? He works by the balance of contending elements everywhere. 3. The position of an unsaved sinner is as when a chief falls wounded between two contending armies: both fight for him. For which does he fight? (*J. S. Fulton.*) *Joshua*:—The Church is a holy priesthood. Regard Joshua as representing the humble, penitent believer. I. JOSHUA IN HIS DIFFICULTIES. Standing before the Angel of the Covenant. No careless person, but a poor sinner seeking to stand before the Lord Christ. Satan is near him as his accuser. When the sinner awakened stands before the Angel Jehovah, how often does the devil, by doubts and insinuations, seek to turn him aside. So the Angel Jehovah becomes his helper. II. THE LORD'S ACCOUNT OF JOSHUA. Scorched, but delivered by power, the sinner saved by grace. The powerful hand of the Lord, by His Word, in His providence, by the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, has arrested and plucked him from the burning. III. THE RELIEF AT HAND. The Angel of the Covenant answers Satan's accusations. Joshua had special holy garments provided for him. But even these were filthy and polluted. He must be stripped and re-clothed. IV. THE HAPPY RESULTS. The pure mitre conspicuously a part of the priest's dress. The angel, &c., stood by to help and comfort, to put Satan to flight, to counsel and to direct, to be his guide as well as his deliverer. We

now stand before the Angel Jehovah, the messenger of light and life and glory, when we come into His house of prayer; and we must stand before Him when He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. (*E. Auriol, M.A.*) *Joshua the high priest*.—The visions of Zechariah were intended to encourage the rebuilding of the temple. The resumption and successful prosecution of the work upon the temple devolved not less upon the ecclesiastical than upon the civil power. Zerubbabel and Joshua must co-operate. The former was ready; the latter needed to be extricated from the Slough of Despond. 1. At the opening of the vision the prophet saw Joshua standing to be judged before the Angel of God. (1) And he was clothed in filthy garments. The best of human kind is not perfect. The contrition of Joshua was, therefore, becoming in him, and all the more because of his official position. Before the all-searching eyes his garments were mere shreds and tatters. And therein he was indeed a just representative of the people. (2) Satan stood at his right hand to resist (*i.e.*, accuse) him. There is no lack of accusers. God's people are always at the bar of judgment, and alas, they have little enough to say for themselves. Guilty is the plea. 2. Next in the vision the Lord Himself appeared to vindicate Joshua. He stands as the champion of His people; His ear is ever open to their cry. He is the champion of all the weak and humble. (1) In this instance He rebuked Satan; not because there was no truth in His charge that Joshua was unworthy to minister at God's altar, or have part in the rebuilding of the temple, but because of other considerations, which made his accusations null and void. (2) The Lord having rebuked Satan, said to His own attendant angels: "Take away from Joshua his filthy garments." Thus does He unclothe His people of their filthy rags, and make them worthy to minister before Him. He is a great forgiver. Thus the Lord encouraged Joshua, and qualified him, despite his personal unworthiness, to offer sacrifices and join with Zerubbabel in the re-building of the temple. And thus does He stand at the heavenly tribunal as the vindicator of the least of His little ones. 3. Then, in the vision, the prophet saw Joshua arrayed in garments white and clean. "I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Nor was this enough. "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." Thus was he encouraged to exercise anew and with increased diligence the functions of his priestly office. 4. The vision closes with the words of a solemn compact or covenant, for the sealing of Joshua's restoration to service. The promise of perpetual blessing is conditioned on patient continuance in well-doing. To him that hath shall be given. A covenant would scarcely be a covenant were there no stone of remembrance. Here the stone had seven eyes in it. "Branch" interprets it. Under this title the Messiah was frequently mentioned. Thus the name of Christ Himself is set as the seal of His covenant with Joshua and his people. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Joshua the high priest*.—Joshua appears to Zechariah in his dream,—Israel's representative, clothed not in the splendid priestly attire, with its immaculate purity and costly jewels, but in garments worn and soiled, symbolical of the nation's sins. Before the humiliated priest is the Angel of the Lord, and at His right hand is Satan. The question is, which shall conquer, the Angel or the adversary? But not long is the question unanswered. Joshua is as a brand plucked from the burning. Israel, despite her sins and her familiarity with the tempter, shall be saved and forgiven. Then, when reclothed, the faithful monitor urges upon Joshua the necessity of obedient, whole-souled service. And then comes the promise of the greater High Priest, the Branch of David, the Messiah Himself, and the stone of the new theocracy, with its seven eyes running to and fro throughout the world, and finally the millennial peace, when Israel shall sit in peaceful forgetfulness of all her tribulations, under her own vine and fig-tree. The dream yields important lessons. 1. The representative function of the priesthood. Joshua stood for Israel. The soiled clothes in which he appeared indicated that both the priesthood and the people were leading lives which were not altogether in accordance with the Divine will, and from other sources we know that the priests of that day were given over to worldliness and materialism. While the priest can hardly fail to take somewhat of the tone of his life and character from the people to whom he ministers, it is also true that, because of his high position as a moral teacher and guide, he is under peculiar obligations to give the tone to his people, and determine in a large measure by his own words and life the standard of their lives. 2. The truth of angelic influence and guardianship. Joshua between the Angel and the adversary. The human soul facing the right and the wrong. But the Angel prevails. The temptation may be a mighty one,

the guilt may be great, but Satan is never allowed to go unchallenged. No child of humanity is ever left alone under the power of evil. He may sometimes feel alone. He may get so low in the pit, may become so hardened in sin, that he loses all sense of God's presence, and feels that there is no help for him in this world or the next. But God cannot, even for an instant, leave one of His children wholly alone with the powers of evil. 3. Another lesson is, that man's extremity is God's opportunity. The occasion of this vision was doubtless the discouragement of some of the more thoughtful Israelites, on account of their national sins. The exciting experiences since the return had tended to hold their minds to material interests, and make them forget their spiritual obligations. Notwithstanding the tendency to formalism under an established order of things, it is probably true that religion reaches its highest spiritual ideals under conditions which are not liable to frequent changes. But God does not forsake His children. He is with them always in the form of a searching and rebuking conscience. When the nation or the individual begins to feel deep down in his heart that a great wrong has been done against God and conscience and truth, then, and not till then, is the way open for forgiveness and restoration. Note the last scene of the vision. Strange enough, we find coupled with this revelation of the Divine heart the prophecy of the Messiah, who Himself was that Divine heart made flesh, and clothed with the features of humanity. Under Him shall the iniquity of the land be removed and the millennium shall dawn. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Joshua the high priest*:—**I. A GREAT ADVERSARY OF GOD'S PEOPLE BROUGHT BEFORE US.** It is strange how every good work meets with resistance in this world. He who would effect reforms, especially in religion, has to stand alone, at least, at first, with none enlightened or brave enough to give their support. "I am sometimes," wrote Robertson, "tempted to doubt whether any one who tries to open people's eyes in religion is to be reckoned as a sublime martyr or an egregious fool. The cross, or the cap and bells? Certainly, had it not been for One, I should say the cap and bells." Paul was accounted a fool for Christ. Wickliffe, Luther, and all great reformers have borne the same antagonism, and many prophets have cried out, "Who hath believed our report?"

"Truths would you teach, or save a sinking land?
All fear, none aid you, and few understand."

Even in such a work as the rebuilding of the temple it was so. And the Bible lifts the veil and lets us see that behind the human actors there are malignant forces at work,—a truth which, though mysterious, is sustained by history and experience. **II. OPPOSED TO THE ADVERSARY IS THE FAITHFUL AND UNCHANGING GOD.** While there is such conflict before truth and godliness prevail, yet the victory is sure. God's servants have to wrestle with principalities and powers, but greater is He who is for them than all who can rise up against them. 1. God's interposition is a restraining of evil. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." He wounds the head of the dragon; puts checks upon the forces which threaten the Church and cause of Christ; turns the weapons forged against her into instruments of retribution to her enemies. 2. God encourages and aids His servants. Joshua is forgiven, clothed in festal garments, crowned with a clean mitre, assured of success, and promised future freedom of approach. There is enough of encouragement for those who take the Lord's side, if only they will use it. **III. THE PROMISE OF A DIVINE SAVIOUR AND KING.** Every book of the Old Testament, either by word or type, predicts a coming Christ who is now arrayed in the attributes of God, and now represented as a suffering but conquering Servant. It was a promise which had many partial fulfilments in God's anointed servants before He was incarnated in Jesus. But Jesus was the Christ of whom others were only figures and signs. He was the Branch extolled by Isaiah, and predicted by Zechariah. The vision still points to a future in which all prophetic hopes will be fulfilled. (*T. Vincent Tymms.*) *The hinderer rebuked*:—**I. SATAN THE ADVERSARY OF THE AWAKENED SOUL.** 1. The person who is resisted. This is the exact picture of an awakened soul: he comes and stands before Christ, clothed with his filthy garments, conscious that in himself he is lost, but resting on the Saviour's power and willingness to save. Wherever we see a soul living in sin and departure from God, there we may see the work of Satan. But wherever we behold a soul forsaking sin, and seeking to live a holy and consistent life, there we behold the work of the Holy Ghost. Consequently, when Satan rises up to resist the sinner he

rises up to resist the Holy Ghost. 2. The manner of Satan's resistance. There is allusion to the customs of ancient courts of justice, in which the accuser always stood at the right hand of the accused. How does he resist him?—(1) Before God, bringing forward his sins, and demanding the awful sentence of violated law. (2) Before himself; troubling the sinner's conscience, and striving, by every wile, to keep him from Christ, and by suggesting the greatness of our sins. (3) Satan keeps the sinner from the Saviour, by suggesting to him his unworthiness, and the uselessness of expecting mercy. 4. Satan hinders by suggesting that Christ is unwilling to save, since you have so often spurned and rejected Him. 5. And by suggesting that repentance is too late. II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS THE REBUKER OF THE ADVERSARY. He is the high priest within the veil, the sinner's Advocate. Notice the manner in which Satan is silenced. Two ways—1. God's sovereignty. "The Lord hath chosen Jerusalem." God's choice is without repentance. 2. The soul Satan desired to have was already beyond his reach. "Plucked out of the fire." (*A. W. Snape, M.A.*) *The good man an inter-ceder*:—Regarding the vision as a symbolical revelation of Joshua, in his representative aspect as the high priest of the Jewish people then existing, we feel authorised to infer from it two or three ideas touching the intercessory functions of good men while on earth. I. That the good man, in HIS INTERCESSORY FUNCTIONS ON EARTH, HAS TO BEAR BEFORE GOD THE MORAL IMPERFECTIONS OF HIS RACE. Joshua had on "filthy garments." This was evidently intended to represent the corrupt state of the Jewish people. The seventy years' captivity had not purified them; for now, instead of setting themselves to the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord, they were taken up with their own personal concerns, and excusing themselves by saying, "The time is not come." Here, then, is a characteristic feature of a good man's intercession while on earth. He has to bear the imperfections of his fellow-creatures before God. And does not this benevolent feeling lie at the basis of all moral excellence? There is not a saint nor an angel in heaven, we suppose, who does not desire the progress of kindred spirits; and what is this but intercession? But that which distinguishes the intercession on earth is, that we have to remember the moral corruption of our race. In heaven there is no defilement. All there are either clad in the robes of pristine holiness, or in garments washed and made white by the cleansing influences of redemptive love. But here all are in "filthy garments,"—garments stained by sensuality, worldliness, idolatry, falsehood, and dishonesty. Here the pious parent has to appear before God for sinful children, the minister for sinful people, and the pious sovereign for a sinful nation. II. That the good man in his intercessory function on earth HAS TO CONTENT WITH A MIGHTY SPIRITUAL ANTAGONIST. The existence of some mighty spirit or spirits, who are determined foes of truth, virtue, and the happiness of man, is rendered more than probable by a number of considerations, independent of the testimony of the Bible. Such, for example, as the general belief of the race, the conflicting phenomena of the moral world, the unaccountable opposite impressions of which all are conscious. Now, this enemy stood up to resist Joshua in his intercessions. And who will say that he is not now specially active with the good man when he draws near to God? In how many ways may he hinder our prayers? Sometimes he may suggest to us, even in the very time of our prayers, doubts as to the existence of God; we may be tempted to ask, Are we sure that there is a God? May not the idea be a delusion, for who has ever seen or heard Him? Or, granting His existence, he may suggest whether He would condescend to attend to the affairs of an individual. Or granting that He does exist, and that He attends to the prayers of some, Satan may suggest that I am too worthless for His notice, that it is presumptuous for me to address His awful Majesty; I am too great a sinner ever to be attended to. This, again, is a peculiarity of our intercessory functions on earth. In heaven, we presume, no enemy will intrude on our devotions, no Satan will stand up to resist as we appear before God. No power there to darken our faith with cloudy doubts, nor to cool the ardour of our devotions! III. That the good man, in his intercessory functions on earth, HAS THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OF A DIVINE HELPER. Whilst Satan stood up against Joshua there was One who stood up for him; the Lord—called also, "the Angel of the Lord." The scene illustrates two thoughts concerning the help rendered. 1. It was rendered sympathetically. "Is not this a brand?" &c. Consider the suffering to which they have been subject. Christ is full of sympathy. 2. The help was rendered effectually. The old "filthy garments," the emblem of impurity and

guilt, were taken away, and he was clothed in other garments; that is, their guilt was removed, they were restored from their degradation. And the "mitre," the emblem of dignity, was put on their head. They were raised once more to the glory of an independent nation. See (1) That if you would effectually help your race you must appear before God as an intercessor. Other means are to be employed. Promote general knowledge, advance the arts, help on commerce, above all, diffuse the Gospel of Jesus; but, in connection with all, you must appear before God as Joshua did for Israel. It is in this way you will change the world's "filthy garments," and get for it the "raiment" of purity and the "mitre" of honour. (2) That if you would effectually appear before God you must have the help of Jesus Christ. Ever as we attempt to approach the everlasting Father in devout thought and worship, do we not find some opposing force like this Satan, or rather, this Satan himself, "standing" at our right hand to "resist" us? What is to be done? Are we to retire?—cease all endeavour to commune with the loving parent of our souls? God forbid! Our doom is sealed in midnight and anguish should this be so. There is no happiness for any finite spirit but that which flows from intercourse with the eternal Fountain of good. Our only hope is in getting HIM—the great Mediator—with us, who shall repel our foe, drive him from our presence with the words, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." (*Homilist.*) *By nature and by grace*:—The Jewish Church is represented by its head, the high priest Joshua; various objections are brought against it, but the Lord overrules them all, declaring His will, that it shall be restored to His favour, notwithstanding its past guilt or present degradation. This transaction represents to us the way in which every true child of God becomes a partaker of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. I. THE CHRISTIAN'S WOEFUL CONDITION BY NATURE. 1. He is exposed to condemnation. It is the condition of us all. Conscience acknowledges this. The Christian, in himself, has no reply to the accusations of Satan. 2. He is an object of God's abhorrence. Indicated in Joshua's filthy garments, offensive in the Lord's sight. 3. He is on the very brink of destruction. A brand actually in the fire. II. HIS HAPPY ESTATE BY GRACE. In spite of every hindrance, Joshua is accepted—the Christian is saved. 1. His conviction is quashed. It is not urged that there are no grounds for condemning him. The charges are tacitly allowed to be true. But at the critical moment there is an arrest of judgment. The accuser is forbidden to proceed,—“the Lord rebuke thee.” There is no ground for this exemption, save the Lord's free and unmerited choice. 2. He is clothed afresh, through the merits of the Saviour, and with the graces of the Spirit of God. The filthy raiment of guilt is what we cannot lay aside, but Christ took it away. And He brought in an everlasting righteousness. 3. He is effectually saved from ruin. Inquire whether this all-important change has taken place in you. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *The Lord, the Defender of His people*:—Here is represented unto the prophet Christ, who is the Lord, taking the defence of Joshua, and by His intercession (acting as the angel of the Lord) pleading that Satan may be rebuked, confounded, and restrained in his malicious and cruel design to destroy them whom God had chosen, and them who, having been almost consumed in trouble, were miraculously plucked out and preserved from total ruin. Doctrine 1. Christ, in His office of mediation and intercession, is the strong refuge of the Church against Satan, who is sufficient to oppose all his machinations, being Himself God equal with the Father, zealous for and affectionate to His people and their weal, and the Father being engaged to help Him and His by virtue of the covenant. 2. Albeit the ground of Satan's accusation of the Lord's people before God, and in their own consciences, may be true and just, yet his insatiable and cruel malice in prosecuting that controversy to their destruction, and casting out of God's favour, is so far from being Christ's allowance, that it is hateful unto Him, and will be effectually suppressed by Him. This is imported in His intercession—"The Lord rebuke thee," or restrain thy malice, and make void thy intention. 3. The Lord's election of and free love toward His people is that whereby they are allowed to answer Satan's temptations, which otherwise might be heavy upon them. And where the Lord hath chosen and purposed to do good unto a people He will also have a care of their ministers for their sake. This we are taught from Christ's first reason of intercession—"The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." God having chosen them, Satan's bill (how true soever) could not be heard to destroy them, or to reject Joshua their minister. 4. Though the people of God may be cast into painful and hard

trouble, and may be kept in it till it come to some extremity that they may be purged, yet shall they certainly be rescued and brought out again; for so was it with Joshua, and this remnant, "a brand pluckt out of the fire," a stick half burnt, and yet thought worth the pulling out. 5. As the former afflictions of the Lord's people do so endear them to Christ's heart that He will not hear Satan's accusations, so His eminent appearing for them in trouble is a pledge that He will not destroy them, but perfect His work notwithstanding Satan's machinations; or this is the force of the second reason of Christ's intercession, "Is not this a brand pluckt out of the fire?" As if He had said,—Should My anger smoke yet against My people who are already almost consumed by it, and whereof they yet bear the marks? Should I not make an end of pleading with frail flesh? And shall I prove so foolish a builder as when I have appeared, in bringing them out of consuming trouble, giving them a remnant to escape, I should again forsake them, and let all My pains be in vain? (*George Hutcheson.*) *Joshua the high priest*:—Sin in act or in heart takes all the meaning and joy out of God's richest promises and gifts. So it prevented the Israelites from appropriating the former gracious words until its baleful influence was removed by the fourth vision of our lesson. It is a vision of free forgiveness for the nation. Joshua, the high priest, represents Jerusalem and the people. His filthy garments are symbols of their sins, and his clean raiment is a pledge of their pardon. I. THE ADVERSARY. Who was the great opponent of those afflicted Hebrews? Was it the nations around? Or was God Himself against them? The vision reveals their true enemy. It was neither of these, but the great adversary of souls; he who tempted Christ, the prince of darkness. The foe of man is Satan, not man; much less God, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it. The very names of this enemy betray his character. The Hebrew word Satan means "adversary." And here, exemplifying his name, he is standing at Joshua's right hand "to be his adversary." When did he ever do a deed or suggest a thought really to help or bless a man? The assaults of Satan are well timed. It was when Joshua stood in foul raiment, symbol of the moral uncleanness of the people, and when the bright hopes of the returning exiles were fading away, that Satan seized the opportunity to accomplish their ruin. The days of sin, failure, despair find him at hand to do his fatal work. God's past dealings with us are a pledge of the future, an assurance of final victory. II. PARDON. How vivid and repugnant sin must have become under such a symbol. The garments were not coarse, or old, or worn and soiled with use, but filthy. By such striking symbolism God taught His chosen people to hate sin. This was no euphemistic language softening and covering the wrong-doing, but rather a proclamation of it. Sin masked under the forms of fashion or elegance is doubly dangerous. With garments so filthy, but one thing can be done. They cannot be covered up. The blackest spots cannot be sponged off—as men try to do with their guilt; for every thread of the clothing is defiled. Moreover, the wretched man seems powerless to remove the unclean garments. In fact, they are part of him, they are his life, his character, himself. God must work the deed which shall free him from the burden of his sins. "Take away the filthy garments and clothe him in fair raiment," "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." III. SUBSEQUENT LIFE. Pardon was never intended to be the end of effort or of progress. Accordingly, the Angel of Jehovah does not pardon Joshua and dismiss him; but rather pardons and then hastens to declare solemnly: "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge," then thou shalt have the honour of priesthood, with its authority and its free access into God's presence. After pardon comes obedience. The order cannot be reversed. Joshua's previous efforts to obey were vain. Only with the consciousness of forgiveness can there be full and unconstrained obedience. But after one is pardoned, walking in God's ways is the condition of further blessing. Not that God who has forgiven once is unwilling to forgive again. He is love, and His mercies are everlasting. But a man cannot wilfully and constantly transgress God's law, and continually and lightly seek forgiveness. Upon the high priest there was an especial obligation to careful obedience. He was in a sense God's representative. His office carried with it wide influence for good or evil. Before God, indeed, all are under the same supreme law of right. But towards their fellowmen, some are under heavier obligations than others. The obligation rests most heavily on the representative of God, the teacher or preacher whose influence is wider than that of one in a humbler sphere, and whose opportunity to help and guide is greater. Our opportunity to serve man is the

measure of our responsibility to man. A larger promise limited to no man or family is now introduced by the emphatic words, "Hear now, . . . for behold." It is an old promise renewed. From earliest ages the hopes of all godly Jews had centred about one dim future figure, ever expected, ever receding. Moses spoke of Him as a prophet, the highest ideal in his mind. David sang of Him as a righteous king, the loftiest conception of man in that age. The coming One was pictured as the servant of Jehovah, and as a sprout growing up out of dry ground from the stump of the fallen house of David. But still He was the hope of Israel. The lowly names by which He was known became transformed into titles of honour and glory. "Behold I will bring forth My servant, the Branch." That promise has been fulfilled to us. And when we, like Zechariah, would urge as a motive for action God's greatest gift, we must speak of that same Servant, of His life and death and resurrection. Wonderful power in human life! His name brought fresh zeal and courage into the feeble remnant under Joshua and Zerubbabel twenty-five hundred years ago. It has never lost its power. This great promise of the Branch, pledge of the continued care and favour of Jehovah, is naturally accompanied by more definite promises of immediate help. The seven eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth and are the symbol of perfect watchfulness, shall be directed to each stone of the temple now building under great difficulties. More than that, He will "engrave the graving thereof," He will give the stone its beauty. He will both watch and work with His people. Man's work is ever incomplete. In spiritual matters, no less than in temporal, our work needs and certainly receives its vitalising and beautifying power from Him who transforms the elements into flower and fruit. Peace and prosperity complete the picture of the future of the forgiven people. Every one shall call his neighbour to come and sit under his fig-tree. Righteousness and peace with God were doubtless included in this favourite Hebrew thought, but temporal peace, with all its glorious blessings, was the chief element in the anticipated reign of the Messiah. Some of the loftiest conceptions of the Jewish religion are found in these verses. Each is a shadow of a vastly greater and more inspiring truth which is familiar to the Christian. (*G. R. Hovey, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?—A firebrand:—*The fire meant here is the fire of sin. Sin is a fire which destroys the comfort of mankind here, and all the joy of mankind hereafter. Nothing can be more suitable to burn in a fire than a "brand." It is not a branch just taken from the tree, fresh and full of sap; it is a brand—dry, sere timber, fit for the burning. And what does this indicate but man's natural heart, which is so congenial to the fire of sin? As the firebrand fits with fire, so does the sinner fit in with sin. We read of a brand "in the fire." Not lying on a heap, but burning and blazing in the fire. Does not this portray our condition? We began very early. Disobedience to parents, angry tempers, petty falsehoods,—these were the first catchings on fire of the brand. We have blazed away merrily since then. What with the lusts of the flesh, or pride, or unbelief, or some other form of departing from the living God, how many are like the firebrand, blazing and flashing in the flame! There is, however, a fair side to the picture. We have here a "brand plucked out of the fire." Sinners these, who though they have still within them the propensity to sin, are no longer in the fire of sin. They have been taken away from it. They sin through infirmity, but wilful sin they do not commit. The fire that once burned within them has been quenched. They are rescued from that fire which once threatened their everlasting destruction. They are brands still; but brands no longer in the fire. The force of the passage seems to lie in the words, "plucked out of." The Christian does not escape by his own free will. He is plucked out of his peril. To be plucked out there needs a hand quick to rescue. Every believer in the Lord Jesus is a trophy of the strength as well as of the mercy of God. The question of the text will bear three renderings. I. *THE SENSE OF WONDERMENT.* "Is not this," &c. The words are spoken of Joshua, the high priest. There was such astonishment at his preservation that, with hands uplifted, the question was asked, "Is not this man just like a firebrand snatched from among the glowing coals?" This marvel is not confined to Joshua. Was there ever a man saved by grace who was not a wonder? Out of the state of our natural depravity we have been plucked, so that every man who is delivered from its sway may well say,—“Am not I a brand plucked out of the fire?” Each Christian knowing his own heart, and having a special acquaint-

ance with his own peculiar setting sin, feels as if the conquest of his own sin by the grace of God were a more illustrious trophy of that grace than the conquest of a thousand others. There are instances so uncommon that they excite surprise in the minds of all who hear. In the cases of extraordinary conversion, one of the first is the salvation of the extremely aged. Exceptional, too, is the conversion of people who have been accustomed to hear the Gospel from their youth up, who, though not perhaps absolutely aged, have nevertheless been receiving Gospel privileges without any result. Over in the Bankside, I am told, when a man is first put inside a boiler, while the rivets are being fastened, he cannot stop long, the noise is so dreadful, but after a time the boiler-maker gets so used to the horrible din that he can almost go to sleep inside. And so it really is under any ministry where the people get Gospel-hardened. There have been cases of gross sinners in which this marvel has been still more exciting. Can we pass over the case of some who have given themselves up to sin, to work it with greediness? There is a wonder which I do see, but not often. It is when a self-righteous religious man gets saved. II. TAKE THE TEXT BY WAY OF INQUIRY OR HOPE. When a sinner's eye is suffused with tears, and a sigh breaks forth, "Alas! woe is me!" you may say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" for the tear of sorrow for sin is a blessed omen of mercy's dawning. The sigh of penitence and the prayer of the seeking are evidences of grace. When the poor soul at last, driven by necessity, throws itself flat at the foot of the Cross, and rests its hope wholly and alone on Jesus, then we may say of it, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And when, in the midst of many a conflict and soul struggle, the heart still flings away its idols, and hopes to love Christ, and vows in His strength to be devoted to His service, we may say again with pleasure, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" I would invite you to think over the signs of grace, and if you see them in yourselves you may be able to answer this question with joy III. AND WHAT A QUESTION OF DEFIANCE THIS IS. Do you not catch the idea of the text? There stood Joshua, there stood the angel of the Lord, and here stood the adversary. The angel, in effect, replies to the adversary: "If God has plucked him out of the fire, you can never put him in again." It is a defiance full of majesty and grandeur. It reflects a gorgeous lustre on the past. If God has chosen him, dost thou think to undo the Divine decree? God hath snatched him from the fire, determined to save him. God has done that which is the earnest and the token of his perfect safety. Then, beloved in Christ, dread not all the temptations that may attack you. God will not leave His purpose half accomplished. He will not be disappointed. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The rescued brand*:—This is the Divine description of a justified and converted man. The words present at once to our view the sinner's worthless character by nature, his dangerous and dreadful condition while in this natural state, and the fulness of unmerited grace and love of which he has been made the subject. Joshua was here the representative of all the true people of God. Like him, they are all "brands plucked out of the fire." Against them all the same power of Satan is employed to resist them. In behalf of them all the same boundless grace is exercised on the part of the Lord God. The rescued brand forms the subject of our discourse. 1. How unprofitable and worthless in himself. A brand! Useless for any purposes of man; having no value annexed to it in his estimation. Is not every unrenewed sinner precisely this in the sight of God? As a fallen creature man cannot be profitable in the eye of God. No creature can ever render anything to the Creator which shall merit a continuance of blessings bestowed by Him. 2. How dangerous the condition in which this brand was found. The fire from which he was plucked refers to those everlasting burnings which are his heritage in a world of recompense. All earthly woes are temporary. These sorrows are unchangeable and eternal. Under this tremendous load the unconverted sinner now lies, condemned and perishing, as a brand burning in the fire. The wrath of God abideth on him. None can appreciate the dangers of an unconverted soul, but they who have been plucked from the fires in which it is still consuming. 3. How glorious and worthy of praise is that Divine power which can pluck this brand from the fire, and transform it into an eternal monument of love, and a vessel of everlasting holiness! In the midst of the ruin of the world, and the guilt of man, God proposes to the ungodly a reconciliation to Himself. 4. How infinite is the extent of that love, of which this brand is the object! The foundation of all our hope is, that God's love is infinite and free. His love can pardon the greatest and most multiplied

transgressions. 5. How precious is the Christian's ground of hope, the glorious union of Divine power and Divine love, in the work of his salvation! The same hand which plucked us from the fire will carry us to the temple. The man who has found peace with God has no enemy in the universe to fear. 6. How inestimable is this privilege of being the objects of God's unchangeable love! (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*)

Danger and deliverance.—I. THE DANGER. The brand is—1. Fit for the fire. 2. Scorched by the fire. 3. Destined to the fire. 4. Unable to deliver itself from the fire. II. THE DELIVERANCE. 1. Its author. 2. Its completeness. 3. Its permanence. 4. Its benefits. III. THE EXCLAMATION. 1. With regard to the speaker, it expresses triumph. 2. With regard to the enemy of souls, it hurls defiance. 3. With regard to the spectators, it challenges admiration. 4. With regard to the person delivered from the danger, it demands gratitude. (*G. Brooks.*)

A suggestive question.—Under the form of an interrogation, the language of the text is capable of being differently understood. 1. It may be considered as conveying a seasonable reproof to an insulting enemy. It is as if God said, Amidst all his imperfections and failings, thou hast nothing to do with him. I claim a property in him, and will assert it. 2. As expressive of exultation and triumph. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" I rejoice in him as such. He is a pattern of My long-suffering, a monument of My grace. 3. The expression carries with it the force of an affirmation. It is a brand plucked out of the fire. I. TO WHOM MAY THIS LANGUAGE BE APPLIED? To all who are finally saved. There are some to whom it is more immediately applicable. 1. Such as great and heinous transgressors, when converted from the error of their way and turned effectually to God. 2. Old and accustomed sinners may be viewed in the same light, when they are brought to repentance and to believe in Jesus. 3. There are some whose cases were despaired of by their friends. 4. Pardoning mercy has in some instances followed upon an overwhelming sense of guilt and distressing apprehensions of Divine wrath. II. NOTICE THE PROPRIETY OF THE DESCRIPTION. 1. A brand plucked out of the fire was once a brand fit for the fire. 2. A brand plucked out of the fire was very near being consumed. 3. A brand plucked out of the fire retains some evidence of the dangerous situation. 4. The brand plucked out of the fire is no way instrumental to its own deliverance. There it must lie and burn if some kind hand do not snatch it thence. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

The sinner rescued from perdition.—Reverse this question, and ask, Is this a brand plucked out of the fire? The text was a sort of challenge to Satan to deny the riches of Divine grace in the salvation of the Israelitish Church, now rescued from the furnace of Babylon. It was a question put concerning them figuratively, for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, and for every individual member of it. Bring the question home, "Am I a brand plucked out of the burning?" Consider the importance of being able to come to a clear decision upon this point. I. YOUR DANGER AS SINNERS. A state of sin is a state of imminent danger. 1. Sin is destroying your bodies, and will at last destroy your souls. 2. Every sinner is in danger of the law of God. 3. The terrors of a guilty conscience are a fire. II. THE WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE EFFECTED. 1. The sinner is delivered by Divine grace from that dreadful sentence, which is literally destruction begun in the heart. 2. The deliverance signifies to be rescued from the raging violence, the destructive power of sin in our heart. 3. This deliverance signifies to be rescued from the burning stings of inward guilt. III. THE ACT OF DELIVERANCE. "Plucked out." 1. Here is exhibited God's own sovereign will and purpose. 2. The act of rescue points to the direct personal interposition of the Saviour. 3. The deliverance is to be viewed in its individual application by the Holy Spirit. IV. THE DIFFERENT EMOTIONS THIS DIVINE AND MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE SHOULD EXCITE. 1. Exultation. Admire the grace of God in your salvation. 2. Confidence. Learn to trust both for yourselves and for others. What cannot Divine grace do! (*The Evangelist.*)

The brand plucked out of the fire.—It is a "brand"—nothing better; dry, sapless, lifeless, profitless; and such is man. If a brand and lifeless, then powerless. Can a brand quicken itself to life? How can it live? It has lost the principle of life. All our efforts to restore ourselves to the dignity we have lost, and to the state from which we are fallen, are utterly abortive. How little men know their spiritual powerlessness, because they will not make trial of it. But the brand is also worthless; it is only fit to be cast into the fire; it has no utility. And such is man. It may seem a hard thing, but God says it, that the natural man is at best enmity against God. And if enmity against God, is not his moral nature loathsome? It is a brand "out of

the fire"; it is black and scorched. So is every sinful son of man. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. A "brand" is fitted for the flames. It is combustible; it is dried up, so as to be ready to ignite into flame. And so sin assimilates man to hell, makes him more susceptible of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." The "brand" is already scorched in the fire. It has been in the fire; it has been "plucked out of the fire." What is hell? Sin unmitigated, unabated by the fear of God, and unassuaged by any kindlier feeling or appliance, sin consummated, sin left to itself. Leave a man to himself, and he needs no other hell. But there is hope for this brand. It is "plucked out of the fire." Was it not grace, sovereign grace that rescued it? What is there in a brand that God should expect anything from it in return? Yet it is taken out of the fire that it might be transformed into a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. What a blessed change passes on the sinner whom God delivers! (*Hugh Stowell, M.A.*) A rescued brand.—Here Satan is presented to our view as the accuser of the brethren. He does his work in the court of conscience; at the bar of public opinion; and before the Divine Judge. Here Satan accused Joshua to one who was his Advocate as well as his Judge. Christ rebukes Satan; alleges God's election; and points to Joshua as a trophy of power, guided by sovereign mercy. I. A VIVID AND IMPRESSIVE DESCRIPTION OF JOSHUA'S ORIGINAL CHARACTER AS A SINNER. "A brand." A piece of wood which has been purposely prepared for burning. A sinner, as a brand, is one in every way fitted for destruction. The wicked have a suitableness to the place and the experience assigned to them by God. There is an adaptation of desert, and of character. Their experience results from their character. They have in themselves the causes of misery—a deranged system. They war with everything, and therefore are warred against by everything. II. AN ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION, UNDER LAW, AND IN ACTUAL EXPERIENCE, IN WHICH JOSHUA HAD BEEN. "In the fire." 1. The brand is one plucked out of the fire, then it must have been in it. 2. By fire, understand the destruction and misery which are the fruit of sin. 3. The sinner is already under condemnation; spiritually dead; he feels the elements of misery in his breast. He feels the oppressiveness of the thought of God. He draws pain from without. He already suffers as a sinner. III. A DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER WHICH JOSHUA NOW SUSTAINED. "A brand plucked out of the fire." Such a brand has on it the marks of burning. The believer retains marks of his once lost condition. In his conscience, which still accuses. In his heart, where are the remains of spiritual derangement and death: In his body, which is mortally affected. In his moral character, which is disfigured. In his very righteousness, which is imputed. In his life, which is derived. Brands plucked from the burning shall be the eternal character of believers. IV. THE AGENCY THROUGH WHICH JOSHUA WAS DELIVERED. It was not by himself. The brand retains the burning flame. Salvation is wholly of God—of grace: in its origin; its purchaser; its application. Man takes offence at this, being self-righteous. The believer rejoices in this. God has thus the glory of salvation. V. THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD RESCUED JOSHUA. He plucked him out of the fire. Indicative of haste—we thus rescue a precious manuscript, accidentally thrown into the fire. God is in haste, for man's guilt is increasing; his depravity is deepening; he is descending with time's flight; his fate is awful! (*James Stewart.*) A brand plucked out of the fire:—Satan is represented in the context as an accuser of his brethren. He brings serious charges against Joshua, the high priest. He never committed a greater folly. The Lord never fails to come to the defence of the redeemed. The Lord represents Joshua as a trophy of sovereign grace. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" I. IF THIS FIGURE MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT UNSAVED SINNERS ARE IN THE FIRE. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" We are accustomed to think of hell as something in the future. There is a sense in which this is true, but it is not all the truth. It is not at death that bad men enter into hell; they are there already. II. IF THIS IMAGERY MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT UNSAVED SINNERS HAVE A NATURAL AFFINITY FOR THE FLAME THAT CONSUMES THEM. A brand is a piece of wood that readily catches fire. The sinner is meet for destruction. See how eagerly men yield themselves to the sins which consume them. III. IF THIS IMAGERY MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT RESCUE FROM THE DEVOURING ELEMENT IS ONLY POSSIBLE BY DIVINE INTERPOSITION—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" A brand in the fire will remain there until it is utterly consumed unless it is taken out. Salvation is a Divine act,

"By grace are ye saved." IV. IF THIS IMAGERY MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT SAVED SINNERS RETAIN THE MARKS OF THE BURNING. Forgiven, saved, but scarred. Even in heaven there will be evidences of the flame. V. IF THIS IMAGERY MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT DELAY IN THE MATTER OF RESCUE IS INFINITELY PERILOUS. Plucked out of the fire. There is no estimating the possibility of sin. There is enough latent fire in any unregenerate heart to effect its ruin. The flame which is smouldering in the concealed places of human life may be even more ominous than that which blazes forth under the open heavens. These facts should have a twofold influence. 1. They should serve to awaken alarm in the unsaved, and arouse the saved to the intensest solicitude and zeal for their rescue. The human brand is not a dead piece of wood. He has reason, judgment, sensibility, will. He needs to be made to realise his peril. 2. There is no time for dallying. The service is urgent. (*B. D. Thomas.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Take away the filthy garments from him.**—*Removal of guilt*:—Zechariah was shown the state and condition of God's Church in his day, and the change wrought upon that Church; a change that must be wrought on all that belong to the Lord God Almighty, and which is wrought by Divine power and grace alone. Here is a scenic representation of Gospel truth. "Joshua was clothed in filthy garments." Why did he so appear, and in such a presence? That his condition, and yours, and mine, in the presence of a Holy God, may be likened to filthy, polluted, unclean, defiled garments. "Satan stood at his right hand to resist him." This alludes to the prevailing custom of placing an accused person before a bar of justice, and bringing his accuser upon his right hand to prefer the charge against him. Satan is the "accuser of the brethren." Having rebuked Satan, our Advocate addresses Himself to them that stood by. "Take away the filthy garments from him." This is the Old Testament description of the removal of guilt, the manifestation of salvation by grace. We must in this manner go to God in our filthy garments. Wait not to try to change your heart, as you would your raiment. Prayer is necessary, but prayer is no qualification; repentance is necessary, but repentance does not qualify for God's mercy. Come, poor self-condemned sinner, just as you are. The filthy garment is removed from every one whose heart is moved by God's grace, though he know it not. What is represented by the change of raiment? The clothing with righteousness of our blessed Redeemer. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is a robe long enough to cover the sinner completely, it is as broad as the law of God; those that are enrobed in it need fear no stormy blast, either through their journey, or at their journey's end. . . . There is nothing to be compared in importance, to us all, with the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the full, perfect, and complete Saviour of our souls. (*A. Hewlett, M.A.*) **So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments.**—*The mitre of priesthood*:—This book was written in the midst of a process of reconstruction. The people, or at least a handful of the people of Israel, had come back from Babylon to a ruined city, but by the guidance and leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and those prophets of God, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the little handful or remnant of the people commenced to reconstruct their state, their city, and temple. It was of little use to build the temple while the priesthood was so degraded as Malachi tells us it was. The priests offered upon the altar of God contemptible sacrifices—they were content to bring to it the halt, the lame, the blind, such as they would not bring to their governor. They looked upon the whole service they rendered as hardly worth their care and energy, so ill were they repaid. You will notice at the end of the chapter we read that Joshua and his fellows were men for a sign, that is, they were types of the spiritual priesthood of the present time. We may not exercise our priestly office any more than we exercise our royal prerogative; yet in God's sight we have a spiritual faculty of standing between God and man, speaking to God for man and to man for God. Is it not a fact that there are men and women here who are priests, but they need to be reconstructed, who are called to exercise this spiritual prerogative, but they have not a fair mitre upon their head? "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." I. We consider THE PERSONS THUS ADORNED, lest any here might suppose that they could not claim the fair mitre. You will see it is Joshua who receives the fair mitre, the person who at first stands before us clothed with filthy garments. Filthy garments always indicate some slur upon the character, some stain on the white robe of the dress of the soul. It may be that you are sensible

that your robe is soiled, and as you come to the searching light of God's angel—the angel of God's presence—you are more than ever conscious of the wrinkles in your white robe. When you first came to the Cross of Christ you washed your robes and made them white in His blood, but you have failed to keep them so. The father sits down at the family altar, takes the old Bible and turns over its leaves, but all the time that he essays to act as priest of the family he is conscious that during the past twenty-four hours he has soiled his garments by impure thoughts or wrong imaginations. It may be that some young man here, who, indeed, is a true child of God, has allowed the sin of foul impurity, of unclean desire, to stain his robes; some housewife here has yielded to that to-day which soils her garments. But even you, in your filthy garment, may yet by the grace of God receive the fillet, the mitre. You will notice not only was Joshua clothed with these filthy garments, but he was the object of Satan's accusation; Satan stood beside and indicated his disgrace. Do you not suppose the great accuser still does this? When just now you bowed in prayer and your thoughts were wandering to your pleasure or business, Satan saw it and said, "Christ, do You notice there is not one in all those people truly in prayer?" And when your minister speaks and his motives are vanity or pride, again the evil spirit stands to accuse us; he says to Christ, "Here is Thy chosen servant, but it would be better for me to cast him out of Thy hand and find another to do Thy work better." And so there is never a negligence, a sin, or a fault but what Satan catches it and casts it upon Christ, because he can wound Christ best by showing up our filth and sin. You will notice also that Joshua was like a charred brand: you know how a piece of wood put in the fire will soon blacken and be consumed; a precious letter, a bank-note, or cheque, by mistake has been taken by your servant to your waste-paper basket and put into the furnace, and when taken out it is so blackened, yellow, or charred, as to be almost undecipherable; and I suppose I am speaking to plenty of men here who have the marks of fire upon them. But though charred as you are, He will pluck you from the burning, and is prepared this very night to adorn your brow with this fillet, this mitre of His Holy Spirit which will equip you to exercise your power as a priest of God. II. I ought to mark THE PREPARATORY PROCESS, because one has often found, in talking to people about the blessed Holy Spirit, that there has not been any deep preparatory previous work, and it is quite impossible for you to receive the appointing of the Holy Ghost unless you have submitted yourself to the previous work of that same Spirit. Whilst the Holy Spirit of Pentecost is more especially the Spirit of power, He is also the Spirit of cleansing, purification, and sanctification. There is a previous process, but with God that process need not take long. This process is indicated in the vision thus: "He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." And we are told at the close of the chapter that God can put away the iniquity of man in a single day. Imagine all the sin rising over England, Scotland, and Wales to-day; this little island surrounded by our four seas; imagine and remember God says He can put away the sin of a land in one day, and that day was when Jesus died. If the Lord during His three hours' crucifixion was able to expiate and put away the sin of the world, how long will it take for Him to expiate the sin which is already expiated? Will you allow Him now, the great High Priest, to put away your filthy garments, to cause your guilt to leave you, and to give you instead the sense of God's forgiveness? That is not all. The "garment," if you compare it with the epistles especially, stands more for habit of life, and when Paul talks about garments he means divesting the life of certain evil habits which have too long clung to it. The word "habit" is used for an article of ladies' dress, and the habit is the dress of the soul that clings to it, and there must come a moment in a man's life when he stands before the angel of God, when certain habits which he once permitted are shown to be altogether unworthy of his Christian character, and he puts off the works of the flesh. You see things in a different light. I feel that the man who does not drop habit after habit, indulgence after indulgence, is not growing; just as a tree may tell us its age by the rings of wood, so we can mark the growth of a man by what he has dropped. I am not here to tell you what to give up, it is not my purpose to add commandments to the decalogue, but to say that a man's growth is determined by what he is prepared to renounce. He does not think it hard to renounce them, because he is receiving so much more; he drops the less to take the better. Just as when we come to the moment of death I do not suppose we shall think

about dying, because the radiant light of that world beyond will attract us, and reaching out our two hands towards it, before we know we have died, we shall have passed into heaven. So now we are attracted always by the heavenly vision. O Christ, cause these habits, associations, indulgences, which have been rotting our heart and holding us back, cause these things to pass. Then there is a change of raiment: you must put on the Lord Jesus; make no provision for the flesh, but put on the perfect character of Jesus Christ. This is the deep truth that we do not all remember, I think; we are more anxious for the negative than the positive; more taken up with what we give up than with what we take on. You see here is Joshua: when I began to speak, he stood there clothed with soiled garments, and Satan stands beside him; but the scene is altered now, the filthy garments have been dropped. He has been bathed in water, and he is clothed with fair and beautiful robes, the emblem of some soul here. Satan has vanished, there is no further record of his accusing Joshua, because Christ had rebuked him; and when Christ throws the ægis of His protection round a soul, then Satan sneaks away. Christ has said, "I have chosen this man, plucked him as a brand from the fire, and am not likely to cast him back. *Avaunt.*" And ashamed and disappointed he sneaks away. And so the soul that stood ashamed and downcast, knowing every sneer of the devil was true, now looks into the face of the blessed Angel—Christ—and says, "O Advocate, Priest of God, O most blessed lover of my soul, what can I render to Thee for Thine advocacy and intercession, by virtue of which the very tempter is vanquished?"

III. Still, though Satan is gone, Joshua wants the crown of the priesthood, the insignia, **THE MITRE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.** The mitre, you know, as worn by the bishop, is golden. It is an emblem of the ancient idea of the cloven tongues of fire, but is a faint rendering of the Greek, for on the day of Pentecost the fire came as a glow of light or fire into the room, and then there was distributed a flame upon each meekly bowed head. But still the mitre is the emblem of the ancient thought. The mitre, fillet, or turban, if you compare this with Leviticus and Numbers, and these again with the epistles, stands without doubt for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not for the bishop alone, but for every one of us. You cannot do priestly work until you have got it; you cannot plead with God as intercessor, and cannot speak to men with power until you have got your fair mitre. You may have your clean robe, but if you have no mitre, you are unable to act as priest. The Lord Jesus for thirty years had a stainless robe of purity and beauty, and as He walked on the hills round Nazareth in intercourse with His Father, there was in Him neither spot nor blemish; yet I think I shall be within the confines of preaching the Word of God when I say that in a sense our Lord had not the fair mitre upon His head until He went down into the Jordan and was baptized, thus identifying Himself with man; then having fulfilled all righteousness, as He came up out of the water, beneath that blue sky, the Spirit of God, in the fitting emblem of a dove's wing, came upon Him, and the fair mitre abode upon His head. He went forth into Galilee and said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." So when He left the Church of God He blessed them and said in effect, "Peter, John, and the rest of you, tarry in Jerusalem until you get your fair mitre"; and though they have been cleansed with fellowship with Him, and by His most precious blood, they waited together in the upper room, until that mystic sign to which I have alluded—the fair mitre—was put upon the head of one hundred and twenty, and upon many since then. Many a soul I have had to do with has spent long years with white robes, but without the fair mitre. You must have the anointing power of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost if you are to do the Church's work in the world. It is noticeable that Zechariah said, "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." Zechariah, you have no right to say that—an angel should do it; you are a prophet, and Joshua is a priest, and there used to be antagonism between the prophets and the priesthood; but Zechariah said, "Let them put a fair mitre upon his head," and they did. The prophet and priest are united by the Holy Ghost. How can you have it? Not by agonising, not by wrestling and struggling, but by first receiving, because Jesus Christ, the angel of Jehovah, waits to give it. There is nothing He wants more to give you than this. You ask me how you know when you have got it? I will tell you. You receive it by faith; you received forgiveness without emotion; you must not gauge your reception by emotion, or you will be disappointed: emotion must not be trusted. You receive it by faith; you may receive it now, at any moment. The indication you have

got it is not emotion : it is two things. First, a new sense of the sweetness of the presence of Jesus ; for the Holy Spirit never reveals Himself, but always reveals Christ. Secondly, a quiet power over other men. These are "men for a sign," and I close with one most precious promise : "Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, if thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge"—I give this as a parting message,—"then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places of access among these that stand by." This is not got by wrestling, but by trusting ; so will you be brought within the inner circle of Christ's presence. "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 6, 7. The Angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua.—*A charge to young ministers*.—I. **WHAT THE GREAT HEAD OF THE CHURCH REQUIRES OF YOU.** 1. **Personal piety.** "Walk in My ways." This phrase denotes the whole of practical and experimental godliness. There can be no true piety without a previous scriptural conversion, a moral, universal, spiritual change ; a change of the principles, of the mind, of the affections, of the heart, of the conduct, and of the life, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and obtained by faith in Christ Jesus. Every unconverted minister is an intruder into the sacred office. The dignity of your office does not discharge you from all the obligations to personal holiness ; but it binds those obligations upon you with superadded weight and force. Then be men of integrity. Cultivate a devotional spirit. Be clothed with humility. Be grave and serious. Be cheerful, but take care that cheerfulness does not degenerate into levity. The piety of some ministers has serious blemishes, against which you will do well to guard yourselves. Such as envy, which is the vice of little minds. Or a disposition to retail slanders. In order to maintain your personal piety it will be necessary for you every day to renew your acts of dedication to God. 2. **A faithful discharge of your ministerial and pastoral functions.** Your office may be called "the charge of the Lord," because you received it from Him, and are accountable to Him for the discharge of its functions. In order to keep this charge, you should well understand its nature. It is Christian theology which you have to teach to mankind ; and you cannot teach it to others unless you well understand it yourselves. It is the well-informed, well-instructed divine who alone can adorn the sacred profession and edify the Church of Jesus Christ. Avoid a controversial style of preaching, for that is generally unprofitable, and unpopular too. You should be faithful, zealous, and laborious preachers, ever ready to declare "the whole counsel of God." 3. In this charge is implied the faithful performance of pastoral duties. The exercise of a pure discipline over the societies (Churches) entrusted to your care. A Church without discipline is like a garden without a fence. The due administration of pastoral advice and counsel is another of our duties. II. **THE IMPORT OF THOSE PROMISES MADE TO YOU.** Dignity and authority in the Church of God is here promised to faithful ministers. Continuance in office is another promise. And it is further promised that they shall at length be translated to nobler stations in the heavenly world, where they shall become companions of angels. Allow me to charge you then to give attention to all these things. I have not exhorted you to pursue unattainable objects ; they are all well within your reach. Redeem the time. And "be thou faithful unto death." (*Edward Grindrod.*) **God's promise to Joshua**.—The design of God's promises is to quicken us to diligence in the work which He hath given us to do. I. **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF JOSHUA** ; or how he was to behave. He was to "walk in God's ways, and keep His charge" ; which signifies a general care to be religious himself, and a faithful performance of the duties of his particular station. II. **WHAT IS PROMISED TO JOSHUA IN CONSEQUENCE OF SO DOING.** 1. That he should be continued in his office. 2. At length he should be preferred to a nobler station, in which he should be the companion of angels. It does not mean that angels should guard and preserve him in all his goings and undertakings. The most natural and easy sense of the words is, that they refer to a future state, and mean that Joshua should at length be joined to the angels in heaven. Most of the Jewish writers paraphrase thus, "I will raise thee from the dead, and place thee among the seraphims." This is a most delightful and instructive idea of the heavenly world—walking among the angels. Heaven is the stated abode of these glorious, wise, and happy spirits, who are superior to men ; therefore they are called "the angels of God in heaven." God intends that all His faithful servants on earth should at length dwell and walk with them. Reflect what an honour

and happiness this will be. Consider what excellent beings they are in themselves. And consider them as those who have been ministers of God to the world, the Church, and ourselves. Application—(1) Reflect, for our caution, on the counterpart of this, or the future state of those who forsake the ways of God. (2) Let us be excited to the duties required in the text, by the gracious promise contained in it. (*Job Orton.*) *Cleansing, obedience, service*.—Let the Christian notice well God's order in these verses. It is cleansing first, then obedience, next service. All through the Bible the cleansing is with a view to the other two; and if these two fail to be seen in the Christian's character he will lose the first, for all practical purposes. A cleansed soul will be a holy soul. A cleansed soul will be an obedient one, and will love to serve. Then, Christian, "work out your own salvation" by putting no hindrance in the way of "God working within you both to will and do." Live upon Christ, and let nothing come between your continued eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. This is living upon Christ; and if your soul lacks it your obedience and your service will cease. The measure of blessing to another's soul will be the measure of Christ living in your own; and the measure of Christ living in you will be the measure of your love to Him, and your own personal assurance of His love to you. You must translate the generally acknowledged fact of His love into a living fact in your own experience. And remember that the measure in which you think about Christ, and in which your thoughts about Him have power over your personal character and your daily life, is the measure of your religion. This, and no more than this, is the extent to which you are a Christian. This, and no more than this, is the extent to which there will be any reality, any power, any real blessing in your service to others, or anything pleasing to God in your obedience. May God make you real—stamp Divine reality on everything within you, and in all your outward life! (*F. Whitfield, M.A.*) *A place of access*.—"I will give thee a place of access." We owe this beautiful promise to the Revised Version (Zech. iii. 7), for in the Authorised Version the text has quite a meaningless rendering. "I will give thee place to walk among these that stand by." The immediate reference of the promise is, of course, to Joshua, the high priest. It was his privilege and his duty, clothed in white linen, to enter the most holy place once a year, there to make atonement for the sins of the people. Instead, however, of this great office being fulfilled, the prophet sees Joshua clothed in filthy garments—the type of his own sins and of those people of his "standing,"—with Satan at his right hand to be his "adversary." It appeared impossible that such a high priest, or such a nation, should ever be permitted to draw near the living God. Then comes the symbolic action of the prophetic vision. The filthy garments are taken away by command of God, from Joshua, and are replaced by "rich apparel," the mitre of high priestly office is set on his head, and the promise is made—made both to him and to his people—"I will give thee a place of access." In spite of Israel's unworthiness and sin, God Himself would permit His people to draw near to Him. Such were the original scope and meaning of these words. "I will give thee a place of access." How little we realise the great privilege of this great promise! To say that we can draw near to God is only to utter one of the commonest of all truisms; but familiar as the truth may be to us, let us never forget that there was a time when it would have been regarded as the strangest and most incredible of all truths. A Jew was never permitted in his own person to come near to God; he had to approach the Most High from a distance, and even the high priest himself was only allowed the privilege of "a place of access" once in each year. Such were the awful holiness and the ineffable majesty of the Most High, and such the terrible sin and guilt of man, that no human soul dared to draw near the consuming fire. God was a God "far off" and not "nigh" to a Jew. There was no "place of access" opened for all the world. We do not wonder, therefore, at the exaltation and rapture with which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells on what Christ had done, in opening a "new and living way" to God, even into the holy place, by His blood, and on the fact that His sacrifice for sin makes it now possible for the sinful and guilty with "boldness to enter into the Holiest." It was the fulfilment of the promise of the text, "I will give thee a place of access." And this is the astonishing privilege of every child of man to-day. Howsoever unworthy and sinful he may be, still through the blood of Jesus, he may freely draw near to God. He may stand in the presence of the Eternal. He may speak face to face with God, and hear God speak to him. "In Christ Jesus," to use St. Paul's words, "we that once were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (*G. W. Barrett.*)

Ver. 7. I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by.—*The right of entry*.—The prophet has just been describing a vision of judgment in which the high priest, as representative of the nation, stood before the angel of the Lord as an unclean person. He is cleansed, and clothed, and a fair priestly garment, with "Holiness to the Lord" written on the front of it, put upon him. And then follow a series of promises, of which the climax is the one that I have read. "I will give thee a place of access," says the Revised Version, instead of "places to walk"; "I will give thee a place of access among those that stand by"; the attendant angels are dimly seen surrounding their Lord. And so the promise of my text is that of free approach to God, of a life that is like that of the angels that stand before His face. So, then, the words suggest to us—

I. WHAT A CHRISTIAN LIFE MAY BE. There are two images blended together in the great words of my text: the one is that of a king's court, the other is that of a temple. With regard to the former, it is a privilege given to the highest nobles of a kingdom—or it was in old days—to have the right of *entrée*, at all moments and in all circumstances, to the monarch. With regard to the latter the prerogative of the high priest, who is the recipient of this promise as to access to the Temple, was a very restricted one. Once a year, with the blood that prevented his annihilation by the brightness of the Presence into which he ventured, he passed within the veil, and stood before that mysterious Light that coruscated in the darkness of the Holy of Holies. But this High Priest is promised an access on all days and at all times; and that He may stand there, beside and like the seraphim. This Priest passes within the veil when He will. Or, to put away the two metaphors, and to come to the reality far greater than either of them, we can, whensoever we please, pass into the Presence before which the splendours of an earthly monarch's court shrink into vulgarity, and attain to a real reception of the light that irradiates the true Holy Place, before which that which shone in the earthly shrine dwindles and darkens into a shadow. Our lives may on the outside thus be largely amongst the things seen and temporal, and yet all the while penetrating through these, and laying hold with their true roots on the Eternal. Our Master is the great Example of this, of whom it is said, not only in reference to His mysterious and unique union of nature with the Father in His Divinity, but in reference to the humanity which He had in common with us all, yet without sin, that the Son of Man came down from heaven, and even in the act of coming, and when He had come was yet the Son of Man which is in heaven. Such a conversation in heaven, and such association with the bands of the blessed, is possible even for a life upon earth. II. Let us consider this promise as a PATTERN FOR US OF WHAT CHRISTIAN LIFE SHOULD BE, and, alas! so seldom is. There is no greater sin than living beneath the possibilities of our lives, in any region, whether religious or other it matters not. Sin is not only going contrary to the known law of God, but also a falling beneath a Divine ideal which is capable of realisation. And in regard to our Christian life, if God has flung open His temple-gates and said to us, "Come in, My child, and dwell in the secret-place of the Most High, and abide there under the shadow of the Almighty, finding protection and communion and companionship in My worship," there can be nothing more insulting to Him, and nothing more fatally indicative of the alienation of our hearts from Him, than that we should refuse to obey the merciful invitation. What should we say of a son or a daughter, living in the same city with their parents, who never crossed the threshold of the father's house, but that they had lost the spirit of the child, and that if there was no desire to be near there could be no love! So, if we will ask ourselves: "How often do I use this possibility of communion with God, which might irradiate all my daily life?" III. Again, my text suggests to us what EVERY CHRISTIAN LIFE WILL HEREAFTER PERFECTLY BE. Some commentators take the words of my text to refer only to the communion of saints from the earth, with the glorified angels, in and after the resurrection. That is a poor interpretation, for heaven is here to-day. All that here has been imperfect, fragmentary, occasional, interrupted, and marred in our communion with God, shall one day be complete. And then, oh! then, who can tell what undreamed of depths and sweetnesses of renewed communion and of intercourse begun, for the first time then, between "those that stand by," and have stood there for ages, will then be realised?

IV. Lastly, notice, not from my text, but from its context, HOW ANY LIFE MAY BECOME THUS PRIVILEGED. The promise is preceded by a condition: "If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then . . . I will

give thee access among those that stand by." If we are keeping His commandments, then, and only then, shall we have access with free hearts into His presence. But to lay down that condition seems the same thing as slamming the door in every man's face. But let us remember what went before my text, the experience of the Priest to whom it was spoken in the vision. His filthy garments were stripped off him, and the pure white robes worn on the great Day of Atonement, the sacerdotal dress, was put upon him. It is the *cleansed man* that has access among "those that stand by." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 8-10. They are men wondered at.—*Christians a wonder* :—Joshua and his fellow-worshippers were wondered at, both by the idolatrous Chaldeans and the unbelieving Jews, for their faith in the Divine predictions during the period of their captivity; that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, the temple-worship restored, and that they should return again to their own land. Good men are not less an object of wonder now than they were then. There is something in their principles and pursuits which men in general cannot easily understand, and they know not to what cause it should be ascribed. 1. Ministers of the Gospel are often a wonder both to themselves and others. It is wonderful that God should condescend to employ weak and sinful creatures in so sacred a work as publishing articles of peace between heaven and earth. Infinite wisdom saw fit to lodge this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us. Considering likewise the mean opinion which good men entertain of themselves, the treatment they are likely to meet with, the difficulties and trials to which they will necessarily be exposed, it is not a little remarkable that they should be induced to engage in the work of the ministry. Yet it is wonderful how such are carried through their work, and enabled to persevere, notwithstanding all the discouragements they meet with, from within and from without. The success that at any time attends the ministry may very properly be regarded as matter of astonishment. 2. The same sort of singularity attaches to all real Christians who walk in newness of life, and exemplify the genuine spirit of the Gospel. (1) They are a wonder unto angels. They are struck with amazement at the love of God, manifested to such sinful and unworthy creatures. (2) They are a wonder unto devils, who cannot but be surprised to see the spiritual temple, which is to endure throughout eternal ages, rising out of the ruins of the Fall. The fallen spirits wonder to see all their plots frustrated and their evil designs overruled for the Divine glory. (3) Real Christians are a wonder to themselves. What reason can be rendered for such distinguishing grace and love? The conversion and salvation of a sinner is a more surprising work than the creation of a world. (4) They are a wonder to one another. (5) They are a wonder to the world. Nor is it strange that it should be so, since they are followers of Him whose kingdom is not of this world. 3. There is something in the very nature of religion that is mysterious and strange. (1) The manner in which grace is implanted in the soul is so. The work of the Spirit upon the heart is one of the deep things of God. (2) The way in which grace operates is equally wonderful. The Christian's life is a hidden one. (3) The fruits which grace produces in the life of a true believer are not less remarkable. Those who walk by sight cannot understand how others walk by faith. How then can the Christian be ashamed of his high calling, even though it should make him a gazing stock to angels and to men? Thou art now a wonder to the world, believer, but what a wonder wilt thou be in that solemn and decisive day, when Christ will come "to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe." (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) **My servant the Branch.**—*The world's wants and God's provisions* :—I. The world wants a **MORAL HELPER**, and in the Gospel one is provided. Morally, man is enslaved, diseased, exiled, lost to the great uses and purposes of his being. God has provided a great Helper, here called His "servant the Branch." In Isaiah we have these words, "Behold My servant whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." He is the "Branch," God is the Root, and all holy souls are branches, deriving their life, beauty, and fruitfulness from Him; but Christ is the "Branch," the oldest Branch, the largest Branch, the strongest Branch, the most fruitful Branch, &c. He is the Branch on which there hang clusters of perennial fruits for the "healing of the nations." II. The world wants **DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP**, and in the Gospel it is provided. "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes." What is here meant by the "stone"? Not the foundation-stone of the temple, which was now being rebuilt, for that had been laid long

before. "The stone," says Keil, "is the symbol of the kingdom of God, and is laid by Jehovah before Joshua, by God's transferring to him the regeneration of His house and the keeping of His courts (before lip-hire in a spiritual sense, as in 1 Kings ix. 6, for example). The seven eyes which watch with protecting care over this stone are not a figurative representation of the all-embracing providence of God; but, in harmony with the seven eyes of the Lamb which are the seven Spirits of God (Rev. v. 6), and with the seven eyes of Jehovah (Zech. iv. 10), they are the sevenfold radiation of the Spirit of Jehovah (after Isa. xi. 2), which show themselves in vigorous action upon this stone, to prepare it for its destination." Perhaps the meaning is, that upon the kingdom of Christ, here symbolised by the stone, God's eyes are fixed (engraven) with deep and settled interest. "The eye is the natural hieroglyphic for knowledge; and 'seven' as every reader of the Bible is aware, is the number used to denote completeness, perfection. Seven eyes denote the perfection of observant knowledge; and as the 'eyes of Jehovah' mean Jehovah's observation and knowledge, His 'seven eyes' express the perfection of both—omniscient observation." Two thoughts are suggested—I. God has a special interest in Christ and His followers. His eyes are on the "stone," there in all their completeness, seven. He has a general interest in the universe, but a special interest here. 2. God has a settled interest in Christ and His followers. The eyes are said to be engraven on the stone, not written in mere ink. III. The world wants MORAL PURIFICATION. In the Gospel it is provided. The iniquity of the land of the Jews was multiform, aggravated, immeasurable; but in one day provision should be made for its removal; the day on which Christ died upon the Cross. "Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." IV. The world wants SPIRITUAL REPOSE. In the Gospel that is provided. Mr. Henry says, "When iniquity is taken away—1. We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification; and 2. We repose in a sweet tranquillity, and are quiet from the fear of evil." (*Homilist.*) For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua.—The stone before Joshua:—That stone was Christ. Take the clauses of the verse in succession. 1. Behold the stone which I have laid before Joshua. "He that built all things is God." He built the temple of nature. More august and glorious far is the temple spoken of here. Its foundation-stone was laid by God Himself in Zion. He laid it when the great Antitype Himself came, and gave His life a ransom for many. He laid it anew, in the Zion above, when Christ was exalted on His mediatorial and priestly throne, a name given Him that is above every name. He shall finally consecrate and glorify it as the "head-stone of the corner," on the great day, in presence of the Church triumphant. 2. "Upon one stone shall be seven eyes." Observe, it is "one stone." One Mediator. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." See that one stone laid by the Divine Builder! The sun needs no glittering taper to add to its light; the ocean needs no tiny drop to add to its volume. Let the giant deed of Christ's doing and dying stand forth in all its peerless, solitary grandeur. What mean the seven eyes? Seven was a sacred number with the Jews, probably from being first associated with the seven days of Creation. It would seem to denote—(1) Christ's fulness or perfection. How applicable to Him "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "Out of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." (2) The "seven eyes" point to Christ's providential government of the Church and the world. What a blessed truth is this universal, constant sovereignty of Jesus! The roll in which are inscribed the world's destinies is in His hands. More comforting still is it to think of Christ's individual providence, the care He takes of each separate member of His Church. This stone, with its seven eyes, has an eye for each. But the words "seven eyes" may admit of the rendering "seven fountains." The "eye," among Orientals, is often the metaphor for the well-spring. The Arabs call the fountain to this day, the "eye of the desert." Render then, "Upon one stone shall be seven fountains." This one stone, the Rock of Ages, was smitten by the rod of justice, and lo! seven fountain-streams flow from its cleft side. Fountains of pardon, righteousness, peace, sanctification, comfort, grace here, life and glory hereafter. All the fountains from one source. 3. "I will engrave the engraving thereof." Carvings on stone were frequent in ancient times. In Nineveh, Babylon, Egypt, it was the old method of inscribing a nation's annals. These "stone libraries" are dug up fresh as they were chiselled and entombed many thousand years ago. Once engraven on the heart of love, you are on His heart for ever. An alternative rendering of this metaphor is, "I will open the openings thereof." "I," says God, "will

unlock the fountains in that sealed stone, that the waters of salvation may gush forth." He opens the fountains every time His glorious Gospel is proclaimed. 4. "And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This doubtless points onwards to the day of days. In the Mosaic and ceremonial dispensation of the Jews, iniquity was typically removed. But all was a shadow, till the true Antitypical Surety and Scapegoat Himself came to remove iniquity "in one day," by having the sins of His people laid on His guiltless head. It was a momentous "one day," the day waited for by all time. The stone was smitten, the fountain was unsealed. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Jesus Christ, the stone whereon are seven eyes*.—The text is highly figurative language. I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS "STONE." Joshua may be the representative of the whole priesthood, or of the Church at large. We take the latter idea. Therefore the stone is laid before Joshua,—or the Church of God. 1. The stone. By which I understand Christ. A precious stone. Precious to the Father, to angels, to the fully redeemed, and to us. A precious stone, because God has chosen it as the foundation of His Church. It is a corner-stone. He is a foundation-stone. He is a tried stone. 2. The situation of the stone. It is not a stone of human production. It was laid in God's everlasting love. In the Old Testament rites and types and shadows. In prophecy. It is to be laid before the Church even now. 3. The Builder. It is the "stone that I have laid." God in Trinity is the builder. The Father is the builder of the Church designedly. The Son is the builder of the Church really. The Spirit is the builder of the Church efficiently. II. THE EYES FIXED UPON THIS "STONE." "Seven eyes." Some refer this to the operations of the Spirit of God. Prefer to take it as the eyes of all, friend and foe, that are placed upon our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. The eye of the Father is upon this stone: in eternal council, when the everlasting stipulations for the salvation of the Church were entered into. 2. The eye of the Spirit was upon Him. The Spirit of God taketh the things of Christ and revealeth them unto the soul. 3. The eyes of angels are fixed on Christ. 4. The eyes of all the saints in heaven are fixed on Christ. 5. So are the eyes of the Church on earth. 6. And the eyes of the wicked, on earth and in hell. III. THE ENGRAVING OF THIS STONE. The names of the Lord's people are said to be written on stones, or in books. Our names are written on the palms of Christ's hands, denoting our security. Upon His shoulders, to denote the support that we receive from Him. On His heart, explanatory of His love. IV. THE REMOVAL OF THE CHURCH'S SIN. By God the Father, through the Mediator. God has imputed all our sins to Jesus Christ, and removed them in one day. (*T. Bagnall-Baker, M.A.*) *The corner-stone of the Church*.—Christ is promised as He who is represented by the temple, and who is the ground and corner-stone of His own Church, and the rock on which she is built, bearing all the burden of the fabric, concerning whom is promised that God's infinite providence shall be about Him and His Church, Himself endued with perfect wisdom to see to and care for all His members, and that by the effects and rays of the glory of God shining in Him, He shall draw all eyes to Him, and keep them on Him; as also that He shall be so polished and adorned by God, as shall be marvellous to the world. Doctrine.—1. Christ the Mediator is not only a part of the spiritual building, making up one Christ mystical with all His members, and the eminent and most excellent part of it, but the very foundation of His Church's being, upon whom all the Church and every particular member thereof is and must be built, and without whom they cannot subsist; for, He is "the stone laid before Joshua." 2. As Christ in His office of mediation is a means of the Father's appointment, by Him to derive happiness to the Church, and establish her in it; so whoever despise and reject Him, yet the Father will have Him high and eminent in that building. 3. As Christ hath all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge employed for seeing to the condition, and finding out the way of happiness for His people, in every case and exigency, signified by seven eyes (which is a number of perfection) engraven on that one stone: and as the vigilant providence of God is always intent upon Christ as Mediator, and for His sake upon the welfare of His Church and kingdom as being His chief delight, signified also by seven (or many) eyes fixed over that one stone, so also is Christ, as Mediator, God-man, revealing the Father in Himself, and as the support and upholder of His Church, so glorious and excellent as may draw all to admire Him, and to fix their expectation on Him, as the only choice and refuge of lost sinners, and will do so to all the elect, which is also signified by seven eyes fixed on that one stone, admiring Him, and having all their expectation from Him. 4. The beauty, excellency, and furniture of Christ the Mediator, is Divine and rare, and He is the

ornament, glory and storehouse of all the spiritual building, being, as God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person (Heb. i. 3). His humanity also being adorned with the gifts of the Spirit without measure, and with all Divine perfections in so far as the human nature is capable; withal His sufferings for His people (as so many curious engravings) speak not a little His beauty to those who have interest therein. This is signified by our Lord's engraving the graving of this stone, polishing it as a precious jewel, and adorning it by His art. Two benefits are promised to flow from Christ the Priest to His people; the first whereof is, remission and purging away of sins by the sacrifice upon the Cross, once for all, which needs not to be repeated as the Jewish sacrifices were. This is promised to the whole elect and mystical body of Christ, figured by the Jews and their promised land, beside what peculiar relation it may have to them and their land, that their sins, being taken away by Christ, should not hinder Him to favour them, nor the land for their sake; but should be looked on in due time, not as polluted, nor possessed and overrun by enemies. (1) Remission and removal of sins is the choice mercy of Christ's people, and the rise of other mercies. "I will remove iniquity," is the fruit of Christ's coming to the world, and of His glory as Mediator. (2) Sin is pardoned and removed only by the virtue and merit of Christ's one sacrifice, only once offered, and not to be repeated on any pretext whatever; for, iniquity is removed "in one day." (3) Christ's own peculiar and given people of the Father, are they upon whom the privilege of pardon and sanctification is conferred, and on whose behalf Christ offered up Himself to procure these benefits, for it is the iniquity "of that land" (a type of the elect Church) that is removed. (*George Hutcheson.*) Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts.—*No engraving without wound*:—That is, of the stone, upon which were to be seven eyes, and which intends the Messiah, the foundation laid in Zion. To engrave is to pierce and cut. When He became a Man of Sorrows, when He said, "Reproach hath broken My heart," then was this Scripture fulfilled. As there is no engraving without wounding, so to engrave is to embellish and beautify. And He was made perfect through suffering. The richest display of His graces; the acquirement of the dispensation of the Spirit; the dominion He exercises in our nature; the prerogative of judging the world in righteousness; and the praises He will inhabit through eternal ages—all these resulted from His sufferings. "Because He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, therefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name." To a person unacquainted with the process, the pruning of the tree; the cleaving of the ground with the ploughshare; the operation of the chisel on the stone would look like an effort to injure or destroy. But look at the thing afterwards. Behold the vine adorned with purple clusters. Survey the field, yielding the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear. Examine the carved work, when the sculptor has achieved his design, and fixed it in its proper place! Christians are sometimes perplexed and discouraged because of their trials. They know not what God is doing with them. They fear He is angry, and going to crush and destroy. But they are His workmanship. He is preparing them for their destination in the temple of His grace. These trials are applied to qualify and advance them. They will all perfect that which concerneth them. Howard was taken by the enemy and confined in prison. There he learned the heart of a captive. "It is good for me," says David, "that I have been afflicted." (*William Jay.*)

Ver. 10. *Under the vine and under the fig-tree.—Messiah's times*:—Thus inspiration characterises the reign of the Messiah. It was to be distinguished by three things. 1. *Enjoyment*. The very image is delightful. Vines and fig-trees were much prized in the East. They afforded at once delightful fruit for the taste, and refreshing shade from the heat. Persons therefore regaled themselves under their branches and leaves,—and thus the expression in time came to signify happiness. And blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. Wherever the Gospel came it was received as good news, glad tidings, and it was said of the receivers, that they walked not only in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. 2. *Liberty*. Slaves and captives did not sit under their vines and fig-trees. Nor did proprietors in time of war. They were liable to the surprises of the enemy. Then they disappeared from these loved, but no longer safe, retreats. In Messiah's days "Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell securely." What have His subjects to fear? Their souls shall dwell at ease. They are free

indeed. They are kept by the power of God. 3. Benevolence. "Ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig-tree." There is nothing like selfishness here. They are anxious that others should partake of their privileges. There is no envy here; there is no room for it. Here is enough for all. If we are Christians indeed, our happiness, instead of being impaired by the experience of others, will be increased by it. Let me invite all that come within my reach to that mercy which I have found. (*William Jay.*) *The times of Gospel peace*.—A second benefit is the taking away of all trouble, and the fear of trouble, which sin procures; and the giving of peace, represented by peoples walking abroad, and daring, in the open fields under shades, to invite and call one another to feasts and enjoyment of the fruits of peace; which promise is spiritually performed to all the elect when they are assured that God is at peace with them; and is sometimes outwardly performed to the Church, when it is for her good, beside what Israel may expect when they shall turn to Christ. Doctrine.—1. True and sound peace comes only from Christ, and from the sense of the pardon of sin through His blood, which those who have fled to Christ ought to take as their allowance to rest confidently upon, whatever danger there be, and feed upon as the choicest of dainties and feasts. 2. As outward peace and tranquillity in the visible Church and nation, where it is a great mercy if it be well improved; so it shall not be wanting when it is for her good: for this promise is put in her charter for that also, and left in the hand of her wise and tender Guide, to dispense it as He sees may be for her profit, being the "Lord of Hosts," to make it forthcoming for her when He pleaseth. 3. As it is a token of a blessed and thorough peace, when with outward and foreign enemies God removes intestine dissensions; and as amity among the inhabitants of a nation, especially in the Church, is a blessing and favour in its own kind; so true, spiritual peace ought to be entertained and improved by mutual godly society, and communication of conditions and experiences for common edification. This is signified to us in that peace, whether inward or outward, is described by "calling every man his neighbour," living in amity, and inviting to mutual feasts and banquets. (*George Hutcheson.*) *The stone with seven eyes*.—The prophet Zechariah, for the length of his prophecy, has rather more than a usual number of allusions to Christ. Among these is the one contained in the passage before us. The language is metaphorical, and derived from the arts of architecture and engraving. I. THE STONE WITH SEVEN EYES. It is generally allowed that this refers directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some, however, understand it of Zerubbabel. But if it be allowed to refer to him primarily, yet only as a type of Christ; for it is the same person who is styled "the Branch" in the preceding verse, in chapter vi. 12, and in other places where Christ is undoubtedly intended. 1. There are numerous allusions to Christ under the metaphor of a stone (Exod. xvii. 6; 1 Cor. x. 4; Psal. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42; Eph. ii. 20). 2. Upon this stone were to be seven eyes. Seven appears to have been a sacred number among the Jews, and one denoting perfection. Hence we read of the "seven golden candlesticks"—"the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes"—the "seven Spirits of God"—the "book with seven seals"—the "seven lamps"—the "seven phials"—and here, of the "stone with seven eyes." Eyes are explained by commentators to signify intelligence and wisdom. Eyes of the Lord are to be understood of His omniscience. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings" (Prov. v. 21). "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (chap. xv. 3). "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (Psal. xciv. 9). Now, as seven in the Scriptures denotes perfection, we are doubtless, by the expression in this place, to understand that the attributes or qualities signified by it are infinitely perfect, inasmuch as they are ascribed to God. It is then, at least, an exhibition of one of the attributes of the infinite Jehovah. Let this be borne in mind, for we shall soon see Jesus Christ possessing this attribute. 3. By these eyes "being upon this stone" some suppose that we are to understand the eyes of the Father beholding the Son. But may we not rather suppose that the seven eyes being upon the stone were designed to signify that the perfections represented by them should be imparted to and become identified with it? And may not this be what is intended by the expression, "I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts"? And may we not, then, suppose that this is an exhibition, by a most beautiful figure, of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ? The engraver was "the Lord of hosts." And says John, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace

and truth" (John i. 14). The things engraved on this stone were the infinite perfections of the Godhead. II. **THE WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.** "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." The whole stupendous work of human redemption centres in one single point;—it was effected by one single act, and that act the work of one single day. The one act which secures it is the sacrificial offering of Himself. The day on which it was effected was the day on which Christ suffered, "the just for the unjust." Whatever, therefore, was said by way of promise, whatever was revealed by prophecy, or whatever was exhibited by the rites of the Jewish economy, all pointed to and centred in the death of Christ. The whole scheme of human redemption was consummated by the one offering of Christ upon the Cross! O my soul, what a day of interest was that to the world! We have heard of a day on which a world was involved in the waters of a flood. We have heard of a day on which whole cities were reduced to heaps of smoking ruins. We have heard of a day on which one decisive battle determined the fate of empires; yea, and we have heard of a day on which the tyrannical yoke of foreign usurpation was broken, and the sweet sound of liberty heard throughout this vast republic. But what are all these in comparison of that day when all heaven, in breathless silence, paused and, with an interest commensurate with the importance of the work, beheld the achievement of "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel"? III. **THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOW.** "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree." Here is, then—1. A spirit of general benevolence. This is a legitimate fruit, or one of the effects of the great atonement applied to the heart of man. The first step towards the restoration of society to proper principles of feeling and action is to remove that principle which first disorganised society, and which still promotes enmity and separation between man and man. As love is the ruling principle of the soul, all sordid views and selfish interests are excluded from the heart of the Christian, and he looks abroad upon all mankind with a heart flowing with benevolence. He rejoices in the prosperity of the prosperous, and tenderly sympathises with those who are in adversity. In a word, he has learned to call every man his neighbour. But wherever this principle is found in the heart it cannot remain inactive. Hence—2. A spirit of association. It is not enough for the true Christian that he has peace, order, and happiness within the sanctuary of his own breast, nor yet that he feels a spirit of general benevolence towards all mankind. The language of his heart is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" The principle of which he is possessed, and by which he is actuated, ever prompts him to "every good word and work." Eating together was by the ancients considered a mark of peculiar respect. It was a ceremony used not only as a testimony of mutual friendship, but also for the confirmation of covenants, in the transaction of civil and religious affairs. The place chosen and sanctioned by custom for these purposes was the shade of the vine and of the fig-tree. The fruit of these was much depended upon both for nourishment and comfort. Beneath their shade, therefore, was an appropriate place for the interchange of friendships, and especially for the purpose of devotion. When, therefore, any one invited his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree, it was a testimony of his love, and the expression of a desire that his neighbour might with him partake of all the temporal and spiritual blessings of which he himself was a partaker. But viewing these expressions in their more immediate reference to the effects of the great atonement, they very clearly designate the spirit by which every true Christian is actuated towards mankind. It was this spirit, in all its infinite perfection and fulness, which moved the Father to "give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." It was the same love that moved the Son to "give Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity," and that He might "break down the middle wall of partition" which separated man from God, and man from man; "and in himself of twain to make one new man, so making peace." It is the existence and operation of this spirit, in the hearts of the ministers of Christ, which stimulates them to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"—to invite and entreat sinners to be "reconciled to God." It is the existence and operation of this spirit which leads Christians to unite their efforts and put forth their energies in the cause of man. Improvement—1. That the Christian hath a strong foundation for his faith. In the first part of this subject we have seen that Jesus Christ, by both prophets and apostles, is laid in Zion for a "sure foundation." He therefore, who believes in Him with a

heart unto righteousness, shall not be confounded. 2. We learn from this subject the great privilege of the children of God. Whatever obstacles lay in the way of our salvation, on account of original sin, was "removed in one day" by the death of Christ. 3. Finally, we learn from this subject the duty of every Christian. Was it said that in the day when iniquity should be removed "every" (Christian) "man should call his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree"? This prophecy, then, clearly points out the duty of every lover of Christ. Think not that this duty belongs exclusively to the ministers of the Gospel. (*Noah Levings.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-14. Behold a candlestick all of gold.—*The candelabrum and olive-trees*.—That by the candelabrum was symbolised the Israelitish community, the people of the theocracy, may be regarded as generally conceded. But Israel was itself a symbol and type; it was the visible manifestation of that invisible spiritual community, the Church of the living God, which embraces the faithful of all ages and places. But the light which the Church possesses is not from herself; it is light communicated and sustained by influences from above. Hence in the vision the lamps were supplied with oil, not by human ministration, but through channels and pipes from the olive-trees which stood beside and were over the candelabrum. Oil is the proper symbol of the Holy Spirit's influence. This is the oil by which the Church is sustained, is made to shine, and is enabled to accomplish the work she has to do in the world. Apart from the Divine Spirit the Church is dark and cold and feeble; but through the visitation of the Spirit she is animated and invigorated, becomes luminous and glorious, and is crowned with success as she labours to erect God's temple on earth. They were taught by this vision not to be discouraged, for it was not by human might or power that the work was to be done, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Through His grace the light should be sustained in them; their hands should be strengthened for their work; and ere long they should see the consummation of that which had been so auspiciously begun. God sustains His Church by His grace. But this grace comes to men through certain appointed media. This was symbolised in the vision by the fruit-bearing branches of the olive-trees, and by the conduits and pipes through which the oil was conveyed to the lamps. The branches represented the sacerdotal and civil authorities in Israel. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

Man as a student of the Divine revelation and a doer of Divine work.—I. AS A STUDENT OF THE DIVINE REVELATIONS. "I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold," &c. The ideal Church is all this. The candlestick may, I think, fairly represent the Bible, or God's special revelation to man: that is golden, that is luminous, that is supernaturally supplied with the oil of inspiration. In fact, in the passage the interpreting angel designates this candlestick, not as the Church, but as the "word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel." I make two remarks concerning this revelation—1. It has in it sufficient to excite the inquiry of man as a student. "What are these, my lord?" What wonderful things are in this Bible! 2. It has an Interpreter that can satisfy man as a student. The angel to whom the prophet directed his inquiry promptly answered. The prophet here displays two of the leading attributes of a genuine student of the Divine—(1) Inquisitiveness. He inquires; and because he inquires he receives an answer. The Bible is an unmeaning book to the great mass of mankind, because they do not inquire into its significance. Truth is only got by genuine inquiry. (2) Ingenuousness. The first reply of the interpreting angel to the prophet was, "Knowest thou not what these things mean?" and he said, "No, my lord." At once he confesses his ignorance. The man who develops these two attributes in relation to God's Word has a Divine Interpreter at his side, namely, the Spirit of God, who will lead us into all knowledge. This passage sets man before us—II. AS A DOER OF THE DIVINE WILL. Man has not only to study, but to work; not only to get Divine ideas, but to work them out. The work of the prophet was to convey a message from God to Zerubbabel, and the message he conveyed was a message to work. Man is to be a "Worker together" with God. I offer two remarks concerning man as a worker out of the Divine will. 1. That though his

difficulties may appear great, his resources are infinite. Zerubbabel, in rebuilding the temple, had enormous difficulties. Those difficulties hovered before him as mountains. But great as they were, he was assured that he had resources more than equal to the task. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." 2. That though his efforts may seem feeble, his success will be inevitable. (1) The feebleness of human efforts is here implied. (a) It is common to despise small things. (b) It is foolish to despise small things. All great things were small in their beginnings. (c) It is contemptible to despise small things. Truly great souls never do so. (2) The success of feeble efforts is here guaranteed. The temple should certainly be completed. So it will be with every true work to which a true man puts his hand in the name of God. It will be finished; there will be no failures, success is inevitable. (*Homilist.*)

The golden candlestick :—1. The Church of God is composed of the most precious human material in the world. The man who walks day by day with the "King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible," is of far more value to the world, and is regarded by God as of more worth, than the man of the greatest intellectual attainments. 2. The Church is a light-giver, because its power to give light is sustained from a source outside itself. The life of the Church of God is not self-sustaining. God is the sustaining power by which the Church is kept alive, and only as she is supplied from Him with the holy oil of the Divine Spirit can she give out that light which is the life of men. The most perfect machinery without this life-sustaining force is useless to accomplish the Divine purpose of making the Church a blessing to the world. This mysterious living principle is due to a life at the back of all that is apprehended by the senses, a life which some call "the efficient cause," but which we think it more reasonable to call the "living God." 3. Because of this all-sufficient source of life we are assured that small beginnings in the kingdom of God will issue in great results. There is no such thing in nature as instantaneous result. The blade comes before the ear. The law of the spiritual kingdom is to begin with the small and end with the great. Connection with the source of life ensures growth unto perfection. (*Outlines by a London Minister.*)

The vision of the candlestick :—1. The temple here represents the Church to be enlightened by Christ, she being in herself but dark, and void of light and comfort, till He come and appear in her, and for her, and make her light. 2. The ministry appointed of Christ for the direction, edification, and comfort of the Church are here represented by the candlestick, who should be pure, that they may be precious in His sight as gold, and who ought to shine by purity and holiness of life, and be instrumental in making the Church a shining light in a dark world. 3. The bowl upon the top of the candlestick which immediately receives the oil doth fitly represent Christ as Mediator, the head and storehouse of the Church, to whom is intrusted all fulness of gifts and graces for the Church's behoof. 4. The variety and sufficiency of gifts communicate by Christ, for the good and salvation of the Church is represented by seven lamps, all tending to one common end of burning and shining. 5. The way of deriving grace from Christ to His servants, by ordained and sanctified means, especially by His covenant; our dependence, and the bands of communion betwixt Him and His people, is represented by seven pipes going betwixt the bowl and the lamps. (*George Hutcheson.*)

The candlestick :—In order to make God's meaning clearer the prophet was granted the vision of the candlestick (lampstand), the gist of which was that the wick, though necessary to the light, played a very inconsiderable part in its production. It had no illuminating power; it could only smoke, and char, and smoulder. At the best it could only be a medium between the oil in the cistern and the fire that burnt on its serried edge. Thus Zerubbabel might be weak and flexible as a wick, but none of his deficiencies could hinder him finishing the work to which he had been called, if only his spirit was kindled with the Divine fire, and fed continually by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. The candlestick was evidently fashioned on the model of that in the temple, the shape of which is still preserved to us on the Arch of Titus. According to the R.V., there were seven pipes to each lamp. Nor was this all. On either side of this massive candlestick stood an olive-tree, from the heart of which, by a golden pipe, the oil was continually being poured into the reservoir; so that, even though it might be limited in its containing power, there could be no failure in its ability to meet the incessant demands of the lamps. So far as the Jews were concerned, the meaning of the vision was obvious. They were represented in the candlestick, of which the many lamps and the precious metal of its composi-

tion set forth their perfection and preciousness in the thought of God. Their function was to shed the light of His knowledge on the world, as it lay under the power of darkness; whilst, to aid them in fulfilling this mission, Divine supplies would be forthcoming from a celestial and living source, and brought to them through the golden pipes, of which one represented Joshua the priest, and the other Zerubbabel the prince. These men, therefore, were but mediums for Divine communications. Their sufficiency was not of themselves, but of God. The mission of Israel would be realised, not by them, but by the Spirit of God through them. They might seem altogether helpless and inadequate; but a living fountain of oil was prepared to furnish them with inexhaustible supplies (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 6. Not by might, nor by power.—*The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel.*—Dwell upon the very remarkable interpretation of the vision given by God Himself in the words of the text. **I. THE FALSE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENCE WHICH ARE TO BE REJECTED.** Summed up in the words "might and power," including all earthly means and human instrumentality. We must beware of substituting temporal means and mortal instruments for the work of the Spirit, or the glory of God. Nothing short of the almighty power of God can open the blind eyes or awaken the dead affections of the natural man to see and embrace the Gospel. If we may not trust to the strength of reason, or the force of truth, neither may we to the powers of oratory. The gifts of oratory or eloquence are lovely and excellent, but trusted in, or gloried in, they become snares and stumbling-blocks, drawing away the heart and affections from Christ, and converting our acts of worship into an idolatrous service. Every Christian, too, has a sphere of influence with which to serve and honour God, and to help and strengthen others. But this must not be rested in. Religion must be a personal concern, a deed of contract, a life of communion between the soul and God. And there are those who imagine that they love the truth because they love some of those who profess it. The power of affection on the minds of such persons is almost unbounded. But a religion based on such grounds is not to be trusted. When the Spirit of God is not the Author of the work it cannot stand trial, even in this world; it can never issue in the salvation of the soul. **II. THE ONLY SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY.** The work and efficiency of the Spirit of God. In three things this work is distinguished. 1. In transforming the character. 2. In overcoming the world. 3. In glorifying the grace of God. (*J. M. Wilde, B.A.*) *Force—spiritual and material.*—We have need to study the Christian dynamics. Good arrangements, good instructions, good intentions, are all well; but what can they avail without a sufficient, continuous force? Let us take a lesson from the angel who spoke to the prophet. Zechariah's object was to instruct the Jews on their return from captivity, and to cheer them on in the work of rebuilding the temple. They were not to be appalled by obstacles ever so formidable, for the work was of God, and God was able to remove mountains of difficulty out of the way. No adversary would be able to injure them. It is easy to pass from this to New Testament teaching. The foundation of the Church has been laid; it grows up slowly but surely, a Holy Temple in the Lord. The work proceeds slowly because it is arduous in its own nature, obstructed by many adversaries. Zerubbabel's temple was finished in about twenty years; but a building which is spiritual needs much more time than one which is constructed of wood and stone. The affections and dispositions of men cannot be shaped as material things may be; and just because the Church is a structure so noble, a habitation of God in the Spirit, its progress is difficult, and in comparison with the works of man it is slow. It has also been hindered by the mistakes and dissensions of the builders; but in the end the same Prince who laid its foundations will certainly finish it. He will say, "It is finished," and in His completed Church He will fill the whole earth with His glory. We speak of the propagation of the Gospel and the construction of the Church: the one movement is diffusive, the other formative; both agree in one, and both are of the Lord. The propagation of the Gospel is not only for, but also by, Christ. He publishes the testimony through all the earth, and saves sinners. The construction of the Church is also by Christ from first to last, and the builders, from Paul and Apollos downwards, are nothing without Him. And oh! with what patience and with what wisdom does He preside over His vast and complex work. Christ is always building His people together, healing, reconciling, moulding, blending, compacting them together as living stones that form the One Temple of the One Holy Ghost. We have said

that there is much opposition to this work. So it has always been, and especially at critical emergencies, mountains have threatened to fall upon and to destroy the work of God. Moses went down to Egypt to redeem Israel; then was the power of Pharaoh as a great mountain against him. And as the people escaped the mountain seemed to come nearer, the Egyptian army pursued and threatened to destroy them. Hezekiah revived religion in Judah; then came the power of Assyria, and as a great mountain impended over Jerusalem. The heathen army invested the city, and Hezekiah had no power of resistance, and he spread the matter before the Lord, and in one night the angel of death removed the mountain and laid the Assyrian host still and dead. The Messiah came, not to condemn but to save the world; then the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and His anointed. Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, elders, and populace all joined in one desperate resistance. The acts of the Apostles were all performed, in spite of mountains of obstruction, by the power from on high that rested upon them. So they carried the Gospel to Europe, and planted it in Macedonia and Greece and Italy, and long afterwards missionaries of apostolic spirit bore it onward through the dense forests of Helvetia, Gaul, and Germany, and penetrated to the distant shores of Britain. The rage of the heathen threatened to devour them, but the Lord stood with them, and before His face the mountains melted away. We have great mountains against us still; huge masses of heathenism which resist our missions. The scepticism which becomes every day more pronounced. There is something else to do than wring our hands and pour out lamentations on the ear. Let us have the faith that removes mountains, and, oppose and deride us who may, let us be of good courage and build. In order to this, mark well what the energy is which surmounts or removes obstacles. Not might, nor power of mortal man. It would have been as vain for the Jews of Zerubbabel to cope with the power of Darius, or for the Apostles and early Christians to grapple with the power of the Roman emperor, or for a few labourers to attack a mountain in the Alps with their spades and try to reduce it to a plain. And equally impossible it is for us to remove the more intellectual or spiritual obstructions in the way of the Gospel by merely human persuasion and argument. The removal of such mountains as we encounter is a thing possible only with God. It was not before Moses, Hezekiah, Peter or Paul, Columba or Boniface, Zwingli or Luther, that mountains became plain, but before Jesus Christ. Zechariah had a vision of the continuous supply of the Spirit as of holy oil flowing through golden pipes from two olive-trees or branches. By this we understand the kingly and priestly institutions which were represented at the time by Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the high priest. In Jesus Christ, our exalted Saviour, the kingship and priesthood are united. He is the Priest upon a throne, and from the Father through Jesus Christ proceeds to the Church a constant supply of the Spirit. This is the present truth for us; if we believe it, why do we give way to languor or discouragement? If we have strength, learning, money, let us consecrate it to the Lord. But, knowing that these cannot prevail, let us lift our eyes to the Lord Himself, and cast our care upon Him. Let me encourage all Christian teachers and preachers to persevere in this confidence, undaunted and unwearyed. The holy Temple on the rock will be finished, and the headstone brought forth with shoutings. Indeed, no man can understand all the symmetry of our Lord's plan till it is completed; but then, it will be seen how He has overruled all the persecutions, martyrdoms, and controversies for higher ends, and has made even the reuding of the outward frame of the Church of God a means of preserving and purifying its inward life. What bursts of admiration when all is finished! What shouts of praise, grace, grace! No shout of human names or party distinctions will be attempted in that bright day. All is due to the grace of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory in the Church. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The Spirit of the Lord*:—The message which this vision was intended to convey was an assurance of God's presence and readiness to help, and of utter dependence on Him. The prophet was greatly puzzled by this vision. The interpretation was given in such form as would be likely to make it most effective for the enterprise in hand. 1. Rulers and people must understand at the outset that as God's chosen they were utterly dependent on Him. It is true for every man in every age. Not with a strong right arm can we make our spiritual livelihood; not with a mighty intellect can we plan and execute the purposes of a holy life. The Spirit of the living God must quicken, energise,

inspire. 2. The vision was interpreted to mean that difficulties should not block the way. All hindrance shall disappear. God shall touch it with His almighty hand. Nothing is too hard for Him. 3. The vision gave assurance of the ultimate completion of the temple. The work had languished for years. But as to the final issue there was no shadow of doubt. A day of great things was coming, if the present did seem to be a day of small things. Remember that we live in the dispensation of the Spirit. The Church is the organism through which the Spirit is working towards the restitution of all things. The Church is the one great power in history. Its influence is inexplicable on any except supernatural grounds. At every point of Christian faith and life we are dependent on its influence. Our life begins with the operation of the Spirit in the new birth. Our sanctification is through the Spirit. A symmetrical character comes in no other way. Our success in Christian service is conditioned in the same way. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

The need of God's Spirit:—This scene has a natural application to the Divine working among men, and suggests the need of God's Spirit. The human spirit should be the temple of God. Its foundations are laid in the capacities of the soul made in His image. Sin opposes the work, worldliness hinders it. How shall it be completed? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." **I. WE NEED GOD'S SPIRIT, BECAUSE THROUGH THE SPIRIT THE DEITY REVEALS HIMSELF MOST CLEARLY.** Our first necessity is to know God. 1. Some of the Divine attributes are revealed in nature. Wisdom, power, glory everywhere, but not the King eternal, immortal, invisible. Scripture declares that since the foundation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Mark the reservation,—His attributes, not Himself. He is ever hidden within impenetrable isolation. Nature leaves us crying, "Show us the Father." 2. God was revealed in Christ. Because men could never by searching find out the Almighty, the Word which was with God, and was God, became flesh and dwelt amongst us, revealing Him even to our senses. The incarnation shows that, while the Deity is an Infinite Spirit pervading immensity, He is yet a person. He has feeling, and thought, and will, as we have. Taking to Himself a body like ours, He manifests every quality which makes earthly friends real. Very God was with men in human body and human soul. 3. God is revealed by His Spirit. When Jesus ascended, the dispensation of the Spirit began, a closer and fuller Divine manifestation. The incarnation was not an immediate revelation of God. By the Holy Ghost God enters directly into our spirits; we know Him, commune with Him, without any earthly faculty called in to interpret. Neither did the incarnation complete the revelation. The fullest manifestation of God to man began at Pentecost. The office of the Spirit is not to supersede the revelation through Christ, but to disclose its meaning and apply its power. Nature shows God above us; Christ is God with us; the Holy Spirit is God in us. **II. WE NEED GOD'S SPIRIT, BECAUSE THROUGH THE SPIRIT THE MOST POWERFUL DIVINE INFLUENCE IS EXERCISED UPON MEN.** God does not merely reveal Himself to the soul, He also acts upon it. 1. The influence of the Spirit was needed to write the Scriptures. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He put before their intellect deep things which it was quickened to apprehend. Their affections were exalted to delight in the infinite grace unveiled to them. Their conscience was purified to behold and adore the Divine holiness. What they saw and felt they were moved to declare to the world. It is this supernatural influence upon the writers which has given the Bible its authority and power. By this influence the Scriptures are understood. Only He who illuminated the writer can enlighten the reader. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Critical acumen without spiritual insight cannot understand the book. 2. The influence of the Spirit is needed in regeneration and sanctification. The plainest truths of the character of God will not of themselves renew the soul. The intellect discerns them, the heart feels, the conscience trembles, the will may struggle to obey, but all this does not give life. There must be added a Divine, a creative touch, which shall send a new energy into every faculty, thrilling through the will itself, and quickening all to the sacred activities of a regenerated soul. This creative act separates the new life in its feeblest beginnings, at a world-wide distance from the most admirable exhibitions of the old life. Wonderful and awful is the entrance of God into the human soul. Under the Old Testament dispensation the Spirit was sent to exceptional individuals for exceptional purposes; it is the mission of the Comforter to abide permanently in every believer, bringing him into personal

union with God, and making him like God. The fruit of the Spirit is not dreams and visions, signs and wonders, but love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,"—healthy every-day virtues that make kind husbands, patient mothers, dutiful children, upright citizens, and pure officials. 3. The influence of the Spirit is needed in Christian work. The Almighty uses human agents. Heathen abroad and unbelievers at home are to be saved through the efforts of Christians. The most powerful Divine influence is given them to accomplish this. We do not always realise that the Almighty is working more efficiently in His present manifestation through the Spirit than He has ever wrought in any other method. He who gives grace to receive the truth also gives grace to speak it. The understanding mind, the earnest heart, the wise tongue, these are the gift of the Spirit. All the Christian power comes from this help. Through our study, our pleading, our prayer must breathe that holy presence which is the power of God unto salvation. This lesson has a special promise to feeble churches and discouraged Christians. It shows that all human opposition is of no account in the sight of God. He gives power to the weak, and grace to the faulty to do His work. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The might of the Spirit*.—What is the secret of the immense and amazing victory of Christianity? It lies in the out-poured Spirit of Pentecost. It was that which made the might of weakness irresistible; it was that which gave to the feeble seedling its imperishable vitality. Nor is it only that Christianity is still preached; it is still no dead doctrine, but a living force to those who truly receive it. Is there nothing for men who are filled with the Spirit of God to do now? Look at the universal worldliness around us; look at the passionate Mammon worship; at the reckless competition; at the desecration of Sundays in the mere voluptuous wantonness of pleasure. O God, give us saints; O God, pour out the Spirit of Thy might! (*Dean Farrar.*) *The world-conquering Spirit*.—The work of the early Churches, and that of the Churches of this age, agree in principle and purpose. The difficulties and forms of opposition are substantially the same. They are more moral than intellectual. 1. The prevalent worldly spirit. 2. The careless spirit manifest in another direction. There is an intellectual indifference to Christianity. But the majority of those who are indifferent to Christianity do not lay claim to any such difficulties. They are simply and utterly careless. 3. The sceptical spirit that lifts its voice around us. Then wherein lies our power? Is it in intellectual subtleties of reasoning? No intellectual power can touch the root of man's alienation from God. It lies in supernatural power: a power which, springing from the Divine heart, lays hold of our hearts and permeates them with His own energy, infusing our intellectual powers with His own strength. With increased supernatural power—the power of the Spirit—we shall yet come against the world spirit, the careless spirit, the sceptical spirit, and cast them down, and the sea of everlasting love shall roll on until "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." (*R. F. Bracey.*) *The spiritual work of the Church*.—1. It is with the spiritual nature of man the Church has to do. (1) Her purpose is not political. A great and important factor she certainly is in all true political progress; but she was not instituted to promote either Republicanism or Imperialism. (2) Her purpose is not to effect great social and moral reforms. These reforms are certain results of her progress. Wherever she becomes a power the character of the people is purified, the tone of life is raised. (3) Her purpose is not only to secure the world's belief in her creed. 2. In man's spiritual nature she has to effect the most radical changes—the greatest transformations. Conversion must be wrought. There must be a change in the spirit's condition, the spirit's relations, and the spirit's aspirations. The accomplishment of this work requires a special power, a spiritual power. 1. It cannot be done by the might and power of the sword. Or—2. By the power of law. "You cannot make men moral by acts of parliament." Or—3. By the might and power of reason. Your premises may be admitted, your arguments conclusive, and your pulpits distinguished for logical force, but men may remain as stones, and our churches as deserts. Or—4. By the might and power of sympathy. Sympathy can touch the heart as no other human force can. But sympathy fails to convert and renew. The essential power is in the Spirit of the Lord of hosts only. 1. This Spirit is greater than the forces in opposition. (1) Greater than the human spirit which has to be won. (2) Greater than the spirit of evil, united with the human spirit, that has to be conquered. 2. This Spirit infuses a new life. He creates. 3. This Spirit effects the change in perfect

harmony with man's freedom. The Church is in the greatest power when she is most filled with the Holy Spirit. Filled with the Spirit, she can be confident of success, although her members be few and the opposing forces strong. The Church's truest friends are those who are the most spiritual, and who most earnestly seek the Spirit's power in her. (*Rombeth.*) *The Spirit of the Lord*:—This message of God is addressed to Zerubbabel, as the former was addressed to Joshua. In this fact the difference in the nature of the vision is to be accounted for. Joshua represented the nation spiritually, and the nation had sinned. So the message to him is a message of mercy, and forgiveness, and promise. Zerubbabel was the civil ruler, and represented the nation's might and resources and means of defence. So he is bidden not to rely upon these, as he was prone to do, but to rely upon God. Two thoughts are prominent. I. THE COMPLETED TEMPLE WAS SYMBOLISED. Zechariah saw a golden candlestick. What did it mean? The candlestick which in old time had been made by Moses and set up in the tabernacle, and which afterwards was removed to the temple at Jerusalem, had been removed out of its place because of the infidelities and sins of the people. There was no tabernacle now where God dwelt, no temple with its mercy-seat and golden candlestick. But there it stood in its perfect and incomparable beauty before the eyes of the prophet as the symbol of a restored temple, with its lamp and altars of sacrifice and incense and songs of joyful worship. It was a picture of what was to be, a prediction of a future which in God's gracious purpose was near at hand. II. THE COMPLETE RESTORATION OF NATIONAL LIFE. Israel was meant to be the light of the world, as the Christian Church is in a more perfect manner. When the chosen nation fell into sin, and had to be punished by the desolation of temple, city, and land, the world was darkened, and the lamp which God had lighted before the nations was put out. Restored worship and a revived nation meant a rekindling of this lamp. To illustrate these ideas and apply them to daily dangers and duties. (Matt. v. 14-16; Mark iv. 21, 22; Luke xii. 35; Phil. ii. 15; Rev. i. 20, ii. 5.) III. THE MEANS OF RESTORATION WAS DECLARED. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (1) Man is prone to rely upon the material. Never was this more manifest than to-day. Man believes in himself, in his resources, in his mastery over the world. He boasts of what his science has discovered, of what his hands have wrought. "Look," he says, "at the bridges which span mighty rivers, at the tunnels I have bored through the earth. See how I can control the electric spark, and make it light up great cities, and send my messages to the ends of the earth." But the power which really does all these things is God's. One object of the Bible is to correct the short-sightedness of man, which fails to see through modes of operation to the Divine Mover and Sustainer of the universe, and so to teach us not to trust in our own strength, or in the strength of human allies, or the forces of wealth, nor yet to be afraid of failure in God's work, because consciously weak and poor and girt about with dangers. The vision is equally fitted to humble us in the hour of triumph, and to inspire courage in the hour of apparent failure and in the day of small beginnings. (2) The material often fails. Success marks man's life, yes, but failure also. A frost undermines his bridges, and they are rolled into the torrent. The forces of nature often rise up to defy man. In the events of life unforeseen accidents frustrate his plans, and pour mockery on his devices. The Jews had broken down in their attempts to rebuild the temple. They began well, and laid the foundations thereof with rejoicing, but reverses followed, and they gave it up. We must not in our life rely upon self. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (3) God works for us when we work for Him. "By My Spirit, saith the Lord." This truth was wondrously illustrated in the history of the Hebrew people. But that which happened to them was an ensample to us. He is with us if we are with Him, and we may boldly say, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." (4) God never fails. What He promises to do He does—does perfectly, and does at the right time. Let us look up. Let us trust in Him. (*T. Vincent Tymms.*) *The true source of power*:—We recognise the lesson which this vision furnishes, namely, that God is in His Church and in the world, and that His government in both is enforced and supported by the adoption of his own agencies. And furthermore, we learn that there is order and unanimity in the employ of such agencies. In the symbol there is unity, order, co-operation, and maintenance. Vegetable life is maintained through a system of organisation. The whole system of human life is carried on by the same principle. The great truth laid down in our subject

is that of co-operation. The golden pipes of the candlestick co-operate with the oil in giving light to the lamps. It is not the mere outward forms and institutions by which only the Church is to preserve her God-like character, and to diffuse her good and saving influence upon the world, but by the Divine Spirit acting through these, uniting them to Himself in one grand scheme of co-operation. The means are required, but they must be made subservient to the Divine will, and co-operate, in their dependency and trust, with the omnipotence and guidance of the Almighty. Consider, then, the true source—I. OF POWER. "Power belongeth unto God." To Him we ascribe all might. This is the one and only source of our power, personally or nationally. We have our instrumentalities, we have our Church and national appliances for building up and enlarging all that is right and beneficial; but we wait for the fire from heaven to kindle it. II. OF COURAGE. Courage lies not in dexterity, but in the heart, in the mind. It is shown by a cool obedience, by a steadiness of manly purpose. Courage that is true is the power of mind over matter. But in order to trace out its source we must look above mind to that Divine Spirit who acts upon the mind. III. OF CONQUEST. The noblest battle is against sin, and the noblest conquest is that of self. Hence as the foes of God, of ourselves, and of truth accumulate upon our life-path, may we meet them with a power, a courage, and a conquest embodied in the words,—“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” (*W. D. Horwood.*) *The agency of the Holy Spirit*:—The primary allusion of these words requires no explanation. The typical import is not less apparent than the primary reference. That by the law of types is not mere, not accidental resemblance, but similarity designed, as well as complete and unquestionable. Man was created to be the temple of God. That temple is now in ruins. The grand end of Christianity is to restore that temple, to clear away the rubbish that conceals its glory. From the contemplation of existing ruin, glance at the ideal of future restoration,—its amplitudes, its completeness, its perpetuity. How can the vision be realised? If, looking at the disproportion of the agency, there comes over the heart the painful impression of inadequacy, and the corresponding, the contingent apathy of despair, then listen to the spirit-stirring voice of the text, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” We are not to conclude that weakness is at all necessarily connected with this influence of the Spirit. The laws that determine the nature and regulate the action of this power of the mind. It must be cognate in kind to that on which it acts. Again, mind is responsible; and to be so must be free. Anything therefore that moves it must not interfere with its liberty of choice or its freedom of judgment. Again, mind is infinitely, constitutionally diversified. Its idiosyncrasies are endless, and, under the influence of a spiritual power, we have reason to expect full tolerance of such varieties, and that no attempt will be made to reduce all into dull uniformity. We are not to interpret the text as teaching that the Spirit is to act independently of, and unconnected with, human agency. The power of coercion, our Gospel leaves to error or secularised systems. The philosophy of the Cross, nevertheless, continually associates Divine power and human agency. In its moral canons and apparatus, the energy of God does not supersede the activity of man; nor is the activity of man efficient without the energy of God. These remarks lead to the proposition of the text, that no human, no created instrumentality, which acts independently and alone, is adequate to the restoration of the fallen temple; but that the Spirit of the Lord of hosts provides the sole efficient energy for the conversion of the world. I recognise the adaptation of truth, scriptural truth, to the nature and necessities of man. That adaptation is universal. Biblical truth is entirely accommodated to our condition and character. Let truth be admitted to the heart and it must conquer. Undoubtedly it must. But a prior question exists, how is it to obtain admission there? The avenues are blocked up by sin. 1. Now it is fair to reason for the truth of a principle from the necessary inconsistencies of its opposite, to urge anomalies irreconcilable, except on the supposition of the accuracy of the assertion before us. Consider then these anomalies. It will be generally granted that in similar circumstances uniformity of cause will be accompanied with uniformity of result. If, accordingly, in the evangelical plan no power beyond the human is at work, similar external energy will issue in similar results. Yet such is not our experience. If dependent on human power, the Gospel will be most successful when preached by the most eloquent men. The skill of an advocate often compensates for the hollowness of the cause. But if the measure of real

ministerial success be the conversion of souls to God, the most logical and eloquent preachers of the Gospel are not the most successful. Again, the Bible contains a system of pure ethics. We might expect the most cordial reception of this system from the purest moralists when and where it is ever propounded. All history attests the reverse. 2. Another train of illustration unfolds itself in analogy. The emblems of conversion are not more numerous and varied than they are one in, indirectly but really, tracing all the results of the Gospel to the power of the Spirit of God. What we want is a ministry thrilled into life by God's Spirit, and thrilling men into vigorous, healthy, sustained life, by the same Spirit, superinduced by faith and prayer. 3. Coincident with this conclusion is the experience of the Church, not only in its more ordinary and routine movements, but in its epochs that stand out in bold relief. Consider then the history of the modern revived Church. Consider the relative success of the preaching of our Lord and of His apostles. Conclude by appeal to scriptural assertion. The Spirit then is the power with which the Church is to be armed. (*Thomas Archer, D.D.*)

Independence of Christianity.—God's first and greatest object is His own glory. This is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. God is jealous of His own honour; He will not suffer even His Church to be delivered in such a way as to honour men more than God; He will take to Himself the throne without a rival. I. NOT BY MIGHT. "Might" properly signifies, the power of a number of men combined together. "Power" signifies the prowess of a single individual. Treat might as meaning might collectedly. 1. Collected might in human armies. The Church can neither be preserved, nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. The progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity. 2. Might may signify great corporations or denominations of men. There never ought to have been any denominations at all. They may do some good, but they do a world of mischief. Whenever a denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns, and take away its glory, till the world shall say, "It is not by might nor by power." II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. The greatest works that have been done have been done by the ones. Take any church, there are multitudes in it, but it is some two or three that do the work. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing. Learning is useful, so is eloquence; but God does not work by these His great works. III. BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. What a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were on a sudden to pour out His Spirit as He did on the day of Pentecost. The grand thing the Church wants at this time is God's Holy Spirit. Whatever faults there may be in our organisation, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity, when once the Spirit of the Lord is in our midst. Be in earnest in praying for this. All we want is the Spirit of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

A work beyond human ability.—I. AS IMPLYING SOME IMPORTANT PROPOSITIONS. 1. That many things which it is our duty to attempt evidently lie beyond human powers. 2. We have reason to expect that God will grant the necessary aid while we use the means which are in our power. 3. God communicates spiritual aid in a manner concealed from human observation. 4. These invisible operations of the Holy Spirit do not supersede human agency, nor alter, in general, the connection between cause and effect. 5. God uses men and means in such a way as to leave no doubt to whom the accomplishment is owing. II. AS SUGGESTING SOME USEFUL ADMONITIONS. 1. The words convey instruction. They throw great light on events which have occurred, for which historians have not been able to assign an adequate reason. 2. A lesson of reproof. Some lay great stress on human means and do not look for the influences of the Spirit. 3. A lesson of encouragement. We are too apt to despise "the day of small things." God acts by degrees. The kingdom of God is as a mustard-seed, but that can grow into a great tree. (*C. Jerram, M.A.*)

The triumph of the Divine kingdom.—So much is in the hands of providence that, in general, we can only conjecture what may be the result. In proportion as events are dependent on the will of God, they are uncertain to us. I. THE MOST HIGH HAS CLEARLY PROMISED IN HIS WORD, THAT THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST SHALL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL OVER THE EARTH. The religious history of the world presents a threefold aspect. 1. We may regard man in the state into which he was plunged by the first transgression; obnoxious to the wrath of the Most High, and distant from Him. Men divide into two classes:—those who forget God altogether, and the Jews to whom were committed the oracles of God. 2. To

the head of the Jewish people it was promised, "In Thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." 3. These promises formed part of the joy set before the Redeemer, by which He was stimulated in His work of self-denial. II. GOD HAS ENJOINED IT AS A DUTY ON HIS CHURCH TO ENDEAVOUR TO PROMOTE THIS END. The inspired writers derived this notion from two sources. 1. Express commands. 2. The principle on which those commands went. The appointment of a Christian ministry implies this duty. III. THE MOST HIGH HAS COMMUNICATED TO THE CHURCH ADEQUATE MEANS FOR ACCOMPLISHING THIS END. We do not now need the aid of miracles. Our power lies in the presence and impulse of the Spirit of truth. IV. WE MAY ANTICIPATE THE PERIOD WHEN THE KINGDOM SHALL BE FULLY ESTABLISHED. Some hopeful signs are—1. An increasing respect for the Word of God. 2. A more general appeal to the great converting principle of the Word of God. 3. A universal endeavour to pay the debt of obligation to the diffusion of the Word of God. 4. Much success has already attended the labours of Christians, and this shows how God smiles on the rising energies of His Church. 5. The hopeful state of the Church as the administrator of truth in the present day. If the Spirit of the Christian religion live in our minds, we shall want no exhortation to advance a cause like this. (*W. Wilson, A.M.*) *The necessity of the Holy Spirit's aid*.—The sentiment here recorded refers to the building of the second temple. When the prophet contemplated the difficulties that lay in the way of the accomplishment of this great design, the magnitude of the work, the obstacles to be overcome, and the insignificance of man's best energies, he was ready to despair. But the assurance came to him that the work should certainly be accomplished, but not by man's might, only in the power of the Spirit of God. I. A NEGATIVE PROPOSITION. "Not by might," can any design be brought to a successful issue. Illustrate by recalling some of the great occurrences which have taken place in the history of the world, and which declare this incontrovertible truth. History of Tyre, Babylon, Assyrian attack on Israel, degradation of Rome, story of Spanish Armada, French Revolution, &c. II. AN AFFIRMATIVE PROPOSITION. Illustrate some instances of the success which attends spiritual exertions sustained amid prayers, and blessed by the presence of the Spirit of God. Noah, the only righteous man in the world at that period of prevailing sin. Success of Joshua when Moses' hands were held up. Success of the Apostles. Reformation of Luther. Triumphs of missionaries. This principle of dependence on the Spirit applies to our reading the Word of God, and to the mode of a sinner's acceptance before God. (*John Cumming, D.D.*) *The work of the Holy Spirit*.—The primary application of these words was to the Jews who were engaged upon the great work of rebuilding their temple. Because they could not depend upon themselves, the Lord, in these words addressed to Zerubbabel, opened a better resource. It was not "by might nor by power" that they were to succeed, but "by His Spirit." Now the Spirit, whereby God helped the Jews in their necessity, was the very same Spirit which, from the commencement, has been concerned in all that regards the well-being of man, and the government of this lower world. He "moved upon the face of the waters." Upon the world thus created through the eternal Spirit, the work of redemption was to be carried out and accomplished. We do not marvel that the Lord Jesus, on entering upon the great work of His ministry, received a visible communication of that same Spirit; and through that same Spirit He offered Himself a sacrifice unto God. The Holy Spirit does not now descend for miraculous operations in the Church. But the promise of the Holy Spirit is a perpetual promise. And it is necessary for the whole Christian community. I. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT IN BRINGING ABOUT THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPEL. The Apostles and first missionaries had to encounter difficulties of every shape and character. Where did they get the wisdom which their adversaries were not able to gainsay or confute? How were they enabled to speak those gracious words which never failed? It was through the Spirit of God. We do not confine these marvellous interpositions of the Spirit to apostolical times. The Spirit has always accompanied the Word with power. II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CARRYING FORWARD THE WORK OF SANCTIFYING AND LIKENESS UNTO GOD. After our conversion we must count upon many a long and weary day of trial and temptation, and spiritual conflict, and heart-distress. If we would take a deeper insight into the things of God, we must ask the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us. Our enemies may be overcome, because greater is He who is with us than all who can be against us. It is promised that

we shall be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man." And the consolation of a Christian man's heart comes direct from the influence of the Holy Spirit. And what is true concerning the individual is true concerning the great Christian body. When the Church is despised and persecuted and everywhere spoken against, God puts forth His interposing arm, delivers His people, and comforts them, confirming the truth of His ancient word, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (*E. Robins, M.A.*) *The might and power of God's Spirit demonstrated*.—Our subject is, the Spirit's influence on the human mind. I. THE NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE. Considering the varied moral effects of the fall, we may ask, can any less powerful agent than the Spirit of God re-organise our faculties, and adduce harmony, loveliness, and order, out of the confusion that prevails within us? No one can savingly know the truth and be really holy, but as taught of God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. II. THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE. We are not called upon to explain the mode or manner of the Spirit's operation on the human mind. The fact is sufficient for our purpose. The value of the agency will correspond with the nature of the agent. Agreeable to His high and essential excellence will be the Holy Spirit's work. The Spirit's work should not be thought of as miraculous. Influence only of an ordinary and necessary kind do we contend for, and that only in an ordinary way, and the use of ordinary means. It is—1. Quickening in its nature, "The Spirit that quickeneth." 2. It is enlightening. 3. It is renewing. 4. It is sanctifying. 5. It is consoling. 6. It is assuring. III. THE EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE. The tree is known by its fruits, so also is the Holy Ghost. His fruits are "love, joy, peace," &c. An immediate effect of supernatural agency will be, a deep and humbling conviction of sin. Another will be,—a ceaseless restlessness till mercy and forgiveness be obtained. A third will be,—a supreme valuation of Jesus Christ. A fourth will be,—a prevailing desire to be holy. (*W. Mudge.*) *A law of Divine operations among men*.—A rule upon which the eternal God acts in the affairs of His people. The law is this,—that not human energy nor resources but the Spirit produces good; that not man but God gives success. Recall some illustrations of this law. 1. In the circumstances in which it was given. The builders of the second temple were disheartened and hindered. Their power was gone; they were taught to look to the Divine power which would work through them. 2. In the operations of the third Person in the Trinity upon the Church. Its progress has always been due, not to human might and power, but to the Holy Ghost. 3. The effect of the truth upon the heart of man is not of man, it is of God. 4. The advancement of Divine life in the soul is in accordance with the same rule. It becomes then the duty of believers to depend on the Holy Spirit at all times for success. Reliance on the Holy Spirit for producing spiritual effects is the rule for Christians. To lose sight of this rule brings a blight upon efforts however earnest. This reliance will act in a twofold way; it will hinder any resting or boasting in lawful human resources; and it will give encouragement where there is little human resource. Faith in the power of the Holy Ghost will inspire men, will shed new light upon their humble path, will put new vigour into their exertions, and will make them bold for God according to their measure, their capacity, and their means. And a pressing necessity arises for continual prayer that the Spirit may be given. While you seek more of the Spirit for yourself, pray earnestly that the gift may be bestowed on others. (*Forster G. Simpson, B.A.*) *The Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel*.—The vision seen by the prophet Zechariah in this chapter is evidently descriptive of the spiritual character and strength of the Church of God, shining with a communicated light, and sustained by a communicated strength perpetually supplied. We dwell on the interpretation of it. We are told—1. The false grounds of confidence which are to be rejected. "Might and power" include all earthly means and human instrumentality. The powers of reasoning, the exhibition of truth, or the force of argument, are not to be despised or neglected. It is the trusting to them, the resting in them, or the boasting of them, that is to be, and must be, utterly rejected if we would look for the favour and blessing of Almighty God. If we may not trust to the strength of reason, or the force of truth, neither may we to the powers of oratory. The gifts of oratory or eloquence are lovely and excellent, but trusted in, or gloried in, they become snares and stumbling-blocks, drawing away the heart and affections from Christ, and converting our acts of worship into an idolatrous service. Every Christian has his own peculiar sphere of influence

with which to serve and honour God. But all brought under such influence must beware lest they rest in it and go no farther. Religion must be a personal concern. Then there are those who imagine that they love the truth, because they love those who profess it. A religion based on such grounds is not to be trusted. When the Spirit of God is not the author of the work, it cannot stand trial, even in this world. 2. The only source of spiritual prosperity. There are three particulars in which the work of the Spirit may be distinguished. In transforming the character. In overcoming the world. In glorifying the grace of God. 3. The certainty of these effects of the Spirit's work issuing in the glory of the grace of God. That which God only can effect, to God only can be attributed. To bring man back again to His own likeness is God's own work, for the manifestation of His almighty power, the revelation of His infinite love, and the perfection of His eternal praise; when, the holy temple completed, the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of, "Grace, grace unto it." (*J. M. Wilde, B.A.*)

Opposition to the Gospel in every age.—The opposition made to the building of the temple in that age may be considered as emblematical of the opposition made to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men and in the world. By the "Spirit of the Lord" we may understand Divine power generally, or the Holy Ghost. The proposition to illustrate is, that the existence and prevalence of religion in the heart and in the world are not owing to human power but wholly to the Holy Ghost. If it were the result of human power, then—

1. Men of great learning and talents would be the first to embrace the Gospel. Their talents and learning seem to qualify them in a peculiar manner for investigating the evidences of the truth of religion. We reasonably expect that they will be the first to receive with meekness, humility, and gratitude, every doctrine which the Bible reveals. How different the actual facts are! The majority of men of talents and learning have either rejected the Bible or treated it with scorn. And the comparatively ignorant and unlearned have become "wise unto salvation." How shall we account for this difference? Never, without taking into account the work of the Holy Ghost.
2. If religion in the heart were by might and by power, then those who are decent and moral would be the first to embrace the Gospel. To all the duties of the second table they pay strictest attention. To such it might be supposed that the Gospel would be exceedingly acceptable. Then there are persons who seem utterly careless and dead; to all appearance they are the children of perdition. And yet, contrary to all expectation, we see the decent formalist passing smoothly to perdition; while the wicked and profane are often "plucked as brands from the burning."
3. If religion were by might and power, then those who hear the ablest preachers would always be the best Christians. But facts do not correspond with expectations. Some of the ablest preachers have laboured with little success; while others, greatly their inferiors, have been "wise in winning souls."

As the existence and prevalence of religion in the heart is wholly the work of the Spirit of God; so the existence and prevalence of religion in the world must be the fruit of the same agency. The arguments which illustrate the one also illustrate the other. The progress of religion in the world is just the progress of religion in a multitude of hearts. Look at the state of the world when the Apostles of Christ were first sent forth to preach "the Gospel of the blessed God." The men who were sent to preach were few in number, without learning, without wealth, without influence, without eloquence. What rendered their work so successful? Only the power of the "Spirit of the Lord." In process of time superstition almost extinguished the light of the Gospel. Corruption spread so rapidly, and diffused itself so widely, that in a little time nothing remained of Christianity but the name. Would the reformation have been such a power and blessing to the world without the presence of the Spirit of the Lord? The success of modern missions is not due to instrumentality, but to the power of the Spirit in the instrumentality. Then let us pray for the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord upon ourselves and upon our missionaries. This is a matter of unspeakable importance. And let us feel a deeper interest in the salvation of our own souls and the souls of others. Let us be more generally, more fervently, more perseveringly, employed in prayer for the Spirit of the Lord. (*W. S. Smart.*)

God's work in man.—In the work of God in the heart, and for the work of God in our lives, we require the operation of God's Holy Spirit. Man is continually seeking and claiming for Himself independence. But they are happy, and they alone are happy, who can commit all their ways unto the Lord their God. Whether we are converted or unconverted, we must be inhabited

by some spirit. I. THE NECESSITY FOR A SPIRITUAL AGENCY. This arises—

1. From man's wants on earth. He needs life. By nature he is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins." How is spiritual life to be obtained? It must be the effect of God's sovereign mercy, by the operation of His Holy Spirit. But man wants light as well as life. He is dark by nature. By the fall his understanding became darkened, and he requires to have that understanding renewed, before he can in any wise comprehend the plain and simple truth which concerns his everlasting peace. Men continue walking in that same darkness in which they were originally created. None but the Holy Spirit of God enlightens man. But if man wants light and life, so also does he require love, because by nature he is at enmity with God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Again, man requires health, for he is spiritually sick. This also comes by the Spirit. Man requires confidence in God, for by nature he distrusts God.
2. We require the Holy Spirit for our admission into heaven. (1) There must be a title to heaven. How is this obtained? We are regenerated by the Spirit. We are adopted into God's family by the application of the blood of Christ to the conscience by that same Spirit. (2) There must be meetness for heaven. This does not depend on our outward circumstances, but upon the inward working of the Holy Ghost. It is the same Spirit that supplies our daily want of grace.

II. THE RESULTS WHICH FOLLOW FROM THIS SPIRITUAL AGENCY. There is security for us amid all the trials and temptations of this life. The subject suggests to us the greatest encouragement in the midst of our many difficulties. The road to everlasting life is beset with difficulties. Who shall be able to overcome these "many adversaries"? None but they who have the Spirit of God working with them. Address those who are disheartened in the endeavour to live the Christian life. Do not attempt to serve God with a half-hearted service; the failure will be as complete in itself as it will be miserable and wretched to you. Be decided, if you are really seeking to be God's children. Are any of you trying to hinder the work of God in others? Remember, there is One above who sees all the malice, perceives all the enmity, and considers that any opposition offered to His children is offered to Himself. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *God's modes of working:*—When Zerubbabel was ready to bend before the interruption of his work, his heart was greatly encouraged to persevere in the arduous undertaking by the assurance that through God's special interposition and grace the work should be carried forward to a happy and honourable termination, till at last he should bring forth "the headstone thereof with shouting, Grace, grace unto it." The expression "Not by might," &c., intimates that God will carry on and complete His work, as He had begun their deliverance from Babylon, not by external force, but by the internal influence of His Spirit upon the minds of men.

I. OBSERVATIONS FOR ILLUSTRATING THE TEXT. 1. It is usual for God to bring most important and stupendous results out of causes apparently trivial and unimportant. 2. The words of text imply God's accomplishment—of the most gracious designs by the weakest and most insignificant instruments. 3. That it is our duty to attempt many things which evidently lie beyond human power. 4. God will grant the necessary aid while we employ the means that are in our power.

II. PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THE SUBJECT. 1. That ministers should preach the Gospel with an humble and confidential dependence on the co-operation of the Spirit to crown their labours with success. 2. This subject administers reproof to those who pervert it into an argument for carnal sloth and security. 3. Learn not to despise the day of small things. As in the natural, so in the moral world, the progress of God's power is often hid from our view; but still, is it making no advancement? The Spirit of God is again moving on the face of the deep, preparatory to a new creation. (*James Hay, D.D.*) *The only power that can set the world right:*—An infidel, who was also a well-known socialist marked down by the police, entered a meeting of the Salvation Army in Switzerland to make satirical remarks for a Constantinople paper, but during the meeting he was moved by the power of God, and at the close, with tears running down his cheeks, he said, "Ah, I believed in dynamite to set the world right, but now I see there's another power, and the only one." *The Spirit of the Lord:*—It was the mission of Zechariah to stimulate the courage of God's people, to kindle again the enthusiasm for the temple and the theocracy with which they had set out from Babylon. Opposition from their foes, the enormity of the task of restoring the temple, and the necessity of providing homes for themselves, had broken their courage, and diverted them from contemplation of their great spiritual

destiny. They must be brought again to the deep theocratic feeling cherished among their fathers of old. The Lord's message to Israel through Zechariah was communicated to the prophet in a series of eight visions. It was a hard lesson for these returned exiles, this lesson of implicit trust in God. The nation was just awaking out of a long night, in which God seemed to have abandoned them. They were little practised in seeing the invisible. Like Elisha's servant, they needed to have their eyes opened to perceive the mountains of Jerusalem "full of horses and chariots of fire" round about the Lord's chosen. The tendency of our times is away from all special reliance on the Spirit of God. Relatively, we have too great faith in secondary causes. To build a temple, you need only a competent architect, a good contractor, and a good force of masons. If opposition is threatened, simply provide yourself with a sufficient police force. Such is men's creed now. We glorify organisation. We deify law. We apotheosise the practical. We are witnessing a revival of the heretical belief in salvation by works. If it was necessary for James to say, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone," it is necessary for us to say, Work, if it hath not faith, is dead, being alone. We give up our inspiration for institutions. We lose the Spirit of God in elaborately designed methods for His operation. The intellectual, the practical, the spiritual; this is the order of importance according to the judgment of many contemporaries. Few things, therefore, could be of more importance to the religious life of to-day than this message of Zechariah to the returned exiles. However truly and clearly seers and prophets may still apprehend God, the life of thousands goes on nowadays in practical atheism. And the infection has spread to the churches. Witness the almost frantic efforts of some among them to keep themselves alive. Having insensibly withdrawn from the sources of vital piety their only recourse is the process of artificial respiration. We need schooling in the science of spiritual dynamics and economics. That this thought may assume greater definiteness, let me specify some of the lessons which the vision of Zechariah has for us. I mention, out of many, three—

I. THE PROPER RELATION OF GOD'S SPIRIT TO THE CHURCH IS A VITAL ONE. Philosophically considered, the main conceptions of God which have been current in the religious progress of the race are two: God as transcendent above the world, and God as immanent in the world. The one erects a throne for the Ruler of the universe somewhere above the sky, and worships Him from afar. It reached its extreme form among the Deists of the last century, who denied all interference on the part of God in the affairs of the world. It was the dominant, though not the only conception of God among the Jews before the coming of Christ, which helps to account for the formality and barrenness of their religion. Nothing so robs religion of its transforming and sustaining power as the drawing of its sanctions from some distant sphere, and the deferring of its rewards to some future age. The other conception—that God is immanent in the world—finds its best exposition in the literature of Pantheism, and has had expression and adherents ever since the time of the Vedic hymns. It reaches its extreme form in the view, still current, which denies to God personality, and identifies Him with the forces which upbear and impel the world. Both these conceptions are found—though not in their extreme forms—in the Bible. The New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit may be regarded as the evangelical counterpart of the philosophical doctrine of immanence. The New Testament teaching here is summarised for us in the fulfilment, in Acts ii. 17, of the prophecy of Joel. God would no longer be confined above the sky, or by the walls of a single building, or by the lines which separate the nations. He would come out into the open, so to speak, and be seen everywhere. He would make every place sacred by His presence. The universe, no longer a booth of skins or a house of cedar, would be His dwelling-place. This dispensation of the Spirit began on the day of Pentecost. In it the Gospel assumes its universal character and function. But the New Testament does not say that the Holy Spirit abides in the world and world forces in such a sense as to become one with them. In the ministry of the Holy Spirit God is still a person different from us and from His world, but He is no longer remote. With Paul we are thrilled with the awe of a great, tender reverence when we reflect that "He is not far away from any one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being." I know of no more blighting heresy than the practical denial among us of this New Testament and Old Testament teaching concerning the presence of God's Spirit in His world, in His Church, as a vital blessed and mighty equipment for life's battles and duties. **II. GOD'S SPIRIT**

IS THE CHURCH'S ONLY PROPER EQUIPMENT FOR SERVICE. The presence of God's Spirit for defence and for aggression was the burden of Zechariah's message to Zerubbabel. God is our defence. It is said that William Penn was the only colonist in America who left his settlement wholly unprotected by fence or arms, and that his was the only one which was unassailed by the Indian tribes. The first Christians depended in a peculiar manner upon the Holy Spirit for protection and leadership, and with the result that they were delivered from the hands of persecutors. History affords no more striking enforcement of Zechariah's message: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." III. GOD'S SPIRIT, APPROPRIATED BY PRAYER, IS NOW INTENDED TO OPERATE THROUGH ALL BELIEVERS. In the time of Zechariah, God's Spirit wrought His will by means of special representatives. The olive-trees supplied the oil to the candelabrum. Only the anointed ones were in full measure supplied with the Spirit. But when Joel's prophecy was fulfilled the Lord poured out His Spirit upon all flesh. It was a new epoch in the spiritual progress of mankind. God wills now to operate directly, without mediation, upon the hearts and minds of all believers. What matters it, however, if while we are within reach of strength we elect to continue in all our old weakness? The nearness of God does not ensure that we shall, in spite of ourselves, personally feel the thrill and joy of His strength. Prayer is a condition to this. Through prayer the very air about us may be charged with God, so as to bear us up like eagles in electric clouds. Closer than our breath is God with His Almighty Spirit and grace. Before Franklin's experiment for harnessing the lightning the air was as full of electricity as it is to-day, but men did not know how to appropriate it. A battery may be charged with electric fire, but you must make your connections to get the power. We need to gear our personal lives and our church work on the Power which moves the world. Then shall we see a revolution in spiritual commerce and economics which will speedily bring in the completed kingdom that was the hope of Zechariah and the inspiration of His message to Zerubbabel. We make this connection by prayer. Pray in faith, and there shall quiver along every fibre of your being a thrill of the life, light, and might of God. (*E. M. Potest.*)

Vers. 7-9. *Who art thou, O great mountain.—The temple of God built amidst difficulties:—*I. THE SEEMING DIFFICULTIES IN OUR LORD'S WAY. Solomon raised his goodly structure in quiet. Joshua and Zerubbabel had difficulty after difficulty to overcome. Turn to the Lord Jesus. What difficulties were there in His way when He first undertook to build God's temple in heaven! He had—1. To introduce sinners into heaven; to bring those near to God, who were among the farthest from Him. 2. He had to prepare sinners for heaven. The Lord the Redeemer has to work to the very last against the bias of nature, and the power of nature's lusts. Consider how many of such men He has to work on and change before His task can be completed. He has to bring "many sons unto glory." Remember where this work is to be done. In a world where there is everything to obstruct, and really nothing to aid it. It is to be accomplished too against all the powers of darkness. It cannot be done in an hour, or a day, or a year. II. THE EASE AND COMPLETENESS WITH WHICH THE REDEEMER OVERCOMES THE DIFFICULTIES BEFORE HIM. This is more strongly expressed in the abrupt language of the original, than in our translation "Who art thou?" There is no surprise or ignorance implied in this question. There is something like derision and contempt in it. The question expresses at once His own dignity, and the insignificance in His sight of the obstacles opposed to Him; His own almighty power and their utter impotence. Here lies one of the hardest lessons we have to learn in practical Christianity—to see the difficulties of salvation, and not be discouraged by them; to see the hills before us and around us, and yet to feel sure that the Lord will carry us over them. III. THE MEANS WHEREBY THE LORD JESUS CARRIES ON HIS GREAT WORK. Christianity has been established in the world without the world's aid, by means which have seemed most unlikely to establish it. Its very existence in the world at this moment is one of the greatest moral wonders the world ever saw. The Lord Jesus fits us for heaven by means of His Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Observe then here how jealous God is for the honour of the Holy Ghost. In looking to the Lord Jesus as our sanctifier, we must not overlook the Holy Spirit. He sanctifies us by this Spirit. IV. THE EFFECT WHICH WILL BE PRODUCED BY THE COMPLETION OF CHRIST'S WORK. God's present dealings with our world will not go on for ever. There is a day

coming when all His purposes of mercy towards it will be accomplished. The completion as spoken of under the figure of bringing forth and putting on the top or headstone of a building. This, in Eastern countries, was generally done with much ceremony, and in the presence of many beholders. With such a prospect before us, well may we ask with this prophet, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" As for the Church of Christ, let us learn to be ashamed of our fears concerning it. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Salvation secure*.—Treat the text as designed to encourage the believer in the assurance of his final salvation, in strong confidence of continuing and upholding power, to be vouchsafed to him. I. THE HONOUR OF GOD IS CONCERNED IN A PERSUASION OF OUR FINAL SAFETY. 1. In all spiritual temples the command to build, and the means to build, and the laying the foundation for the building, originate solely with God Himself. How unlikely then that God should forsake the work of His own hands. God is the author of that spiritual temple which is to be raised from the ruins of our degraded humanity. Man is as powerless to work a change in his own spiritual affections as he is to fix a new sun in the heavens, or to divert the course of the trackless deep. 2. The honour of God is concerned in the accomplishment of this work, by the multiplied succours which He has provided for carrying it on. We discover a constant regard to a law of progression. Whether God be ripening a blade of grass, or forming a world from the shapeless void, there is to be a beginning, a continuance, and an end. The building up of the soul into a holy temple in the Lord is no exception to this law. God will take His own time, and work in His own way. II. THE BUILDING OF THIS TEMPLE WILL REDOUND TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST. Zerubbabel is a type of Christ. 1. There is a promise on the part of Christ to His people, that He will work in them all needful grace to keep them faithful unto the end. 2. Christ is concerned in our final victory, because the believer's triumphs form an integral part of His own. Conclusion—(1) Be as confident with regard to the completion of the work as if it were altogether of God. (2) Be as diligent in working out that accomplishment as if it were altogether your own. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The building of the spiritual temple*.—Zerubbabel is a type of a far greater builder than himself, and the temple of Zerubbabel is a shadow of a far nobler temple. Zerubbabel is a type of Him "whom God hath exalted from among the people," to build His spiritual temple; and the temple of Zerubbabel is a type of that Church, which is "built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone"; of which every true Christian is a lively, that is, a living stone; and in which all are builded together, for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Each converted Christian is a temple of God by the Spirit, and like the temple of Zerubbabel, is honoured by the indwelling God as His abode. Christians are spoken of in Scripture as living stones of one great spiritual temple (as well as each being a separate temple). The manner in which the separate stones of Solomon's temple were prepared was striking and remarkable. While that temple was in building, no sound of axe or hammer was heard. Of the glorious temple to the Lord—a temple built of ransomed and purified souls, of deathless and sinless bodies—our Lord Jesus Christ is the chief builder. And He "will not fail nor be discouraged," until He has erected His spiritual building on God's eternal hill of Zion. But He uses instruments. He has His fellow-labourers. He directs their work. The whole plan is in His mind. To His ministers he gives "diversities of operations" by the same Spirit. It is the conviction that our great Master is with His servants, even unto the end of the world, that supports and cheers them under difficulties that would otherwise overwhelm them. (*W. Weldon Champneys, M.A.*) *His hands shall also finish it*.—*The founder and finisher of the temple*.—Zerubbabel is very little more than a grotesque name to most Bible readers. He was a prince of the blood royal of Israel, and the civil leader of the first detachment of returning exiles. The words of the text are, in their plain original meaning, the prophetic assurance that the man, grown an old man by this time, who had been honoured to take the first spadeful of soil out of the earth, should be the man "to bring forth the headstone with shoutings of grace, grace unto it!" I take them to be a Messianic prophecy. This Zerubbabel was a prophetic person. What was true about him primarily is thereby shown to have a bearing upon the greater Son of David who was to come thereafter, and who was to build the Temple of the Lord. I. THERE IS HERE, A LARGE TRUTH AS TO CHRIST, THE TRUE TEMPLE-BUILDER. "I am Alpha and Omega," &c. All the letters are from Him, and He underlies everything. That is true about Creation, in the broadest and in the most

absolute sense. "He is the beginning, and in Him all things consist." He is the Beginner and the Finisher of the work of redemption, which is His only, from its inception to its accomplishment. Jesus makes a new beginning; He presents a perfectly fresh thing in the history of human nature. Just as His coming was the introduction into the heart of humanity of a new type, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, so the work that He does is all His own. He does it all Himself. The text declares that all through the ages His hand is at work. "Shall also finish it"—then he is labouring at it now. We have to think of a Christ who is working on and on, steadily and persistently. A work begun, continued, and ended by the same immortal hand is the work on which the redemption of the world depends.

II. WE HAVE HERE THE ASSURANCE OF THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL. There were many who were ready to throw cold water on the works of Zerubbabel. The text is the cure for all hopeless calculations by us Christian people, and by other than Christian people. When we begin to count up resources, and to measure these against the work to be done, there is little wonder that good men and bad men sometimes concur in thinking that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has very little chance of conquering the world. That is perfectly true, unless you take Him into the calculation, and then the probabilities are altogether different. He renews and purifies the corrupted Church, and He lives for ever. When Brennus conquered Rome, and the gold for the city's ransom was being weighed, he clashed his sword into the scale to outweigh the gold. Christ's sword is in the scale, and it weighs more than the antagonism of the world and the active hostility of hell.

III. HERE IS ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DESPONDENT AND TIMID CHRISTIANS. Jesus Christ is not going to leave you halfway across the bog. That is not His manner of guiding us. He began and He will finish. If the seed of the kingdom is in our hearts, He will watch over it, and He will bless the springing thereof. Be of good cheer, only keep near the Master, and let Him do what He desires to do for us all.

IV. HERE IS A STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE FATE WHICH ATTENDS ALL HUMAN WORKERS. Few of us are happy enough to begin and finish any task, beyond the small ones of our daily life. Authors die with half finished books. No man starts an entirely fresh line of action; he inherits much from the past. No man completes a great work that he undertakes. Coming generations, if it is one of the great historical works of the world, work out its consequences for good or evil. We have to be contented to do our little bit of work that will fit in along with that of a great many others. How many hands does it take to make a pin? We have to be content to be parts of a mighty whole. Multiplication of joy comes from division of labour. So let us do our little bit of work, and remember that whilst we do it, He is doing it in us for whom we are doing it, and let us rejoice to know that at the last we shall share in the "joy of our Lord," when He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Reasons against pessimism:—Those Hebrew prophets were thorough optimists. No matter how great the desolation which was around them, no matter how deep the degradation into which the people had fallen, no matter how dark the prospect, they told of a glory to follow. Their words are charged with hope. They summoned languid, desponding souls to courageous action. They never hung their harp upon the willows. In the presence of error, evil, idolatry there is no quailing, no craven cry of fear, but a tone of almost contemptuous defiance. Can the force of contempt go further? "Moab is my washpot,"—I will wash my hands in Moab. "Over Edom I will fling my old shoe." It is so here. This young Zechariah is perhaps the most hopeful of all the prophets. He calls upon the daughter of Zion to sing and rejoice. The holy city, which has been despoiled, shall become so vast that no angel can measure it, and God shall be a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it. In this chapter he seeks to encourage Zerubbabel in the great work of rebuilding the temple. A mighty mountain of hindrance bars his way. But by this most suggestive vision the prophet assures him that he shall be aided in his work by the mysterious energy of God. Perhaps there never was an age when the servants of Christ were more exposed to dejection, or when it was more incumbent upon them to maintain an undaunted and confident spirit. Pessimism is in the air. It fills our literature with a wailing cry. As Goethe said: "Men write as if they were all ill, and the whole world a lazaretto." There is a deep undertone of sadness in the life of our times. The culture of the age is mournful. One may well ask, Is this "merrie England"? The number of suicides in this country during the past thirty years has risen from 65 per million to 79.

In London it is 85, in Paris 422. Now, pessimism is the legitimate outcome of unbelief. If man is a bubble, soon to be pricked by death, how can he be glad? Men are congratulating the world that faith is dying; but they will find, if it dies, that some other things, which they would fain keep, have disappeared too. But if pessimism is proper to unbelief, it ought to have no place in the minds of Christian men. What are the reasons against pessimism? What reasons have we for declaring that it will be laid low? I. First of all, IT IS ALIEN TO HUMAN NATURE. The fundamental principle of pessimism is that evil is an essential element of human nature. It is original and permanent. The world is corrupt in its nature. The teaching of the Word of God is that sin is an intrusion. We are often told that the Scripture view of man is too dark. It is the only bright view of the subject. That which regards sin as natural is horrible, and forbids hope. Sin is neither the "essence of the creature nor the act of the Creator." So terrible is it when it culminates, that it would be fearful to regard it as the mere outcome of the natural working of the human heart. What a vivid picture is that which our Lord gives of the state of man! The human heart is a house, and living in it, ordering it, is "a strong man armed." Yes, sin is a mighty tyrant, but it is only a lodger. It occupies the city of Mansoul, but it has crept in and it can be cast out. Is not this evident from a survey of the effects of evil? It is manifestly foreign to human nature, for it runs right athwart the interests, and cuts deep into the powers of that nature, sapping its strength, and draining its very life-blood. It is a wrong inflicted upon the soul, not the intended outcome and expression of the soul. It is a great hurt, a violation of law, a break in the harmony of life, a discord in its music, a derangement of its order. The effects of sin are eloquent of its nature. It spoils, rends, tears, maims, perverts. It is off "the course of nature." Human nature has fallen among thieves, which have robbed, wounded it and left it half dead. Sin is not the essence of man; it is an alien thing, it is a foreign power. Men feel it has to be accounted for, that it is not according to the constitution of things. A belief in a fall runs through the religions of the world. Archdeacon Wilson has well said: "The problem about evil which has attracted the mind of man has always been enunciated as the origin of evil. Did any one ever write an essay or vex his mind over the origin of good? It is in the constitution of our minds to ask for a reason for anything that is rare, exceptional, or anomalous. Why does an eclipse of the sun take place? What is the cause of thunderstorms? But we do not often ask why the sun gives light. Can it be that evil is so rare a phenomenon? No; the pessimist will not admit, and the optimist will not assert, that evil is so rare an interference that we are driven to account for it because of its rarity. It is not because it is rare, but because we instinctively feel it is an intruder, however common it may be. We ask for the cause of sickness, common as it is. Health is the normal state; disease the abnormal. Sin is an interference, a fall." II. ANOTHER REASON AGAINST PESSIMISM, AND A GROUND FOR HOPE, IS TO BE FOUND IN THE WILES AND DECEPTIONS THAT EVIL MUST PRACTISE BEFORE IT CAN SUCCEED. It pretends to be what it is not. It palms itself off as something else. Sin only keeps its place by deception. It is "transformed into an angel of light." It wears the garb of goodness, and declines to be unclothed. Nor does it wholly possess the human soul. The noblest, most authoritative power of the soul may be cowed and silenced, but it never consents heartily to the sway of evil. Conscience is often like a disrowned king, whose commands are slighted, but it does not run with the multitude of the passions to do evil. It stands solitary, apart, issuing, however vainly, its protests. Hence sin and fear go together. The mountain shakes and trembles, as Sinai at the voice of God. "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Nor are the forces of evil so compact, so massive, so welded together as they seem. It is well to follow the counsel which the angel gave to the fearful Gideon—"But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host, and thou shalt hear what they say, and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened to go down to the host." An undefined fear pervades the ranks of evil. There are vague presages of approaching disaster. III. But let us hasten on to CONSIDER THE CHIEF REASON AGAINST PESSIMISM, THE HIGHEST GROUND FOR CHERISHING THE SPIRIT OF THE TEXT. The vision recorded in this chapter is most beautiful and suggestive. The prophet sees a golden candelabrum, like that which had been in the old temple, but much grander. It has a bowl on the top of it, and beneath are seven lamps and seven

pipes to the lamps, and on each side of the bowl stands an olive-tree. THE PROPHET IS TAUGHT THAT HIS HELP IS IN GOD. As the lamp was supplied, not by human agency, but direct from the living trees, so he is to learn that evil will be overthrown and righteousness exalted, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The advent of Jesus Christ into this world was the coming of one stronger than the strong man armed. It was the introduction of a new spiritual energy, a life-giving, restoring force. His whole work, and the consequent descent of His Spirit, show that God is on the side of man, and that the evils which have enslaved, defiled, degraded him shall be overcome. Truth, purity, love are on the throne of the universe. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad." And further, we are reminded that, as we seek to overcome the mountains of evil which are in this world, we can only be qualified for our work as we receive the power of the Holy Ghost. To trust in our own strength, to place our dependence in men or means, to rely on ecclesiastical organisations and auxiliaries, will entail inevitable weakness and defeat. I read the other day of an Italian miser, who died near San Remo worth £120,000, who for years went without stockings because he grudged paying for the washing of them. Some Christian workers are guilty of a similar penuriousness with regard to the spiritual treasures, the "unsearchable riches," which are at their disposal. Let us not be straitened in ourselves, for we are not straitened in God. Let us be of good cheer, and cultivate a bold, buoyant optimism. And let us be clear as to what is implied in the hope of the overthrow of evil and the establishment of righteousness. It is not implied that the millennium will be here in a fortnight, or that the progress of goodness is steady and uniform. Dalliance with the world may enfeeble the churches, and they may be shorn of their strength. Everything depends on the extent to which the Spirit of Christ prevails among men. The great mountain of evil is a crumbling mountain. Some of us have quailed before that mountain. Sin seems so fixed and strong. The characteristic evils of our nature seem so inveterate. (J. Lewis.)

Ver. 10. Who hath despised the day of small things? — *Great results from small beginnings.*—This has ever been a watchword among Christians; small beginnings are not to be despised. Apply—I. TO THE INSTITUTIONS OF RELIGION. Four reasons why we should not despise the day of small things. 1. Because often the mightiest effects are produced from them, as in the world of nature; in the world of literature; in the world of politics. So in grace. What is it and what will it be? Yet what was its origin? 2. Because God's power can make the feeblest mighty for the accomplishment of His work. 3. We never know what God intends to do by our understanding. Prescience is not ours. Not having it, we cannot see what God will do. 4. In matters of religion, what is comparatively little is abstractedly great. Then if you want to do much for God, do not generalise so much. Do not be discouraged by seeing how many are unsaved, look at the one saved. II. TO PERSONAL AND PRIVATE RELIGION. Religion is often small in its commencement—sometimes rapid, sudden conviction, but ordinarily more slow. This day of small things may be despised by scorn; by opposition; by neglect. First impressions are sacred; treat them as such. The day of small things is not despised by those who best know its value; the Father of Mercies; the Son; Angels; or Satan. It is the pledge of greater days that are coming. Apply to ministers; parents; Sabbath-school teachers; the lately awakened. (J. Summerfield, A.M.) *Small beginnings.*—Despondency paralyses exertion, but hope stimulates and supports it. Despondency is never so likely to be felt as at the commencement of an undertaking, when there are few to support it and many to oppose it; when the beginning is so small as to excite the apprehensions of its friends and the derision of its enemies. The Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity felt this when they applied themselves to the rebuilding of the temple. "Small beginnings are not to be despised." Consider this sentiment—I. IN APPLICATION TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. The age in which we live is happily and honourably distinguished by a spirit of religious zeal. So many are the associations throughout our country, for humane and pious purposes of every form, that charity, where it has but a solitary offering, is almost bewildered in its choice. Those only who have known by experience what it is to originate a new institution, especially if it be out of the ordinary routine of Christian effort, can form an adequate idea of the labour, patience, and heroism which are requisite to carry it to maturity, amidst the

doubts of the sceptical, the mistakes of the ignorant, the misrepresentations of the slanderous, and the cold and selfish calculations of the lukewarm. But still, small beginnings are not to be despised. 1. The most wonderful effects have resulted from causes apparently very small. Illustrate from the natural, intellectual, and political world, and in the world of grace. Trace the cause of Protestantism to its commencement. Contemplate the progress of Methodism. Or note the beginnings of great missionary societies, or the Bible Society. 2. We should not despise the day of small things, because the power of God can still render the feeblest instruments productive of the greatest results. The feeblest preacher may be the honoured instrument of conversion, when the most eloquent has preached in vain. 3. However discouraging appearances may be, we never know what God really intends us to do, or to do by us. We can never look to the result of our actions in their influence upon others. No man who devotes himself to the cause of religious benevolence can say what use God intends to make of him, but it is often far greater than he is aware. Illustrate by Robert Raikes, or Wesley. 4. In religion, what may seem little by comparison, is, when viewed positively and absolutely, immensely great. We may offend against the injunction of the text by inattention. We do not advocate an indiscriminate precipitate zeal. Or by scorn. If the object of a scheme be good, if the means appear adapted to the end, let it not be contemned because it is at present in the infancy of its age, and of its strength. All that is sublime in Christianity was once confined to a little circle of poor men and women. Neglect is another way of sinning against the letter and spirit of the text. Especially let those who are the principal agents in schemes of benevolence beware of despising the day of small things. Let them not too soon sink into a state of depression. If they have fears, they should conceal them, and exhibit only their hopes. II. APPLY THE SENTIMENT OF THE TEXT TO PERSONAL RELIGION. 1. Religion is often small in its commencement. This is not always the case. Sometimes a transformation of character takes place, as complete as it is rapid. But the usual process of this great change is much more slow. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. There are many ways in which the small beginning of personal religion may be despised. It may be ridiculed as the fanaticism of a weak mind, or the enthusiasm of a heated imagination, or the whim of a capricious taste. Ridicule is not unfrequently coupled with direct opposition. Men who find laughter avails nothing are very likely to exchange it for wrath. Neglect, however, is that which comes more immediately within the spirit of this part of the subject. The first appearances of religion in the soul do not always receive from others the prompt, affectionate, and skilful attention which they demand and deserve. First impressions, unless carefully watched, like the young buds of fruit-trees in the spring, will soon fall off from the mind and come to nothing. 2. Reasons why the day of small things ought not to be despised. It is not despised by those who best know its importance. It is not neglected or contemned by the Eternal Father. Angels do not despise it. The beginnings of religion lead on to great and glorious attainments. Our subject has its special admonition to ministers, and to parents, and to Sunday-school teachers, and to Christians generally. (*John Angel James.*) *The day of small things*:—I. SOMETHING ABOUT GOD. These words show us that humility is, if I may say so, a portion of the Divine character. He does not despise "the day of small things." It is impossible to find lowliness in the Divine nature in its essence, because there is nothing upon which to base it. The life of God is a necessary life. There is room for this virtue in the Divine actions, though not in the Divine essence. Note the absence of ostentation in all God's works of nature or of grace. Note the condescension of Divine providence. Not only in its prime, in its perfection, in its maturity, in its grand completeness, does God take delight in the soul, but in the nascent form of undeveloped life, the very foundation of the spiritual structure. He does not despise first beginnings; it is even true that in the "day of small things" God especially acts. II. SOMETHING ABOUT SMALL THINGS. We despise little things, and think them beneath us. Our thoughts and measurements are so different from God's thoughts and measurements. And this results from pride, which makes us think so many things beneath us, not worthy of care and of finish. It arises also from a certain ignorance of the value of little things. The text implies that they are important. 1. Because our life is made up of little things. 2. In their effect upon our spiritual life, because they require so much effort. III. SOMETHING ABOUT OURSELVES. 1. It teaches us hope. God does

not despise, because He sees in His eternal mind the results. 2. We learn patience from it. 3. It must fill us with emulation. This will make us persevere and long to make progress. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) *The regard of God for small beginnings, physical and spiritual*:—It was but a small and feeble remnant that returned from the captivity in Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Their spirits broken by slavery, their cohesion imperfect, their resources limited, their well-wishers few; the adversaries arrogant and numerous, the difficulties manifold and dispiriting. It was as if a fraction of a swarm of bees were striving to rebuild their hive under the ceaseless attacks of a cloud of malignant wasps or hornets. Their souls were exceedingly filled with contempt by the scorn of Sanballat, who cried aloud, "What do these feeble Jews? Will they revive the stones of the temple out of the heaps of burned rubbish? If a fox shall go up even he shall break down their stone wall." Now this contempt of Sanballat well represents the scorn with which the great world regards all religious beginnings both in individual lives and in society. The notion which prevails so widely as to the hopes of Christians might be expressed thus: "These aspirations of yours after union with the Infinite and Everlasting Cause, after an indestructible life in God, are too absurd. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and consider their magnificence, look upon the illimitable vastness of that celestial machinery, the number of those worlds on worlds, which shine through the eternal darkness; and then look down on yourselves, and at mankind, a cloud of ephemeral insects passing away. Who can believe that such 'minims of nature' have any permanent relation with the universe, much less with its Maker? Face the inevitable, and do not shrink from the nothingness which is your doom." The one all-sufficing answer to these degrading counsels is to be found in the words of the prophet of the restoration. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" The law of the Divine action is evolution from small beginnings, the development of all organic growths from germs, and the gradual transformation of lower into higher forms of being. Suppose the seeds of all the flora of the world in all its latitudes could be offered to our view in one panoramic vision. Who could suppose, apart from experience, that out of such a collection of black or grey or yellow dots, or tiny cones, or coloured berries, could spring the cloud-piercing forests of the tropics, or of the American Andes, and all the radiant glories of the flowers, shrubs, and trees of the temperate zones? Who could believe that such a marvellous universe of lovely form and lovelier colour lay hid under the appearance of such insignificant beginnings? Extend the thought to the world of birds, to the development of their airy figures and varied plumages, and places of abode, and modes of living, all springing from invisible vital germs concealed in eggs throughout all their uncountable millions of millions; and finally enlarge the conception by taking in the whole animal world similarly developed. Who after such a review could rationally despise the day of small things? It is a world unceasingly renewed from invisible points of life—points of life developed under a Divine pervading power into the universe of wonders that we see around us. The visible and material is a type of the unseen. "First the seed, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. So is the kingdom of God." And this leads us directly to the Divine lessons inculcated by the prophet in the name of the living God: "Who hath despised the day of small things?"—the lessons learned from God Himself, and His own loving procedure—(1) Of respect for all early growths in the days of their feebleness; (2) Of toleration for all the defects of their early stages; and (3) Of patience with undeveloped natures. 1. The old Latin proverb teaches us that "great reverence is due to the young." Oftentimes there is very little of this shown to them. Many of the most unpleasant qualities of children are frequently the direct result of the infamous treatment which they receive from their elders. Try to be a sun to your planets, not raining down on them only the cold light of instruction and reproof, but the warmer rays of a beneficent friendship. Wise words cannot take the place of loving deeds. Flowers must have sunshine. Souls must have tenderness. If you "despise the day of small things" here, you despise the foundations of the future structures of the temple of the Lord. 2. In the same manner respect the beginnings of early religion. Many adult Christians appear to have no faith in the reality and value of early piety. Let us never despise the day of small things, but understanding our Lord's regard for elementary faith and love, never be detected in breaking, as unworthy of reliance, the bruised reed of childhood, or quenching the tiny spark on its smoking flax. 3. In the same manner we have to learn, if ourselves established

Christians, to understand and sympathise with the imperfect development of character in the earlier stages of adhesion to the Son of God. It would be delightful if all Christians were suddenly struck into perfection, as a disc of gold is struck with some heroic image on one side, and with St. George's victory over the dragon on the other. But it is not so. The plant of righteousness is a growth. The temple slowly rises. The formation of the Divine likeness is both a creative and an imitative process. Children are childish in both worlds. But who hath despised the immature stages of development? It is as if you enter a sculptor's studio. You see here an almost shapeless lump of clay; there a mass beginning to put on the human form; there a bust beginning to speak with the lines of nobleness or beauty; there a piece of marble undergoing the first rougher process of assimilation; there an artist at work with hammer and chisel, striking frequent blows with passionate ardour, as said Michael Angelo, as if he would "set free the imprisoned angel"; there the master-hand at work on his final touches, which are to breathe soul into the stone, and beauty and life into the dead material, and to impress on it, perhaps, a likeness which shall transmit to future ages the countenance which overawed or delighted contemporary generations. Even so in the Church you see souls in all stages of progress under the Supreme Artist's touch. Learn, then, to tolerate the defects of incipient development. We know not what we shall be, and we see not what others will be. Simon, the passionate fisherman of Bethsaida, became the steadfast and devoted Rock, or Petra, on which Christ has built His Church. The Son of thunder became the Apostle of love. The ferocious and murderous Saul became the gentle and all-embracing father of the Gentile Churches. God only knows what He will bring out of anything. Man can bring light out of the blackest coal, and the colours of the rainbow in the aniline dyes are extracted from gas-tar. And so God can convert carbon into the diamond, and souls swarming with many devils, into the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." How hopeful as well as tolerant should such a retrospect make us in relation to the unfinished individualities around us. We must see the "end of the Lord" before we judge of His work. There is but one Eye that sees the end from the beginning, and that is the eye of the Eternal. That which is last to our thought is first to Him. The evolutionary prospect is ever before Him, and in looking at each creature He sees what that creature shall become in all the stages of its future eternity. We know not what we shall be; but we know that to despise small things now is to contradict the processes of Divine thought, and to flout the methods of Divine procedure. Each soul is the subject of a work which will never end, under the hand of the Omnipotent Designer. And that which will satisfy us, when we awake in His likeness, and will satisfy Him when He rests with delight, and sees His work to be "very good," in the endless Sabbath, will also satiate the desires of His under-workmen. Oh, what will be the heaven of such a man as St. Paul? It is this vision, in its different degrees of glory, which the Omniscient Mind sees beforehand for all God's servants in the eternal future; and it is because He sees it, that He warns us never to "despise the day of small things"; because each soul is what God sees it to be, not only now, but in its future development. (*Edward White.*) *God's blessing on the day of small things.*—1. God's great mind, so infinitely above our level, does not perceive all the distinctions we are wont to make between what we denominate great and small. To a person greatly elevated, all below—people and buildings—appears equally small, even so Jehovah is too high to perceive the various grades of greatness and littleness into which we are accustomed to divide the affairs of life. 2. It has ever been God's plan to work from apparently small beginnings; had He chosen He could have commanded great things at once into existence, but He has said, "A little one shall become a thousand," &c. (Isa. lx. 22). The great Saviour came into the world as a weak babe; His great kingdom commenced with twelve men, most of whom were unlearned. Mark the insignificant beginnings of modern missions, of Sunday Schools, or of our Christian Endeavour Movement! Truly, "God chose the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong," &c. (1. Cor. i. 27). 3. Those who despise the day of small things will never accomplish great works. It is dangerous and disastrous to make light of the small beginnings of evil, sin, or bad habits. The modern scientific theory of germs may be used as an apt illustration, showing how the neglect of even infinitesimal atoms is the cause of so much fatal disease. 4. The tenderness of God comes out in His

regard for the small and weak. "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory" (Matt. xii. 20). Our Lord often referred to the small beginnings of His kingdom, comparing them to "seeds," "a grain of mustard seed," "a little leaven" (Matt. xi.). The day of small things is the day of precious things, but we are not to be satisfied until it becomes the day of great things. 5. Small things marked the beginning of the work in the hand of Zerubbabel, so small was the foundation in the eyes of those who had seen the glory of the former temple, that "they wept with a loud voice" (Ezra iii. 12) at the comparison; but God assured them that, in the latter end, its glory should be greater, inasmuch as the Messiah Himself would stand within its walls, and His Gospel be proclaimed therein (Acts v. 42). 6. There is great comfort here, for all depressed builders of the spiritual temple. The work progresses so slowly that we are often discouraged. But let the work of grace be ever so small in its beginnings, the plummet is in good hands. The great Master-BUILDER will surely accomplish that which He begins. Jesus Christ is the finisher as well as the author of our faith (Heb. xii. 2). 7. "God's blessing on it" is the secret of all success. Work, great or small, without this is utter failure. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. iv. 6). (*E. J. B.*) *Folly of despising small things* :—Value of little things may be seen in—I. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH HIS CHURCH. Give illustrations from both Old Testament and New, from the Reformation, and from modern missionary societies. II. IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER LIFE. 1. In the training of children. 2. In the formation of habits; both good and bad. Conclusion—(1) God is with the Church still. Then there is hope in our small beginnings. (2) Patiently work, biding God's time. (3) Find encouragement in temptation in this, that "He will not break the bruised reed," and if faith be weak, remember that a child may as really (though not as firmly) hold a staff as a strong man. (*J. G. Pilkington, M.A.*) *The day of small things* :—No doubt many of the Jews had looked with a sort of contempt on the apparently insignificant beginning which had been made towards restoring the religion of their fathers, and had discouraged one another by insinuating that what commenced with so much feebleness was never likely to reach a successful termination. They might have known better. Just because there seemed to be but little proportion between the agency and the end, they decided at once that success was hardly to be looked for, and that it was useless to persevere in an endeavour so palpably hopeless. These Jews have been imitated by men of every age. Much of the evil that exists in the world may be traced to the despising "the day of small things." I. THE REASONS WHICH LIE AGAINST SUCH DESPISING. God is wont to work through instruments or means, which in human calculation are disproportioned to the ends which He designs to accomplish. He does not always take what appears to us a mighty agency, when a mighty result is to be achieved. There is in us all a tendency to ascribe to second causes what ought to be ascribed directly to the First. It is by the day of small things that God ordinarily interposes those great revolutions and deliverances which alter the whole state, whether of nations or of individuals. God ordinarily commences with what appears inconsiderable. II. CERTAIN CASES IN WHICH THE "DAY OF SMALL THINGS" IS DESPISED, WITH THE CONSEQUENCES THAT ARE THENCE LIKELY TO ENSUE. We are likely to make light of small things. Take the case of the slave of bad habits. Few plunge immediately into evil. Most men begin by deviating from the right in some one small particular. And it is this small beginning which it is perilous to despise. Observe the ordinary course followed by God in His spiritual operations on unconverted men. They are not for the most part to be distinguished from the operations of their own minds. There is a small beginning of influence which it is perilous to despise. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *Small things* :—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE "DAY OF SMALL THINGS"? It is the course of God that the beginning shall be small to lead to great effects. We see this in creation, in providence, and in grace. In many a young and tender heart there has been just a thought, then a misgiving, then a desire, then a prayer. And that was just the day of small things: it was the first dawning of a bright day. When God begins the work, He carries it on in His own way, therefore perseverance is the great mark of effectual calling. Think of those who, though not young in years, are the weak in faith. They are always wavering between hopes and fears. Wherever we look we may see a "day of small things." II. WHO HATH DESPISED IT? God does not. Jesus will not despise them. Take care lest you

should be found despising it. Apply to ministers, parents, teachers. The gradual work in souls is little discernible, but, when duly reflected on, it is as clearly to be traced out as any other. (*J. H. Evans.*) *The significance of apparent trifles* :—I. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE. 1. The seed. 2. The mountain rivulet. 3. The spark. 4. The child. II. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PROVIDENCE. 1. Scriptural, as Joseph, Moses, David, Esther. 2. General, as Cromwell, Napoleon. III. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. 1. Introduction of the Gospel. 2. Reformation. 3. The religious denominations. 4. Benevolent and religious institutions. (*G. Brooks.*) *The day of small things* :—It is a “day of small things” with you as regards your—I. CONVICTION OF SIN. How easy it is to know ourselves to be sinners, how hard to feel ourselves to be such. We distress ourselves because it seems to us as if we could not repent. But beware of imagining that a certain number of tears, a certain standard of repentance is to qualify you for the blessings of Christ’s salvation. Try yourself thus, “How do I feel with regard to sin? Have I any desire to be rid of it in its power, as well as in its consequences? Do I feel any real degree of hatred towards it? Do I desire to hate it?” If you can answer in the affirmative, this is a sure proof that God’s Spirit has not forsaken you. The Spirit’s office is to convince of sin. II. FAITH. Your cry is, “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” You have no doubts as to the power of Christ’s work; but you can scarcely believe there is salvation for you. Many are in darkness and disquietude through lack of faith. It may be a “day of small things” as regards your faith in God’s providence. III. CHRISTIAN GRACES AND THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON THE LIFE. This again is a source of deep humiliation and much disquietude to you. Be not discouraged. The work of grace is gradual; you cannot sow the seed and have blossom and fruit in a day. IV. SPIRITUAL PEACE AND JOY. It cannot be presumption to claim what God bestows, what Christ has purchased. V. RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE. You find many difficulties in the Bible. As yet you seem to understand only “first principles of the doctrine of Christ.” How then are you to go on to perfection? The Spirit, to teach and enlighten, as well as to sanctify and comfort you, is covenanted to you. You shall grow in knowledge as in grace. (*John C. Miller.*) *The day of small things not to be despised* :—In this message God reproved those who had regarded the new temple with contempt, and those also who thought that they were unable to finish it. He informed them that the work was His, that it was to be effected not by human might nor power, but by His Spirit. Zerubbabel should finish it, and those who had despised the feeble commencement of the work should witness its completion. I. IN ALL GOD’S WORKS THERE IS USUALLY A “DAY OF SMALL THINGS.” There is a season in which His work makes but a very small and unpromising appearance. Illustrate from the beginnings of the Christian Church, and from the work of grace in the hearts of individuals. II. MANY PERSONS DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.” God’s enemies did so in Zechariah’s time. The friends of God do. They think too little of it; they undervalue it, and they are by no means sufficiently thankful for it, and therefore may be said, comparatively speaking, to despise it. Illustrate, times of religious revival generally begin with persons of no social standing, and so revivals are often despised. Even Christians too lightly esteem the work of God in their own hearts. III. REASONS WHY IT OUGHT NOT TO BE DESPISED. 1. Such conduct tends to prevent its becoming a day of great things. 2. Because the inhabitants of heaven, whose judgment is according to truth, do not despise it. 3. Because our Saviour does not despise it. “The smoking flax He will not quench.” 4. Our Heavenly Father does not despise it. 5. Because it is the commencement of a day of great things. Apply—(1) By asking every individual present, is it with you, in a religious sense, even so much as a “day of small things”? Beware how you deny or underestimate what God has done for you. (2) There is an opposite error. Instead of despising the day, some professors make too much of it, and are too satisfied with it. They conclude too hastily that the work of grace is begun in their hearts, and flatter themselves that it will go on, without their attention. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Weak grace encouraged* :—It is not easy to determine what is small. Things, at first apparently trivial and uninteresting, often become very great and momentous. It is so in nature, in science, in political affairs, in moral concerns. What inference should we derive hence? A philosopher will not despise the day of small things; a statesman will not; a moralist will not—and should a Christian? Apply the question entirely to the subject

of religion. 1. The work of grace in the soul is frequently small in its commencement. The Christian is a soldier, and the beginning of his career is naturally the day of small things. The Christian is a scholar; and when he enters the school, it is, of course, a "day of small things"; he begins with the rudiments. 2. Three reasons why the day of small things is not to be despised. (1) Our Saviour does not despise it. He received and blessed the weak. (2) Because such a day is precious. Real grace is infinitely valuable. It is the work of God; the image of God; the glory of God; the delight of God. A little grace is too precious to be despised. (3) Because it will be a day of great things. The child will become a man, condemn not his infancy. Divine grace shall assuredly increase. What is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. Conclude with a question—Is it even a day of small things with you? With an admonition. Do not overlook or undervalue imperfect religion, whether in yourselves or others. If you are upright in heart you will be in most danger of despising it in yourselves. You are in some danger with regard to others. You may think too little of a real work of grace. You may suppose God has done nothing, where He has been doing much. With a caution. Let not the subject cause remissness in duty. Those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," will cry "evermore give us this bread." More is attainable. More is desirable. There are two reasons why you should seek growth in grace; one is taken from usefulness, and the other from comfort. (*William Jay.*) *The day of small things*:—Contempt for small beginnings is one of the most ordinary displays of the human disposition, in all departments of affairs, but especially in things connected with sacred interests. Divers of the great powers and influential systems, good or evil, that have had a mighty effect, have in their apparently insignificant origin been despised. Individuals appointed to be of the greatest importance in the world have often experienced contempt in the beginning of their career. This is true of David, and it is in a sense true of the Son of Man. The vain world has always been peculiarly disposed to an unhesitating contempt of the small beginnings of Divine operations,—to attribute meanness to what had a relation to infinite greatness. The Christian cause itself, in its early stage, was an object of extreme scorn; every ignominious epithet was connected with the name of a Christian. So fared the great Reformation. We comment on the tendency in men to indulge contempt for good things, in the littleness and weakness of their beginnings and early operations. The case with our world is, that man, having lost his original goodness, was to be under an economy of discipline, for his correction and practical restoration; but that the operation for this was not to be sudden, but by various processes, commencing in an apparent littleness of agency, power, and scope, so as to appear, in human judgment, incompetent to a great purpose. Why has the Sovereign Wisdom appointed it so? It is a higher discipline for the servants of God, as agents in a good cause, as it brings their principle of obedience under a more plain, unequivocal proof. It tends to keep them under a direct, pressing conviction that all the power is of God. They will also have a stronger sense of the value of the good that is so hardly and so slowly accomplished. Can we expose the error and injustice of this disposition to despise small beginnings? It comes from not duly apprehending the preciousness of what is good, in any, even the smallest portion of it. Any essential good, in the highest sense, is a thing of inexpressible value: especially so in an evil world, where it is scattered among baser elements. Again, in the indulgence of this disposition, it is left out of sight, how much, in many cases, was requisite to be previously done, to bring the small beginning into existence at all: it did not start into existence of itself. Though *small*, it may have been the result of a large combination. Another thing is that we are apt to set far too high a price on our own efforts and services. Far enough from small, truly, have been our labours, expenditures, sacrifices, self-denials, inconveniences, pleadings, perhaps prayers. Our self-importance cannot endure that so much of our agency, ours, should be consumed for so small a result. A tenth part of the pains should have done as much. It is not an equivalent; and it is a hard doom to work on such terms. Again, we overmeasure our brief span of mortal existence. We want all that is done for the world to be done in our time. We want to contract the Almighty's plan to our own limits of time, and to precipitate the movement, that we may clearly see the end of it. In all this there is the impiety of not duly recognising the supremacy of God. The grand essential of religion—faith—is wanting; faith in the unerring wisdom of the Divine scheme and determinations: faith in the *goodness* of God. With such *faith* let

us look on the "day of small things," and remonstrate against the tendency to despise it; whether it be in good men, from impatience, and a very censurable self-importance; or in worldly men, from irreligion. Look into the natural world, as having an analogy emblematical of a higher order of things. In nature we see many instances of present actual littleness containing a powerful principle of enlargement: such as the seed of a plant, the germ of a flower, the acorn of the oak. In fire there is a mysterious principle of tremendous power. Does the parent despise the day of small things in his infant? Turn to the kingdom of God on earth, the promotion of which is the cause of God. There the small things are to be estimated according to what they are to become. But what things, as yet comparatively small, come under this description? We answer; all things, judiciously and in good faith, attempted to promote the best cause, that is, to diminish the awful sum of human depravity and misery. Efforts to diminish ignorance. The topic includes the progress of genuine Christianity. Looking abroad, we can but think it a "day of small things" for Christianity. But what is it, that, on this account, shall be despised? Is it Christianity itself, or is it God who sent it? We may be confident that when God makes or causes a beginning of a good work, it is intended for progress and expansion. Now to remonstrate and warn against "despising." To a decidedly irreligious contemner, we might say, "Beware what you do; for if the thing be of God you are daring Him by your contempt." There is also admonition to those who are too apt to fall into something like what the text describes,—not from hostility to religion and general improvement, but from want of faith,—from indolence, cowardice, or mere worldly calculation,—reckoning on things without reckoning on God. To undervalue is in a certain sense to "despise." Shall there not be an admonition to examine whether pride, or sluggishness, or covetousness have not something to do with it? In some cases, it partly proceeds from the less blamable cause of a gloomy, apprehensive, disconsolate constitution of mind,—looking on the dark side,—dismayed by difficulties,—prone to fear the most and hope the least, dwelling on remembered and recorded failures more than on successes. But there may be the interference of pride. A man shall have such a notion of himself, and of a good cause, as to deem it unbefitting his dignity to connect or concern himself with it. It is not of an order, or in a state, to reflect any honour on a man of his high sentiments, refined habits, or consideration in society. With some men a good work or design is of "small" account, when it has not the quality for rousing the sluggish temperament, nothing to excite gaze and wonder. Covetousness is one of the most decided practical "despisings." Most truly does a man treat the good things as contemptibly small, when he deems them not worth his money, that is, money which he could afford. We would rather refer to such as were not positively enemies, whose "despising," in a mitigated sense of the word, was from little faith, self-sparing, false prudence, worldly calculation. They have lived to see that the good cause can do without them, and that there were more generous, liberal, magnanimous spirits to be found in the community. Well, at all events, the good cause of God, of Christ, of human improvement, is certain, is destined to advance and triumph. It may at last be seen that the whole course of the world, from the beginning to the end, was "a day of small things," as compared with the sequel—only as a brief introduction to an immense and endless economy. (*John Foster.*) *Christian appreciation of little things* :—Zerubbabel was taught of the Lord to hold in due esteem even the imperfect commencement already made, and to regard with a degree of assurance and satisfaction the feeble results his hands had already wrought. This is but one of the uncounted instances, both in Scripture and in nature, of the affectionate interest with which God regards "little things." It is not quite easy and natural for us to think of God as putting all the skill of His thought and interest of His heart in the small matters of His providence and His workmanship. In all our attempts to figure and localise Him, we resort instantly and spontaneously to words that represent immensity of height, and breadth, and circuit. It is not the drop, but the ocean—not the pebble, but the mountain that seems to us redolent of Divine suggestion, and freighted with Divine presence. This tendency prompts us to see God in the flashing of the lightning, and to hear Him in the pealing of the thunder, but makes us deaf to Him in the pattering of the rain, the sighing of the wind, and the twittering of the sparrow. Happy is the man and the prophet that has the ear to detect the Divineness that lodges in the little quiet voices of God's works and providences. It is only when we pass into

the New Testament that we get the best assurances of God's distributed regard, and of His detailed interest and affection. It is the genius of the Gospel to try and convince men of God's fatherly concern for us. But fatherly concern always particularises and individualises : and so in the Gospel there is not much about the sky, but a great deal about the ground : not much about masses of men, but about individual men. God feeds the bird, paints the lily, clothes the grass. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Christ's history, from the Baptism to the Ascension, is mostly made up of little words, little deeds, little prayers, little sympathies, adding themselves together in unwearied succession. One reason why we have no more continuous and solid comfort in our Christian life is, that we are looking and feeling after great joys, and neglecting and failing to economise the multitude of little blessings that are within reach, and that, if husbanded and cultivated, would go, in most cases, to compose a life quite substantially delightful and quite solidly comfortable. It is not well to pray for great joys. There is something disturbing and unsettling in them. It is a great deal better to pray that we may have our hearts let into an appreciation of our everyday joys, and into an appreciation of the goodness of God in that these everyday joys come to a very quiet but very steady expression. We want a Christian genius for infusing sublimity into trifles. Some one has said, "It is better that joy should be spread over all the day, in the form of strength, than that it should be concentrated into ecstasies, full of danger, and followed by reactions." Our lives would be more fruitful if we let our hearts feel the incessant droppings of heavenly mercy. The constant dropping of God's little goodness seems designed, not so much for their own sakes, but, like the constant dropping of the rain, that they may be to us a kind of heavenly fertility, soaking in at the soul's pores, and sinking down around the roots of our manly Christian purposes, nourishing those purposes, becoming absorbed into them, and so quickening them, building them up, and pushing them on to fructification. What capacity even the most commonplace living has for affording us discipline. A good angel really hides in every provocation and petty exasperation. The little tests that are given to our temper, our faith, our affection, our consecration, are more efficacious than the larger and more imposing ones. They take us when we are off our guard. There is something in great occasions that nerves us to powers of endurance not properly our own. We ought to show great respect for little opportunities of service and patent continuance in small well-doings. (*Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Duty in relation to the little* :—I. IT IS SELDOM WISE TO DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS." This is shown by history and observation. Look at nature. Into the hand of an infant may be put an acorn which shall be the parent of many forests. The Wye and the Severn may be turned whithersoever you please at their source, and a child may step over them. At their outset they are indebted to the very smallest possible rill, and even to the tears of rushes. Look at men. Rembrandt painted in a smithy ; Pascal traced his Euclid with chalk ; Wilkie drew his first rough sketch on the white-washed walls of his father's rooms with a burnt stick ; and it was with a burnt stick on his father's barn door that one of Wales's most celebrated preachers learned to write. Luther was but the son of a miner, Carey a shoemaker, and Morrison a last maker ! And who can help going back to the humble company of the Galilean fisherman who afterwards turned the world upside down. Sydney Smith made sport of the Baptist Missionary Society, because the first collection on its behalf was only £13, 2s. 6d. ; and to come to a recent Lancashire political movement, who can forget the Anti-con law league's "day of small things" and subsequent grand success ? II. IT IS GENERALLY WRONG TO DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS." 1. There is a heartlessness in it. It is during "the day of small things" that men need sympathy and help. Johnson in composing his dictionary, and many others in all fields of labour. "To him that hath shall be given." At one point in a man's history, a kind word, a sympathising look, and a cordial grasp of the hand will be felt to be of more service than any amount of money at a subsequent stage in his career. 2. There is a cowardice in it. The cowardice of sneering at honest, well-meant efforts on a small scale. 3. There is an injustice in it. The injustice of withholding encouragement and praise from men who so act as to deserve success, whether they succeed or not. Blessed is the man who still believes that "wisdom is better than folly, though it fail to bring him bread during the reign of fools." The right—the Christian thing should take precedence of all calculations as to the scale of operations. The right must be weighed in its

own scales—tested by its own standard. The extreme importance of not “despising the day of small things” in regard to—1. The formation of bad and irreligious habits. 2. The formation of religious habits, and the cherishing of religious impressions and convictions. 3. The present attainments and spiritual stature of professing and real Christians. 4. The final prevalence of Christianity throughout the world. (*Homilist.*) *Day of small things—A talk with children*:—We are all inclined to underestimate the importance of little things whenever we see them. We should not despise them—1. Because small things are often too powerful to be despised. Our enemies are microbes, not lions. The discoveries of science are chiefly in the direction of showing the terror of small things. 2. Because of the exceeding beauty of small things. Illustrate by the revelations of the microscope. Their beauty teaches us that God has taken care to make, not only big things, but even the smallest things exquisitely beautiful. He is such a perfect worker that He would not do anything imperfectly. And with us, careful attention to little things will help to form a noble character for life. If you become negligent and slovenly in school you will, by and by, be slovenly in life. There is no knowing what little things may become as time unfolds. You little children, learn of Jesus Christ and His love, and you may turn out a great reformer, or such an one as Luther, Knox, Wesley, Spurgeon, or Florence Nightingale. Then never treat small opportunities with indifference, but consider that every great thing has come from a little beginning, and that a great life, as a rule, consists of many little things well done. (*David Davies.*) *Small things (to children)*:—You, my children, are living in the day of small things, the day of little sorrows and little joys and little sins and little thoughts and words, but do not despise the day of small things. The greatest results, both of good and evil, come from small beginnings. There is an old fable that the trees of the forest once held a meeting, to complain of the injuries which the woodman’s axe had done them. All the trees determined that none of them would give any wood to make a handle for their enemy the axe. The axe went travelling up and down the forest, begging the oak and the elm, the cedar and the ash, to give him wood enough for a handle, but they all refused. At last the axe begged for just enough wood, only a little bit, to enable him to cut down the brambles, which were choking the roots of the trees. Well, they agreed to this, and gave him a little wood, but no sooner had the axe got a handle than the cedar and the oak, the ash and the elm, and all the trees were cut down. So is it with sins and bad habits. They begin with a very small beginning; the tempter whispers, “Is it not a little one?” and then, if you yield to them, they cut you down and destroy you. Remember that one single worm can kill a whole tree. Never think sin is a trifle; it may seem small to you, but it is none the less dangerous. A scorpion is a very small reptile, but it can sting a lion to death. There are plenty of ruined men and women, who began as children by being too idle to get up betimes in the morning, and to do their work. If you want to get rid of the weeds in your garden, pull them up when they are young; don’t give them time to grow strong and run to seed. If you want to grow up to be good men and women, try to get the better of bad habits whilst you are young. One of the labours of Hercules was to kill the hydra, a horrible monster with one hundred heads. As fast as one head was cut off two more grew in its place unless the wound was stopped with fire. We have all got some kind of a monster like the hydra to fight with. Perhaps your monster is bad temper, or laziness, or untruthfulness. You must fight against your monster, and out off its head. And you must get the wound burnt with fire, that the heads may not grow again. I mean, that you must pray to God to help you, and to send the fire of the Holy Spirit to your assistance. Little sins seem like trifles to us. Well, a grain of sand seems a very little thing too, yet millions of grains of sand form a desert, and bury the traveller beneath them. When we do wrong for the sake of pleasing ourselves we think it a small matter, and look forward to having our own way. But we find in time that what we get by our sin crushes us at last. In the early days of Rome the governor of the citadel, the strongest part of the town, had a daughter called Tarpeia. When the Sabines, a neighbouring tribe, came to attack Rome, Tarpeia promised to open the gates to the enemies of her people. As a reward she asked for what the Sabines carried on their left hands, meaning their golden bracelets. When the treacherous woman had let them in the king of the Sabines not only threw his bracelet upon Tarpeia, but also his heavy shield, which was carried on the left hand. His followers did the same, and Tarpeia was crushed beneath the

shields and bracelets. So it is with sin. "The wages of sin is death." Again little words seem trifles, but they are very important. Such words as "I shan't," "I won't," "I don't care," have made many a parent's heart sad, and spoilt many a promising life. (*H. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Small, but enough*.—In Sir Henry M. Stanley's account of his African experiences he tells of his first encounter with a pigmy tribe that used poisoned arrows. With contemptuous smiles the young men drew out the tiny darts, flung them away, and continued answering the savages with rifle-shots. When the day's fight was over the wounds, which were mere punctures, were syringed with warm water and bandaged, but soon the poison began to be felt, and all who were wounded either died after terrible suffering, or had their constitutions wrecked or were incapacitated for a long time. So the smallest sin does its work in the heart and life, sooner or later. *Small, but growing*.—When the father of William the Conqueror was departing to the Holy Land he called together the peers of Normandy, and required them to swear allegiance to his young son, who was a mere infant. When the barons smiled at the feeble babe the king promptly replied to their smile: "He may be little now, but he will grow." And he did grow. That same baby hand ere long ruled the nation with a rod of iron. The same may be said of evil in its tiniest form: "It is little, but it will grow." Once let the smallest sin gain the upper hand, and it will destroy the whole life. *No influence is small*.—The great tendency in many Christians of circumscribed lives is to believe that their influence is small. Tell them that they have a large influence over the people among whom they live, and they will at once dispute it and perhaps blush at the thought of their having any perceptible degree of influence. And this is true of many Christians of acknowledged piety, ability, and clean records. And it is because of this feeling that not a few of these good people do not put forth that effort to reach and help others which they easily might. They are afflicted with a modesty which underrates the real measure of their power and possible ministry. Better realise, Christian brother, that, however weak and narrow your ability may seem to you to be, your influence is never small, but always large. You cannot make it otherwise if you would. An eminent preacher says: "Do not fear that your influence be small; no influence is small: but even if it were, the aggregate of small influences is far more irresistible than the most vigorous and heroic of isolated efforts." Did you ever think of the influence which the odour of a little bed of flowers has? Everything around that bed is influenced by it; every one coming near it is consciously affected by it. Do not excuse yourself from duty of any sort on the plea of having no influence. (*G. H. Wetherbe.*) *A little woman and a big war*.—When Mrs. Stowe, who wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin," visited the White House, President Lincoln bent over her, saying: "And this is the little woman who made this big war?" The freeing of the serfs in Russia was the result of thoughts aroused by the reading of the novelist's story, so the Czar told Turgeneff. *The resolution of a moment*.—At Toulon, Napoleon, looking out of the batteries, drew back a step to let some one take his place. The next moment the new-arrived was killed. That step brought the French Empire, and made possible the bloody role of its victories and defeats. The rout at Waterloo turned on a shower of rain hindering Grouchy's advance. The resolution of a moment with some men has been the turning-point of infinite issues to a world. (*J. C. Geikie.*) *Great results from small beginnings*.—A little babe is born in a poor miner's home at Eiselben, Saxony, November 1483. Few notice his birth, but in 1519 Martin Luther shakes the foundation of the papal throne, and saves Europe from gross ignorance and superstition. August 25th, 1759, William Wilberforce was born at Hull. Who imagined that this small babe would one day become the saviour of the slaves, and that on August 15th, 1838, 800,000 African bondsmen would rend the air with cries of "Freedom's come"? *Nothing should be despised*.—Down at Greenock there, on an ordinary working man's hob, there is a kettle boiling. Kettles have boiled in Scotland millions of times before. Listen to the lid. "Rat-a-tat!" Listen! Don't judge it! The ears of a genius are suddenly fixed on the sound of the lid that is raised by the bubbling of the boiling water. What have you there? You have the birth of the giant steam forces that are abroad on the world to-day. Don't be hasty either about men or method—about workers or work; you never know what it is to grow to, if God be in it. Over in an American State there is a kite flying as the thunder-cloud is coming across the sky, and there is a man holding the string like a silly schoolboy. "Oh, what an undignified thing," you say. And

he has a key in his hand. He is tapping away at the bottom there, when suddenly a spark is seen. What are you going to say about it? A small thing, yet perhaps one of the mightiest events that ever took place in this world. It is the birth of electricity—the birth of the electric forces that bind the Antipodes to our shores. Ah, be careful! When God is in it you do not know what is to come out of it. But these men, though chosen by God, have got no extra intellect. They have no extra learning, and would have been passed by even for a Socialistic propaganda. It was not likely that these men should carry the banner of the Cross as they did. “Only a little chit of a boy,” the elder said at a Scottish communion; “only one chit of a boy joined us this communion”; and he thought the minister was wasting his time, night after night, with that little chit of a boy. But in that Scottish parish there was never such a communion, never such a joining of the Church; for that little boy was Robert Moffat, Africa’s missionary. Never despise anything, for you never know to what it will grow. (*John Robertson.*) *The day of small things*:—This very sweet and evangelical minor prophet bore his burden of prophecy after the return from the Babylonish Captivity. The second temple, erected in his time, was of no esteem in the sight of the people, few and poor as they were, whose fathers had boasted to them of the glory of the first temple. But the prophet cheers them as his fellow-prophet Haggai did, who said, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former!” In this despised temple the people would know that the Lord of hosts had sent His servant to them. Man is never so apt to err as in coming to hasty conclusion with regard to God’s dealing with him. I. OURS IS A DAY OF SMALL THINGS. 1. We live in a small world. Many worlds that surround us in space greatly exceed ours in size. We stand, as it were, upon an atom of God’s material creation. 2. Our bodies are small portions of this world. Over these alone we have immediate control, and that in a very partial degree. 3. Our faculties are few. We have but five senses of the body and five of the mind. These are at our command in a limited and imperfect manner. 4. Our knowledge of matter is small. Nature is ever sparing in her revelations. 5. Our knowledge of the Divine Mind is small. II. THIS DAY SHOULD NOT BE DESPISED. Why should it? It is ours. No one despises his own. Despise—1. Not small opportunities of obtaining religious knowledge. This is the chief knowledge. Its smallest morsels are more precious than pearl-dust. Religious knowledge is useful for two lives—a guide for both worlds. 2. Not small opportunities of doing good for Christ. We have not all abundance of wealth to enrich God’s sanctuary. Few have ten talents to occupy until He comes. 3. Not small sins in their earliest stage. However small, they are deviations from the right path; the lines containing a small angle, if produced far, become far asunder. As large rivers spring from small sources, so small sins soon grow to be large. Sinning is strengthened by habit, and increases in its onward course. 4. Not small chastisements for sin. 5. Not small religious impressions. You may never get stronger ones to start with. By being timely cherished they will grow in strength. Why we should not. Because our present day is but the infancy of our being. Our brief time will give birth to an eternity; a dwarf will be the parent of a giant. We shall have to give an account of how we spend it. Why should we differ from others with regard to the day of small things? God despises not small things; if He did, He would not have created so many of them. Nor does the Church; it receives the weakest in the faith, and performs the smallest duties. Nor does the Evil One, with his malicious craftiness. (*J. Bowen Jones, B.A.*)

Vers. 11-14. What are these two olive trees.—*The candlestick and the olive trees*:—In the parable of Zechariah we have the picture of a lamp supplied not by a limited quantity of oil contained in metal or earthen vessels, but by an unlimited unfailing quantity from a living source. It was not part of the produce of an olive harvest that kept the candlestick burning brightly; for that supply would in course of time have been exhausted; even the whole crop of olives of one year would in course of time have failed. And what a beautiful symbol of the bountifulness and enduringness of grace this is! We do not get a limited, carefully measured supply from Christ, but an unlimited, ever-flowing fulness. He will supply all our need; not according to our own sense of need, but according to His riches in glory. Christ came not that we might have a bare life, snatched from the condemnation of the law, but that we might have more abundant life than man originally possessed in his unfallen state. It is

not pardon and acquittal only that He gives us, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Where our sin abounds His grace doth much more abound. God carefully measures His afflictive dispensations, and sends trials and sorrows in small doses, as it were; just as the apothecary measures out in a carefully graduated medicine-glass the bitter or poisonous medicines that are necessary to cure our sicknesses. But God pours His joys and blessings into our souls in such lavish bountifulness that there is not room in them to contain them. He wishes not only that His joy may be in us, but that our joy may be full. The two olive trees that feed the visionary candlestick, one on each side, may be said to represent the twofold character of Christ's personality,—His Divine and human natures. Another idea implied in the symbol of the text besides this of exhaustless abundance is spontaneity—freeness. The olive trees pour their oil into the lamps freely as well as fully. The oil that feeds the candlestick has not to be first gathered in the berries, extracted in the oil-press, manufactured by the art of man, sold by the merchant, bought and earned by the sweat of the face. Not in this roundabout, laborious, artificial way, but directly, by a spontaneous, natural process, do the olive trees contribute of their fulness to the supply of the lamps; and thus it is that the grace of God is freely given to us. Not by laborious mechanical arts and efforts, but by a living faith, a simple trust, do we obtain the supplies of our spiritual need from Christ. We have not to work for them, but only to freely receive them as they are freely offered to us. How striking is the contrast between the way in which we get the fruits of sin and the tree of life! We stretch out our hand to pluck the forbidden fruit. We take it ourselves, in defiance of God's command—by force, by deceit, by trouble, by methods that cost us toil and pain. But God gives to us to eat of the tree of life. We have not to stretch forth the hand to pluck it; it is given into our hand, into our mouth. God's unspeakable gift is freely bestowed. The olive trees that feed the lamp of your faith and love are planted in no earthly soil, and are dependent upon no earthly means of culture. They grow without your toil or care in heavenly light and air. Their harvests are regulated by the unchanging laws of God's covenant of grace. Your Father is the husbandman. Your Saviour has finished the whole work of grace, and you do not require to add to it. The less you interfere with its working the better. The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself—first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. He who is the author of your faith will be the finisher of it; and having begun the good work of grace in you, He will carry it on and complete it; and therefore the more poor in spirit you are, the more empty and destitute, the more will the Kingdom of Heaven be yours, the more room and freedom will it have to work out in you the good pleasure of God's goodness as the work of faith. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.*)

The consecration of the people:—The picture that the prophet saw is set before us with distinctness, and the meaning of the symbol is not obscure. The significance of the central figure—the candlestick or candelabrum, all of gold,—the prophet knows perfectly. Concerning that he asks no questions. Is the meaning equally clear to all of us? The golden lampstand always symbolises the Church. The Church is represented, not as the light of the world, but as the receptacle or support of the light. The light is Divine. The candelabrum all of gold was to the prophet the symbol of the Church of God in its latter-day glory. To him the Jewish Church and the Jewish nation were not twain, but one. That sharp discrimination which we make between things sacred and things secular, the devout Jew did not make at all. Between politics and religion he drew no line. It must be admitted that this old Hebrew conception is a little nobler and finer than the theory of life that generally prevails among us. We have come to make a broad distinction between that part of life which is sacred, and that part which is secular. The complete divorce between the Church and the State which exists among us is the result of sectarian divisions. That a practical unity is one day to be realised I have no doubt. It can never be realised until the different sects all learn to exalt that which is essential above that which is secondary. The things that are essential are the values of character, righteousness, purity, and love; the things that are secondary are rites and forms and dogmas. When the Church of God shall be one it will be possible to bring it into the closest relations with the State. The prophet did need to inquire concerning the two olive

trees growing on either side of the candelabrum, connected with it by golden pipes and pouring a perennial supply of golden oil, pure and precious, into the golden bowl—what did they symbolise? The oil thus provided must be taken to represent the Divine inspiration, which is the power that moves and the life that energises the Kingdom of God in the world. It is the immanent and perennial grace of Him “whose light is truth, whose warmth is love.” The two olive trees are the “two anointed ones,” Zerubbabel and Joshua—the two men in whom the Spirit of the Lord was dwelling; the men who were working together to rebuild the temple, and fully restore the worship. They were the living sources of inspiration and help to the restored and glorified kingdom. We have no kings or priests. All who believe, says Peter, are a royal priesthood. The grace that was specialised in the old time is generalised in the new. The right of standing before the Lord, receiving His messages, and transmitting His truth and love and power, is not restricted to a few; it belongs to all faithful and loyal souls. (*W. Gladden.*)

Model religious teachers :—This is not another vision, but an explanation of the one recorded in the preceding verses. Take the “two anointed ones” as types of model religious teachers. I. THEY HAVE A HIGH ORDER OF LIFE IN THEM. They are represented by the olive branches. Few productions of the vegetable kingdom are of such a high order as those of the olive. Its fatness was proverbial (Jud. vii. 9); it is an evergreen, and most enduring. In short, it is marked by great beauty, perpetual freshness, and immense utility. It was one of the sources of wealth in Judea, and its failure was the cause of famine. The emblems of a true teacher are not dead timber or some frail vegetable life, but an olive tree. Religious teachers should not only have life, but life of the highest order. They should be full of animal spirits, full of creative genius, full of fertile thought, full of Divine inspiration. II. THEY COMMUNICATE THE MOST PRECIOUS ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE. They “empty the golden oil out of themselves.” It has been observed by modern travellers that the natives of olive countries manifest more attachment to olive oil than to any other article of food, and find nothing adequate to supply its place. Genuine religious teachers feed the lamp of universal knowledge with the most golden elements of truth. They not only give the true theory of morals and worship, but the true theory of moral restoration. What are the true genuine religious teachers doing? They are pouring into the lamps of the world’s knowledge the choicest elements of truth. III. THEY LIVE NEAR TO THE GOD OF ALL TRUTH. “Then said he, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” They “stand”; a position of dignity, “stand,” a position of waiting—waiting to receive infallible instructions, ready to execute the Divine behests. All true religious teachers live consciously near to God. (*Homilist.*) *The two olive trees* :—Consider—1. That by the two olive trees it is not clear to understand only the graces of God poured out on His Church. That is indeed signified by oil in such Scripture as Psa. xlv. 7. Here the resolution is concerning the trees that furnished the oil. Nor yet are we to understand them of a fountain of bounty in God; for there can be no reason given why that should be compared to two trees, and be said to “stand before the Lord.” But by them we are to understand Christ anointed in His priestly (which includes His prophetic) and kingly office, who was chief in this work, and in furnishing all instruments; who furnishes His Church, and serves His Father in the work of redemption, and is cared for by Him. 2. That the angel, answering both the prophet’s questions in one, leads us to understand the one by the others so far as is needful; and therefore we may conceive that either that of the branches is not touched as needless, or pointing out only the fit ways of communicating Himself to His people’s capacity, the pipes not being able to receive the oil of the whole tree at once, or that branches only now furnishing, imported Christ’s communicating Himself in a small measure in this typical work of building the temple in respect of what He had and was to communicate in the building of His Church under the Gospel; or if we will stretch it further, it may take in Joshua and Zerubbabel, the one anointed priest, the other a successor of their anointed kings, who, however, as instruments in the work, they were resembled by the burning lamps, getting furniture from the bowl, yet in respect of their office among that people, and their influence upon all instruments of building the temple, they were types of Christ, and so might be represented by two little branches, resembling Him, the great olive tree . . . “standing before the God of the earth,” as being instrumental to keep in life in the Church when all power shall be opposite to her. (*George Hutcheson.*) *The two anointed ones* :—Who

are these? They refer to some standing channel of blessing from God, and are alluded to again in Rev. xi. 3, 4, in terms that cannot be mistaken. Without entering at length into the reasons for this opinion, we simply affirm that they refer to a duality of gracious manifestation from God, corresponding to a duality of necessity in the nature of man. There are two grand evils to be overcome, guilt and pollution, and they demand two standing sources of blessing, the one to remove the guilt by atonement, the other to remove the power of sin by giving a higher power of holiness. These two sources are embodied in two official forms, the only two that were connected with the theocracy as permanent elements, the sacerdotal and regal orders. This duality marked all the manifestations of God, for it rested on a deep necessity of human nature, and it was then embodied in the persons of Joshua and Zerubbabel. Since, then, they were so essential to the theocracy, the people need not suppose that God would allow them to perish, but would continue them in existence until He should come who was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Learn—1. That the Church is the same under both dispensations, for the promises made to her then are only fulfilling now, showing that then and now she was the same Church. The candlestick is the same, though the tubes may be changed; and the Church is the same, though her official channels be totally altered. 2. God has provided an unfailing source of strength for His people. Their supply comes not from a dead reservoir of oil, but a living olive tree, that is ever drawing from the rich earth its generous furnishings, and then distilling them by seven pipes, a perfect number, to those who are to be burning and shining lights. 3. The whole work of religion in the heart of the individual, and throughout the world, is of grace. Christ is at once the corner-stone and the cope-stone of the Church; and as He was greeted with "shoutings of grace" when He came the first time, much more shall He when He comes the second time, without sin unto salvation. 4. We are prone to judge of God's work by man's standard; and because we see but a narrow stream from the fountain, doubt or deny the river. 5. It is not only unwise, it is wicked, to be disheartened because of the external feebleness of the Church, compared with the work she has to do and the enemies she has to encounter. God is her strength, her glory, and her hope, and to despair of her is to deny God. 6. The doctrine and discipline of the Church, the truth and power that God has lodged in her organisation and in her ordinances, are still the standing channels through which the Spirit pours the oil of grace and strength, and hence should both be kept pure and unclogged. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *Do not arrest the inflow of spiritual influences*:—Beware, also, that nothing chokes the golden pipes of obedience to His kingliness, and trust in His priesthood; else the entrance of the golden oil will be arrested. They may soon become stopped by neglect, inattention, or disuse. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Two olive trees*.—The prophet manifests great concern to understand what is meant by these two olive trees. I. THE UNIVERSAL DOMINION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "The Lord of the whole earth." Not to be understood in an abstract, but in a relative sense. The Lord Jesus is the last Adam, and He came and acquired universal dominion on behalf of His people. He obtained universal dominion by prevailing with God. This He did by His obedient life. Whatever perfection—whether of love, or holiness, or wisdom, or integrity—you may name, the Saviour possessed them all. And "the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake." This righteousness, this obedient life of the Lord Jesus, hath prevailed with God's law, hath prevailed with justice. This is one step towards the Saviour's universal dominion, God's unexceptional approbation of His righteousness, God's deep and eternal interest in His righteousness. When the Saviour came to die, was there in the whole universal Church one sin that He did not conquer? Was there one demand of justice that He did not meet? See some of the symptoms of this dominion while the Saviour was in the world. He cast out devils,—there is power over hell. Need I remind you of sin? Why, He pardoned one and another. Then diseases,—what disease was ever too hard for Him? Then the sea,—He walks on it. Whatever dominion He possesses, He will give to you. II. THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES. The two anointed ones. In the Book of Revelation called the "two witnesses." These represent the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church. In this passage, then, is given Christ's entire dominion; the river of the Gospel; the Old and New Testament Churches sweetly united in the same theme; a clear note of time when these wonders were to be mediatorially accomplished; and the faithfulness of the Old and of the New Testament Churches. (*James Wells.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1-4. And I turned . . . and looked, and behold a flying roll.—*The flying roll* :—The object of this discourse is to present to you the Scriptures as a phenomenon of the world around us. Consider them as an appearance in the circle of our observation, a fact in the history of our race, and ask, what account is to be given of it? The attention of our age is taken up much and wisely with the study of phenomena. We may interpret the Scriptures in one way or another; we may study or neglect, revere or despise them; we may consider them to be the dictates of observation, or below the level of human intelligence; we may call them a word of delusion, or the Word of God; but in the extremest varieties of opinion no one can escape from this,—that they are a leading phenomenon in the history of civilisation and religious thought, in the aspect of the moral world as it now stands and moves before us. In the text an angel speaks in vision to one of the last of the prophets, and asks, as if in the very spirit of modern research, “What seest thou?” The prophet raises his eyes and sees a winged book, “a flying roll.” It is of gigantic dimensions. It is of restless speed. It “goeth forth over the face of the whole earth.” It was the roll of the Lord’s judgments—a consuming fire. In this respect the Bible corresponds with it only in one of its parts, but in that part perfectly: in its testimony against unrighteousness, its sentence upon those who love and practise dishonour, its “fiery law.” Dealing with the “flying roll” more generally, what are the points that we discover in it? 1. The extraordinary dimensions of the book, “its length twenty cubits, and its breadth ten.” What a space does the Bible fill in the gaze of mankind, though it can be carried about in the hand of the feeblest wayfarer! Do we not speak truly of its wonderful dimensions when it holds on its ample pages such a widely scattered wisdom, and is discerned from so far? 2. Its preservation and continuance through so long a sweep of time. This is remarkable even at a first glance. Since faithful Abraham came out from Chaldæa vast tribes and strong nations have risen to renew and passed away into silence. Founders of states have not so much as secured the name of what they founded. Dispensers of religion have left neither a priest for their successor nor a shrine for their monument. Oracles of wisdom have grown forgotten as well as dumb. Genius and learning have gone down into the dust, and there is not a finger-track of an inscription upon it for their posterity to read. Whole literatures have disappeared, their tongues having ceased, and their characters become illegible or blotted entirely out. But here is writing, from many hands, and in a long series of instructions, dating as far back as the school lessons of human improvement. It has defied time. It has repelled decay. The linen, or the parchment, or whatever frail material it was confided to, held fast its trust, while brazen trophies were melted down and marble columns were pulverised. The temple of the Lord protected its archives; though its huge stones were unable to hold themselves together, and its sacred vessels served at last but for the ornaments of a heathen triumph. 3. Its spread. It is, indeed, a “flying roll.” The Scriptures move rapidly. They are not only preserved, but incredibly multiplied. They were addressed for the most part to one people, and they now speak to all people. They were written in their own peculiar tongues, and now they call all tongues their own. Have they not “gone forth over the face of the whole earth”? They are among the studies of learned men, who find there a wisdom higher than all else they know; while the ignorant and the simple, reading as they run, are made wise to life everlasting. 4. The honour with which they have been received as they have flown along. They are recognised in the public worship of most of the civilised tribes now under heaven. They are enshrined in cathedrals. They are revered, at least with all outward forms of homage, in the courts of the proudest empires. They are sworn upon when the most solemn vows by which we can be bound are to be attested. The patient fingers of holy recluses could for centuries find no better task than to copy them; and countless presses are now perpetually busy, that they may be distributed over the globe. The rarest genius and the profoundest learning are employed upon the illustration of them. It may be objected that we have said nothing of the disrespect and derision with which the Scriptures are regarded by multitudes, and have always been. We may admit this, but press the consideration, that they have withstood even this trial. Familiarity and levity have not subjected them to contempt. Nothing could better show how deeply they are seated in the

veneration of mankind. 5. Their influence, their surprising power. There may be a high repute without any true efficiency. But that roll of the Divine covenants has always been of a Divine force. It has acted upon communities, wherever it has been introduced, so as to accomplish the most astonishing consequences. Are you inquiring what overthrew many of the massy oppressions, the enormous abuses, of the elder times? It was its paper edges that smote upon all that dark strength, and before those thin leaves buttress and battlement went down. How much has it done for individual minds. 6. Their immeasurable superiority, as mere traditions, above everything that has been handed down to us from the ancient world. There is in their contents a deep spring of instruction, such as the old generations nowhere furnish, and the coming ones are not likely soon to exhaust. Your own minds will surely leap to the inference; the finger of God was here. You may be perplexed with many passages in your Bible. You may slight some things as unimportant, and repel others as uncongenial. You may think you discern great blemishes and errors here and there. But what of that? It should throw no mistrust over the spontaneous conclusion: the finger of God was here. Yes, the Divine providence ordained and protected this charter of man's truest liberty and highest good. Let us look thoughtfully at it, then, as it flies on its holy errand. (*N. L. Frothingham.*) *The flying roll*:—The import of this vision is threatening, to show that the object of the prophet was to produce genuine repentance. The parts are significant. A roll, probably of parchment, is seen, 30 by 15 feet, the exact dimensions of the temple porch; where the law was usually read, showing that it was authoritative in its utterance, and connected with the theocracy. Being a written thing, it showed that its contents were solemnly determined beyond all escape or repeal. It was flying, to show that its threats were ready to do their work, and descend on every transgressor. It was unrolled, or its dimensions could not have been seen, to show that its warnings were openly proclaimed to all, that none might have an excuse. It was written on both sides, to connect it with the tables of the law, and show its comprehensive character. One side denounced perjury, a sin of the first table, the other stealing, a sin of the second; and both united in every case where a thief took the oath of expurgation to acquit himself of the charge of theft. This hovering curse would descend in every such case into the house of the offender, and consume even its most enduring parts, until it had thoroughly done its work of destruction. The immediate application of this vision was to those who were neglecting the erection of God's house to build their own, and thus robbing God and forswearing their obligations to Him. On such the prophet declares a curse shall descend that will make this selfish withholding of their efforts in vain, for the houses they would build should be consumed by God's wrath. The teaching of this vision is that of the law. It blazes with the fire, and echoes with the thunder of Sinai, and tells us that our God is a consuming fire. We learn thus a lesson of instruction to those who have succeeded the prophets of the Old Testament, as the authorised expounders of God's will under the New. It is needful to tell the love of God, to unfold His precious promises, and to utter words of cheer and encouragement. But it is also needful to declare the other aspect of God's character. There is a constant tendency in the human heart to abuse the goodness of God to an encouragement of sin. Hence ministers of the Gospel must declare this portion of God's counsel as well as the other. They must declare to men who are living in neglect of duty, that withholding what is due to God, either in heart or life, is combined robbery and perjury. For those who thus sin, God has prepared a ministry of vengeance. There is something most vivid and appalling in this image of the hovering curse. It flies viewless and resistless, poising like a falcon over her prey, breathing a ruin the most dire and desolating, and when the blind and hardened offender opens his door to his ill-gotten gains, this mystic roll, with its fire-tracery of wrath, enters into his habitation, and, fastening upon his cherished idols, begins its dread work of retribution, and ceases not until the fabric of his guilty life has been totally and irremediably consumed. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The flying roll*:—I. THE MAN WHO IS MARKED AS A SPECIAL TRANSGRESSOR IS MARKED ALSO FOR SPECIAL JUDGMENT. The curse went "forth over the face of the whole earth," but it was to cut off the thief and the false swearer. In the Hebrew nation there were many sinners, but there, as everywhere else, there were sinners who had not yet filled up the measure of their iniquity, and there were others who had passed all bounds, whose transgressions were so great as to make them marks upon which the lightnings of God's displeasure must fall. II. ESCAPE

FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNREPENTED SIN IS IMPOSSIBLE. It is not necessary that the sin should reveal itself in action to ensure the entail of the certain penalty. If it never passes the boundary of the inner man there will be a reaction upon the man's spirit as certainly as night follows day, and more so because, though God has suspended the laws of nature, we have no reason to suppose He has ever interposed to prevent the consequences of sin, unless the sinner has come under the power of another law,—the law of forgiveness by confession and repentance. However hidden the transgression, the curse will find out its most secret hiding-place. III. THEFT AND PERJURY INCLUDE ALL OTHER SINS. The son who forges his father's name includes in that one act every other crime that he can commit against him except that of taking his life. He only needs occasion to reveal his readiness for any other act of dishonour toward his parent. The man who deliberately appeals to God to uphold him in his false statements forges the name of the Eternal Himself, and seeks to turn the God of truth into the Father of lies. IV. THE SPECIAL SINS OF SOME BRING SUFFERING UPON MANY. The curse went forth "over the whole earth," or land. It is a truth proclaimed by God and verified by experience, that many may suffer by the sin of the few to whom they are in no way related. See this principle, and its bright reverse, illustrated by St. Paul in Rom. v. 18. (*Outlines by London Minister.*) *The flying roll* :—The threatenings here are directed against the defects and transgressions of the Jewish people at that time. God gives them to understand by this vision that whilst it was His purpose to make His promise good, in the establishment of His Church, He would by no means connive at their sins and corruptions, but would visit them with present punishment, and with future extirpation, if they persisted in their unbelief and rebellion. I. THE SINS MORE ESPECIALLY CONDEMNED. 1. Theft and sacrilege. 2. Perjury and false swearing. II. THE PUNISHMENT THREATENED. Partly personal and partly domestic. 1. A personal judgment is denounced. Every one shall receive his reward and punishment according to his sins, and according to the sentence of the roll. 2. It was to extend to his relative and domestic interests. "It shall enter into the house of the thief." "It shall remain in the midst of his house." "And shall consume it with the timbers thereof, and the stones thereof." This subject may well teach heads of families a lesson of religious caution, lest by an undue anxiety for their own worldly success, or that of their children, they frustrate their most cherished purposes, and entail a curse rather than a blessing. We shall do well to remember that no external evil which may befall a particular class of mankind, in consequence of the faults of their progenitors, renders any individual of that class less acceptable to God, if he turn from his wickedness and repent. But the very curse may become a blessing, if it operate to warn an individual against the sin by which it was brought down upon him. On the other hand, let no children of religious parents suppose that the piety of a long line of ancestors will avail in their behalf, unless they are themselves the possessors of religious principle. And since all are exposed to an infinite danger on account of sin, how deep should be our gratitude to that Divine Redeemer, who bore the curse for us, that we might escape the impending penalty, and inherit the unspeakable blessings of His salvation. (*S. Thodey.*) *The flying roll—Divine retribution* :—I. AS FOLLOWING SIN. 1. The particular sins which retribution pursues. (1) Theft and sacrilege. (2) Perjury and false swearing. The sins here mentioned are not mere specimens, but root or fountain sins. The "flying roll" of Divine retribution followed sin with its curses. There is a curse to every sin, and this is not vengeance, but benevolence. It is the arrangement of love. 2. The way in which just retribution pursues them. (1) Openly. The roll is spread open, and is written in characters that are legible to all. Divine retribution is no secret to man. It is not some intangible, hidden, occult thing. It is open to all eyes. Every man must see the "flying roll," not only in the history of nations and communities, but in his own domestic and individual life. The "flying roll" hovers over every sin. (2) Rapidly. Retribution is swift. It is a "flying roll." Retribution follows sins swifter than the sound of the swiftest thunder-peal follows the lightning-flash. (3) Penetratingly. "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name." Wherever the sinner is, it will find him out. No mountain so high, no cavern so deep, no forest so intricate and shadowy as to protect him from His visitation. It serves to illustrate retribution. II. AS ABIDING WITH SIN. "It shall remain in the midst of his house." Not only does it rule the house of the sinner, "it remains in the midst of it" like a leprosy, infecting, wasting,

consuming, destroying. It abides in the house to curse everything, even the timber and the stones. Guilt, not only, like a ravenous beast, crouches at the door of the sinner, but rather, like a blasting mildew, spreads its baneful influence over the whole dwelling. The sin of one member of a family brings its curse on the others. The sins of the parents bring a curse upon the children. (*Homilist.*) *Judgment with consolation*.—The angel shows, in this chapter, that whatever evils the Jews had suffered, proceeded from the righteous judgment of God; and then he adds a consolation—that the Lord would at length alleviate or put an end to their evils, when He had removed afar off their iniquity. Interpreters have touched neither heaven nor earth in their explanation of this prophecy, for they have not regarded the designs of the Holy Spirit. Some think that by the volume are to be understood false and perverted glosses, by which the purity of doctrine had been vitiated; but this view can by no means be received. There is no doubt but that God intended to show to Zechariah that the Jews were justly punished, because the whole land was full of thefts and perjuries. As their religion had been despised, as well as equity and justice, he shows that it was no wonder a curse had prevailed through the whole land, the Jews having by their impiety and sins extremely provoked the wrath of God. This is the import of the first part. And then, as this vision was terrible, there is added some alleviation by representing iniquity in a measure, and the mouth of the measure closed, and afterwards carried to the land of Shinar, that is, into Chaldea, that it might not remain in Judea. Thus, in the former part the prophet's design was to humble the Jews, and to encourage them to repent, so that they might own God to have been justly angry; and then he gives them reason to entertain hope, and fully to expect an end to their evils, for the Lord would remove to a distance, and transfer their iniquity to Chaldea, so that Judea might be pure and free from every wickedness, both from thefts and acts of injustice, by which it had been previously polluted. (*John Calvin.*) **This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth.**—*The Lord's curse*.—This type is expounded to signify the Lord's curse going forth to do execution in all the land of Judah, and to cut off sinners against the first and second tables of the Law. *Doctrine*.—1. Whatever be the particular punishment inflicted by God for sin, yet this is seriously to be laid to heart, that every such punishment hath in its bosom a curse, till the sinner, awakened thereby, flee to Christ, who became a curse, that His own may inherit a blessing. 2. The Lord is an impartial avenger of sin, when it is persevered in without repentance; and when other means are ineffectual, He will not spare to cut off the desperate sinner; for the curse goes forth "over the face of the whole earth," or land; and "every one shall be cut off," without exception, who are guilty. 3. The Lord will not spare but indifferently punish sin, whether against the first or second tables, in avoiding of both which the Lord's people are to testify their sincerity. This is signified by "cutting off every one that stealeth, and every one that sweareth." 4. When a people are delivered out of sore troubles, and yet their lusts are not modified, they ordinarily prove covetous, false, and oppressing, as labouring by all means to make up these things that trouble hath stript them of; therefore is there a particular threat against every one that *stealeth*, it being a rife sin at their return from captivity, for they went every man to his own house (Hag. i. 9), were cruel oppressors (Neh. v. 1-3), yea, and robbed God of tithes and offerings (Mal. iii. 8). 5. Covetous and false men, in their bargains with men, will make no bones of impiety and perjury, if that may help to gain their point; for with the former is joined "everyone that sweareth," which is expounded, ver. 4, to be "swearing falsely by God's name." (*George Hutcheson.*) **It shall remain in the midst of his house.**—*A curse in the family*.—As certain as the ordinances of nature, is the law that ill-gotten gain will bring a curse. The following is a startling illustration of the truth, gathered from the history of a rural town:—"In 1786, a youth, then residing in Maine, owned a jack-knife, which he, being of a somewhat trading disposition, sold for a gallon of West India rum. This he retailed, and with the proceeds purchased two gallons, and eventually a barrel, which was followed in due time with a large stock. In a word, he got rich, and became the squire of the district, through the possession and sale of the jack-knife, and an indomitable trading industry. He died, leaving property, in real estate and money value, worth eighty thousand dollars. This was divided by testament among four children, three boys and a girl. Luck, which seemed the guardian angel of the father, deserted the children; for every folly and extravagance they could engage in seemed to occupy their exclusive attention and cultivation. The

daughter married unfortunately, and her patrimony was soon thrown away by her spendthrift of a husband. The sons were no more fortunate, and two died in dissipation and in poverty. The daughter also died. The last of the family, for many years past, has lived on the kindness of those who knew him in the days of prosperity, as pride would not allow him to go to the poor-farm. A few days ago he died, suddenly and unattended, in a barn, where he had laid himself down to take a drunken sleep. On his pockets being examined, all that was found in them was a small piece of string and a jack-knife! So the fortune that began with the implement of that kind left its simple duplicate. We leave the moral to be drawn in whatever fashion it may suggest itself to the reader; simply stating that the story is a true one, and all the facts well known to many whom this relation will doubtless reach." (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *A plague in the house*:—How terribly those words have been fulfilled in the case of people and families we have known! It has seemed as though there were a plague in the house. The fortune which had been accumulated with such toil has crumbled; the children turned out sources of heartrending grief; the reputation of the father has become irretrievably tarnished. "There is a plague spread in the house; it is a fretting leprosy, it is unclean." No man can stand against that curse. It confronts him everywhere. It touches his most substantial effects, and they pulverise, as furniture eaten through by white ants. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 5-11. And this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.—*The woman in the ephah*:—This vision, like the preceding, is of a warning character, and somewhat more obscure in its symbolical apparatus. A dim outline rises to the eye of the prophet, to which the angel calls his attention, but which he cannot at first distinctly make out. The angel tells him that it is an ephah, a very common dry measure, containing about three pecks. He then sees a mass of lead, containing about a hundredweight, lifted up above the measure, and on looking more closely he sees a woman in the measure. This woman is then violently thrust down into the measure, and the mass of lead laid upon its mouth, after which two winged women carry it away into the land of Shinar, where it was to be permanently deposited in a house prepared for it there. The general meaning of this is to show that when the measure of the people's wickedness became full, then their punishment should come, and they should again be carried into the land of their enemies in exile, not for seventy years, but for a long time. As the flying roll symbolised the certainty and completeness of their punishment, so this vision indicated its swiftness and mode. The ephah is selected simply as a common dry measure, to symbolise the thought that there is a certain measure of sin beyond which the people cannot go with impunity. The woman sitting in it represents the Jewish people, by a common figure. The phrase, "this is their appearance (Heb. *eye*) in all the land" (ver. 6), simply means, this represents that to which the people are looking, or tending, namely, to fill up the measure of their sin, and when they have done that, God will lay upon them their punishment. When the prophet perceives the woman in the measure, he is told that this is (represents) wickedness, even that of the Jewish people. Henderson thinks that the wickedness here represented was idolatry, and that the vision predicted the removal of idolatry from Palestine to Babylon. But there is no reason at all to limit it thus, but rather the contrary. Idolatry had not been a sin of the Jews for a century, and would hardly be represented as an existing thing, as this vision does. It did not exist in the land, and so could not be removed out of it. Moreover, it was not removed to Babylon, in any sense, literally or figuratively, and did not remain there as the vision declares (ver. 11). for the Mohammedan occupants of that region were not idolaters. Hence the explanation that refers it to the entire wickedness of the Jewish people of all kinds, is more consistent with the preceding vision, and gives a better sense. The mass of lead symbolises the heavy judgments that God was holding over them, and which at the fulness of time He would allow to fall. Accordingly, the wicked woman is thrust down into the small measure, crushed and doubled together, and the heavy weight laid upon her to keep her thus prostrate. Then there appear two winged messengers, with outstretched pinions, as if the wind was raising them up, and their wings were strong for flight like those of the stork. There were two, because it required two persons to lift such a measure. They symbolised the messengers of God's wrath that should desolate Judea, and banish the people. They were to carry it into Shinar, which is here the symbol for an

enemy's country, and not the exact country to which they were to be exiled. There it was to be put in a house, shut up, and this house to be built strongly and securely for a permanent habitation, to show that this exile would not be, like the first, a brief sojourn, but a long, weary, and enduring banishment from the land of their fathers; when their resting should not be on God, or on the rock Christ Jesus, but "on their own base"; they should be left to themselves, weighed down like lead with judicial blindness, stupidity, darkness, and hardness of heart. The vision predicted what happened four hundred years afterwards, when the measure of their iniquity being full by the rejection and murder of the Messiah, their hearts being gross, and their care heavy, the hour of vengeance came. Then appeared the Roman eagles, and after the most desperate struggle, the Jewish nation was crushed, and scattered to the four winds, wandering in enemies' countries, not resting on the promise of God, but weighed down with leaden obstinacy, and resting on their own works and righteousness. Learn—1. Every individual, and every nation, has a measure of sin; and until that measure is filled up, God's longsuffering will wait for repentance and reformation. 2. There hangs above every sinner a crushing weight of wrath, poised and ready to descend with overwhelming destruction. 3. If the measure is filled up, the weight shall fall, and crush the sinner with its ponderous mass of punishment. 4. The finally impenitent shall be driven from God into gloomy exile, and left to himself, "to rest on his own base," to be subject to the thrall of his own lawless lusts that he has so long pampered into strength, and to reap as he has sowed, through a long and limitless banishment. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *Vision of the ephah*:—There are some portions of Old Testament prophecy which, at first, appear unmeaning. But upon closer examination they are found to contain important lessons, profitable for all times. Such a prophecy is Zechariah's vision of the ephah. Look—1. At the symbol as seen by the prophet. The ephah was a well-known Jewish measure, represented by our word "bushel." The prophet saw such a measure moving forth as if it were a thing of life, and in the midst of it sat a woman with a talent of lead lifted up before her. The whole picture was a composite symbol, in which were prominent the measure, the woman, and the talent of lead. 2. The meaning of the symbol. In ver. 8 the Hebrew emphatically declares—"This is the wickedness." The most obvious suggestion is, that form of wickedness most likely to ensnare and ruin the people to whom Zechariah prophesied. The symbols point most naturally to the sin of unrighteous traffic, the root and essence of which is covetousness (1 Tim. vi. 10; Col. iii. 5). Why a woman rather than a man appears in the symbol is somewhat difficult to say, but probably because of her power as a temptress. The ensnaring images which have been most prominent in the great systems of idolatry have borne the female form. This woman's throne was an empty measure, and her sign an uplifted talent of lead, thus aptly representing the sin of those who would "swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail" (Amos viii. 4-6). This iniquity of unrighteous traffic appears to have ever been a besetting sin of the Jewish people. The preceding oracle of this prophet (vers. 1-4) was directed against thieves, and those who swore falsely by Jehovah's name; and the obscure expression in ver. 16 (lit., "this is their eye in all the land") is perhaps best explained as alluding to the fact that in all the land the eyes of thieves, extortioners, and false swearers, turned longingly towards this tempting goddess of covetousness. 3. The removal of this ephah to the land of Shinar indicates some kind of retribution which will visit this form of wickedness. The woman was cast down into the empty measure, and the leaden weight was cast upon her mouth (or on the mouth of the ephah), and ephah, woman, and talent were lifted up, and carried off into a foreign land; and the removal was effected by two women, who had wings like the stork, and who were helped by the force of the wind. This part of the vision sets forth God's penal judgment upon this sin and its devotees. Among the various elements of this judgment we note the following—(1) Such wickedness as this composite symbol represented cannot abide in the holy land of Israel, or inherit the kingdom of God. There must be, and there will be, a renewal. (2) The instruments of this woman's sin are made to contribute to her punishment. Her being cast into the ephah, with the leaden stone upon her mouth, suggests the image of a covetous soul, cramped and crushed into the narrow world of self, with nothing else to know or talk about than weights and measures. Thus sold to covetousness one makes his own place, and goes to it; his heaven is made his hell. He is made to live inside his own little half-

bushel, and talk of nothing else than talents, stocks, bonds, corner lots, &c. (3) By an irreversible law such natures are taken out of the fellowship of the pure and good, and removed far from them, by others of their own kind. The world will love his own, and when selfish interests are at stake, men and women of an adulterous and sinful generation aim to help those who have helped them. So this one woman was taken up and carried away by her like—aiders and abettors in unrighteous traffic. When the angel had cast her into the ephah and put the stone upon her mouth, these other women came to her rescue, and, for a season at least, remove her to a more congenial place. The stork is mentioned probably for no other reason than for being a well-known bird of passage, having notably large wings, and abounding in the land of Shinar, in the Euphrates valley. The money-lovers of this world move rapidly in each other's selfish interest, as if borne upon the wings of the wind. 4. The land of Shinar is to be understood as the opposite of the land of Israel, which in chapter ii. 12 is called "the holy land." It was the Babylonian plain, where the descendants of Noah settled after the flood, and builded the city and tower, which was the occasion of their being confused and scattered by the curse of Jehovah (Gen. xi. 2). It was a land of idolatry, whither the Jewish people had, according to Zechariah ii. 6, been scattered as by the four winds of heaven. So this vision symbolised the penal scattering abroad into an unclean land of all whose eye admired the goddess of weights and measures more than Jehovah. The great moral lesson of the vision is therefore a warning against covetousness and unrighteous traffic. Where the love of money is so strong as to employ "balances of deceit," and make "the ephah small and the shekel great," there will come curse and exile. The covetous man will suffer in ways he little dreams of, and the very instruments of his sin may be turned into modes of punishment. He who will serve Mammon must leave the house and land of the Lord, and so all those Jews who loved the wages of unrighteousness might expect sooner or later to be again scattered as by the winds of heaven. Their aiders and abettors might come to their help, and even build for them a house in the foreign land; but, like the tower of Babel, built by selfish ambition in the plain of Shinar, even that house will be likely to prove a curse. This process of separating and removing the lovers of this world from truth and holiness is ever going on in the development of the kingdom of God. Judas loved silver, and was cut off and went to his own place. Demas forsook the Apostle Paul from love of the world. John, the apostle, speaks of those who went out from the godly because they were not of them (1 John ii. 19), and Jude significantly mentions the sensual, having not the Spirit, as they who separate themselves, or make separations. So, by the necessary antagonism of opposite natures, the covetous must remove from the holy; for the narrow-minded, self-centred worldling cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (*Milton S. Terry, D.D.*) *The woman in the ephah*.—The question of the angel, and the answer of the prophet, suggest—1. That the medium of Divine thought may be obscure to human understanding. 2. That which we are to communicate to others must be seen clearly by ourselves. 3. That what is difficult to one servant of God may be clear to another. The vision probably refers to the general sin of the nation, which reached its height in the rejection of Messiah, after which the nation was entirely removed from the land. It suggests—I. THAT TIME IS NEEDED FOR A NATION TO COMPLETE ITS DESTRUCTION, AS WELL AS FOR ITS CONSTRUCTION. The ephah is a measure of considerable size; the idea conveyed is that, when it is full, it is lifted up and carried away. The filling takes time, and the nation to which the vision pointed did not all at once fill up the measure of its iniquity. Wickedness is allowed to go on unchecked for a certain period, but only to give space for repentance. II. SIN FIRST IMPRISONS THE SINNER, AND THEN SEPARATES HIM FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE. A talent of lead shuts the woman into the ephah, which is then borne into the land of Shinar. This foretells the constant dwelling of the Jews among the Gentile nations. The man who finds himself in a condemned cell is really shut in and banished from his own choice. So it was with the Jewish nation, and so it is with every man who rejects God's plan of regenerating him. He is self-imprisoned and self-banished. III. THOSE WHO REJECT GOD'S PLAN OF RESTORATION WILL BE LEFT TO THEIR OWN. God offered to the Jewish nation a sure foundation upon which to rebuild their national greatness (see Isa. xxviii. 16). This they would not accept. Therefore they were banished from their land, and, in the words of this prophecy, "set there upon their own base." They were left to be their own national architects and defenders,

and the history of their bitter sufferings for many centuries, and their present inability to gather themselves into a national whole, shows how ill they succeed who prefer their own way to that which God offers to them. This truth applies equally to every man who rejects the only foundation upon which his character can be rebuilt into its original greatness. (*Outlines by London Minister.*) A *materialistic community*.—Utter mercenariness is an abhorrent object to an angel's eye. The prophet still looks, and what does he see? The meaning of the new scene may be easily discovered. The ephah, with the woman in it, is carried away between earth and heaven, i.e. through the air. Women carry it because there is a woman inside; and two women, because two persons are required to carry so large and heavy a measure, that they lay hold of it on both sides. These women have wings, because it passes through the air; and a stork's wings, because these birds have broad pinions, and not because the stork is a bird of passage or an unclean bird. "The wings are filled with wind, that they may be able to carry their burden with greater velocity through the air. The women denote the instruments or powers employed by God to carry away the sinners out of His congregation, without any special allusion to this or the other historical nation. This is all that we have to seek in these features, which only serve to give distinctness to the picture."—Thiel and Delitzsch. I. Such a community is **ENCASED BY THE MATERIAL**. This woman, the emblem of the worldly Jews, was not only "in the midst of the ephah," but was closely confined there. "He cast the weight of the lead upon the mouth thereof." To an utterly worldly man matter is everything. He is utterly shut out from the spiritual; there is no glimpse of it, no interest in it. Like the woman in the ephah, he is encompassed by that which shuts him in. The bright heavens and the green fields of the spiritual world are over and around him, but they are nothing to him. He is in the ephah. (1) Your secular scientist is in the ephah. He sees nothing but matter, believes in nothing but matter. (2) Your sensuous religionist is in this ephah. He judges after the flesh. (3) Your man of the world is in this ephah. All his ideas of wealth, dignity, pleasure are material. II. Such a community is being **DISINHERITED BY THE MATERIAL**. This woman in the ephah, emblem of the worldly Hebrew, is borne away from Palestine, her own land, into a foreign region. Materialism disinherits man. His true inheritance as a spiritual existent is "incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away." But materialism carries him away from it, away to the distant and the gross. (1) The process was rapid. No bird so fleet with wing and foot as the stork, and with this fleetness this woman in the ephah was borne. How rapidly do animalism and worldliness bear away the spirit of man from the realm of spiritual realities, from a love of the true and the beautiful! (2) The process was final. "And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established and set there upon her own base." "To be carnally minded is death. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." What ruined Simon Magus? The world. What ruined Demas? The world. And, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 8. **And he said, This is wickedness.**—*Worldliness*.—This is the ruin of thousands and tens of thousands. It is not at all necessary to insure a man's perdition that he either "steal" or "swear falsely." A man may be a thorough worldling, without the practice of these or any gross iniquities. Whatever shuts God out from His place in the heart as the object of fear and love, and from His place in the conscience as the authoritative regulator of the life, that, be it what it may, is the ruin of the man. In the parable of the marriage feast, the men who declined the invitation, and went away to their farms and to their merchandise, are not charged with any selfish and fraudulent dealings in the management of their farms or the prosecution of their merchandise. What was their sin? Worldliness. They preferred the world to God. They declined the blessings of the Gospel for something more to their taste. They chose the world and the things of the world—no matter in how innocent a form—even the sweets of domestic life itself—to God and the things of God. And in the enjoyment of these, as their chosen portion, they "had their reward." Thus it was of old; thus it is still. Let no man deceive himself by fancying it necessary to his forfeiture of the blessings of God's salvation, that he give himself up to the practice of dishonesty and of open vice. If his heart is in the world, with the world he must have his portion. Let Christians be on their guard against

“the love of this present world.” It is an insinuating and perilous principle. In proportion as it gains upon the heart, it tends to enfeeble the energies, and deaden the sensibilities, of the Divine life in the soul. God will not have a divided heart. “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1-8. Behold there came four chariots out from between two mountains.—*The four chariots*:—The general meaning of this vision is very clear. The enemies of the Church shall be punished, is the motto of the picture, and the purport of the vision. The immediate application of the truth was to the existing circumstances of the Jewish Church, but it contains a general proposition or law of the Divine procedure that is now in fulfilment, and will so continue until the restitution of all things spoken of by the holy prophets since the world began. Following the preceding vision, which denounced wrath on the Jews, it declares that after the Jews have been punished, God will destroy their enemies, who will also be the enemies of the Church. Now, as the threatened punishment of the Jews is not yet completed, so this punishment which was to follow that completion is also incomplete, and the main fulfilment yet to come. We have therefore in this vision an instance of what has been called the continuous fulfilment of prophecy. This takes place when the prophecy is not so much a simple prediction of facts, as the annunciation of a great principle of Divine procedure, in the garb of existing and well-known facts, but yet equally applicable to other facts all along the history of God's dealings with man. Thus the most abstract and formulated statement of the essence of this vision is, the enemies of the Church shall be punished. Its immediate application was to Babylon and Egypt, the existing representatives of the ancient enmity of the serpent's seed, but this application is of course a single one, that does not exclude the future examples of this principle of the Divine government that may and must arise. This is wholly different from the old double sense of prophecy, and is a most obvious and reasonable canon of interpretation. How striking the fulfilment of this threatening, when we remember the circumstances under which it was made. Could the haughty nobles of Babylon, in the gorgeousness of its magnificence and the pride of its power, have heard the threatening of this obscure Jew, amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, with what derision and contempt would they have treated the threat! The anathema that was so feebly uttered against the mightiest and richest city in the world, to the eye of sense seemed like the ravings of lunacy. Yet that feeble whisper was the uttered voice of Jehovah, and the elements of ruin in their remotest lurking-place heard the summons, and began to come forth. Slowly and silently did they come up to this dread work, and yet surely and resistlessly, until the glory of these high palaces was dimmed, and the magnificence of these gardens and temples was covered, and now the winds whistle through the reeds of the Euphrates, where Babylon then sat in her pride; and loneliness, desolation, and death are stationed there the sentinel witnesses of the truth that His word returns not to Him void, that His Spirit is quieted in the land of the north. The same is true of Egypt, and later on of Greece and Rome. So it will be with guilty and godless Europe. **Learn**—1. That the history of the world is all arranged and conducted in reference to the destinies of the Church, and the agencies that control that history go forth from the seat of the Church's great head, the unseen temple. 2. God has in operation every species of agency, human and angelic, animate and inanimate, needful for the accomplishment of His purposes, and will send these forth at the proper time. Political changes and revolutions are only the moving of the shadow on the earthly dial-plate that marks the mightier motions going forward in the heavens. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The supremacy of God*:—The entire vision was designed to teach a great general lesson—the lesson of the universal supremacy and superintendence of the “God of Israel” over all the agencies of nature, and all the varying movements of progress or retrogression, of prosperity and adversity, of peace and war, amongst the nations; and to teach it with a special application to themselves, as His chosen people, and to those adjoining or more distant countries by which their condition

had been, or might hereafter be, beneficially or injuriously affected. It called upon them to put their trust in the wisdom, power, and love of their own Jehovah,—the governor among the nations;—in one word, to “have faith in God.” Let us learn the lesson. Amidst all the convulsions and revolutions that are agitating Europe, let us not only acknowledge but rejoice in the supremacy of the infinitely wise, and good, and mighty. All “the winds” are His. He “holds them in His fist.” The zephyr and the hurricane are alike His agents. All influences—in every department of creation, and in the hearts and wills and words and actions of men of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, are under His absolute control. “None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” Let us trust in Him, own Him, pray to Him,—deprecating, on behalf of our country, and of our guilty world, merited wrath,—and imploring, especially, that all events may result in glory to His name. (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) *God’s government of the world*:—This is the last in the series of visions, which amount in all to seven, during that one night. This is not more easy of interpretation than the preceding ones. The objects which were now revealed to the prophet’s vision are various and strange. (1) He sees four chariots. It does not say whether they were chariots of war bearing the warrior out to battle, or home in triumph, or whether they were chariots used for private or public conveyances. (2) He saw these four chariots proceeding from two mountains. These were not mountains of earth or stone, but mountains of brass; mountains, therefore, having peculiar solidity and strength. (3) He saw these chariots drawn by horses of different colour. I take the vision to illustrate God’s government of the world, and it illustrates four facts concerning that government. I. VARIETY. This is suggested by the colour of the steeds that bear on the chariots of His plans. The “red horses,” emblem of war and bloodshed. The “black,” emblem of calamity, distress, and mourning. The “white,” emblem of gladness and prosperity. The “grisled” and “bay,” or piebald, a mixture of events, prosperity and adversity, friendship and bereavement, sorrow and joy, &c. Has not this variety characterised the providence that is over man from the beginning until this hour? It is not only seen in every page of the history of nations and Churches and families, but in the history of individuals. The experience of every man is more changeable than the weather. There is a constant alternation,—the red, the black, the white, the mixed. These changes are useful. 1. They break the monotony of life. They tend to keep the heart of humanity on the alert. There is but little opportunity for moral sleep. 2. They create a desire for a state of certainty. They prompt a search for a “city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” This is not our rest. II. IMMUTABILITY. These chariots move between two “mountains of brass.” Though they are borne by a variety of steeds, and move rapidly towards every point of the compass, and bear a variety of events wherever they go, they are overshadowed and hedged in by the immutable in mountains of brass. God’s immutable counsels of decrees keep all the motions and commotions, all the convulsions and revolutions of the world in their place. As the ocean amidst all its ebbings and flowings, rage and fury, is bound to obey the moon, which remains serenely settled in her orbit, so all the agitations of the earth are bound to obey the immutable decrees of Heaven. Thank God! that in this changing world of ours there are mountains of brass, things that cannot be shaken. “All flesh is grass, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” III. UNIVERSALITY. These chariots, borne by these varied coloured steeds, rolled towards every point of the globe, some to the north and some to the south. They walked “to and fro through the earth.” Not a spot unvisited or ignored. God’s providence embraces all, matter and mind, great and small, good and evil. Hence we should bow with resignation under all our sorrows, and shout with gratitude in all our enjoyments. IV. SUPREMACY. “These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.” He is at the head of all. No evil spirit moves without His permission and control; no good spirit without His inspiration and guidance. He is the Lord of all the earth. How great must He be who manages all things! (*Homilist.*) *These are the four spirits of the heavens.*—*Four spirits of the heavens*:—Eminent interpreters translate the words “celestial spirits,” and thus present us at once, in our own customary theology, with angels. There is difficulty here, however. In the first place, “spirits of the heavens” is a very unwonted designation for angels in Scripture. I know not that it has a parallel. And secondly, if angels are intended, how come we to have four? Their

number is "ten thousand times ten thousand"; and unless they are mentioned in connection with something else that leads and limits to the number four, it is difficult, by any analogy, to account for it. Let me illustrate the remark from another passage—"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree" (Rev. vii. 1). Here we have "four angels." But we at once see *why* they are four. They are, in the vision, employed in "holding the four winds of the earth." Now the four winds, from the four cardinal points—understood as representing and embracing all the intermediate points, and thus signifying the winds in general—was a style of expression familiar to the ancients as ourselves. The word rendered "spirits," as most if not all of you are aware, signifies also winds. The question then is, whether what are called "the four winds of the earth," in the Book of Revelation, be not the same as what are here called the "four spirits," or winds, "of the heavens." I am strongly tempted to think that we have, in this vision, one symbol, or emblem, explained by another. "The four winds" are an emblem—a most natural and appropriate one—of all the powers and agencies by which the earth can be affected; especially agencies of judgment—of wars and desolations, arising from the contending elements of human passions and Satanic malignity. (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*)

Vers. 9-15. And set them upon the head of Joshua.—*The matchless man in history*.—The crowning, the work, and the position of Joshua spoken of in these verses, are obviously employed to symbolise some coming man who would be matchless in all history. Concerning this matchless man, we are taught—I. THAT HE IS ONE WHOM HEAVEN COMMANDS THE PEOPLE TO HONOUR. The prophet is commanded to go to certain men of the more distinguished who had returned from Babylon, representative men it may be. He was to take these men, whose names are here given, to the house of another distinguished man, here called Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. From that house silver and gold were to be taken, with which crowns were to be made, and placed upon the head of Joshua, the son of the high priest. By general consent of expositors, this was a mere symbolical transaction—a transaction pointing to some great man whom heaven will require all men to crown with the highest dignity. Here is a character symbolised by the name of Joshua, to whom the people are called upon by God Himself to render honour. Who is this man? The man Christ Jesus! "When He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." II. THAT HIS PEDIGREE WAS STRIKINGLY SINGULAR. "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord." He came down from heaven and tabernacled on this earth, which was not His place. A great soul, dominated by a supreme sympathy with the Supremely Good, can grow anywhere, in its place or out of it. It can subordinate the most hostile external elements and forces for its own will and interests. III. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE MISSION IS SUBLIMELY GLORIOUS. "He shall build the temple of the Lord," &c. Zerubbabel was now engaged in the work of rearing the material temple at Jerusalem; and a more glorious work than this is not given to man, viz. to promote the public worship of God. IV. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE POSITION AND FUNCTIONS ARE TRANSCENDENTLY EXALTED. He is on a throne. 1. As a priestly King. 2. As a glorious Reconciler. The Mediator between God and man. The reconciliation, the atonement. V. THAT HE IS ONE WHOSE POWER TO ATTRACT OTHERS TO HIS ENTERPRISE IS IMMENSELY GREAT. The Gentiles were to be themselves stones in the building, and agents in the rearing of it. (*Homilist.*) The man whose name is the Branch.—*On Christ's name, the Branch*.—The text and context are a remarkable prophecy of the coming of the promised Messiah in the flesh, who is described by His natures, His offices of Priest and King, and His work in building the spiritual temple of the Lord. 1. Some observations upon the occasion and reason of this name, the Branch, given to the promised Messiah, before His coming in the flesh. (1) The original word, "tsemach," does not signify "the East," as some have imagined, but always, "the Branch." There are also other Hebrew words expressing Jesus Christ by this His name, the Branch. (2) A man's offspring are, by a very just metaphor, called his branches, because they proceed from him, as branches or sprouts from a root. Jesus Christ is said, in Isa. xi. 1, to be a "Branch out of the root of Jesse."

(3) Jesus Christ is metaphorically called a Branch, respecting some family He was to spring from in His human nature, and this was the family of David, the son of Jesse. (4) When the kings of David's family, and their kingdom, which was then the Church of God, were greatly declined, sore oppressed and much weakened, this promise to David, that Christ was to come as a Branch from him, was presented to their faith, that they might expect the greatest blessings to themselves, and to the Church of God, by the means of this Branch of David's family. (5) After the return from captivity, the encouragement and hope of the Church were founded upon the coming of this Branch of David. 2. Scriptures of the New Testament where He is designed the Branch (Luke i. 78). For "day-spring" the margin has sun-rising or branch (Matt. ii. 23). Nazareth had its name from a branch, which, though not the same word as in our text, yet is of the same signification. 3. The Scripture account of Jesus Christ, under the name and designation of the Branch. (1) He was to be the true and eternal God. "The Lord our Righteousness." (2) The Branch of the Lord (Isa. iv. 2). Son of God the Father, by an eternal, incomprehensible, and incommunicable generation. (3) Really and truly man, and of the lineage and posterity of David. (4) Both God and man, without any change of one nature into another, or confusion of the one with the other, and all this in one person. (5) He was to be Jehovah's servant for the redemption of lost sinners. "He took upon Him the form of a servant." He came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (6) This Branch was, in a peculiar manner, of God's bringing forth and raising up. God the Father found Him out, and called Him to the work of saving sinners. (7) He was for a time to be very low and contemptible, to be cut down, and to grow up to the greatest height. This was to be specially true of His birth. (8) The Branch was to sustain and execute offices for the building of the temple of the Lord, both as Prince and Saviour. (9) It was to be a righteous Branch, a Branch of righteousness. Application—1. Learn the advantage of studying the Old Testament. 2. Be restless in your endeavours, until this Branch, this man, be excellent, desirably glorious and precious to you, and in your esteem. 3. Behold the man whose name is the Branch. Behold Him in His person, in His natures. 4. Come and take up your dwelling under the shadow of this man whose name is the Branch. (*James Robe, M.A.*) *The Branch*.—The words are addressed to Joshua the priest, but they represent the Divine Saviour. I. THE BEAUTY OF THIS "BRANCH." What is it that most especially constitutes the beauty of the Divine character? Not justice by itself; not mercy by itself; but the marvellous union of both, the harmony between these Divine attributes, by which God can be "a just God and a Saviour." That union has been discovered perfect and complete in the person of the Lord Jesus, the God-man-mediator, so in Him is the very perfection of beauty. It is indeed said of Him, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him"; but these expressions refer to the meanness of His birth, and to the prejudices of His nation. II. THE SHADINESS OF THIS BRANCH. The term brings to our minds the exposed state of the sinner, in the "weary land" of this world. He stands exposed to the wrath of God. He wants "shade"—something that will interpose between him and the intense heat from above, and afford him a protection from it. By whatever emblem the precious blood and perfect righteousness of Christ are represented to us in Scripture, the idea always conveyed is that of security against the effects of Divine wrath, consequent on human transgression. The shade of the "righteous Branch" is the interposing mediation of our exalted Redeemer. The shade of this Branch is extending itself every day. III. THE FRUITFULNESS OF THIS BRANCH. The two figures are united in Canticles. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." In Revelation is described the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and whose leaves were not for shade only, but also for healing. IV. THE STRENGTH OF THIS BRANCH. "He shall bear the glory." He shall bear the weight of all the cares and concerns of His whole Church, both small and great, even of every individual, however important or insignificant; and He shall be found both able and willing to support them all. And He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (*F. Elwin.*) *The man whose name is the Branch*.—There is a difference between the manner in which the prophets, before and after the captivity, spoke of the Messiah. To the prophets after the captivity, the invasion of the Babylonian armies, the destruction of their city and temple, and the very return of the Jews were all past events. The fulfilling hand of the faithful Inspirer of foregoing predictions had swept them all aside; and nothing remained to turn their attention

from that near approach of the Messiah of which they all speak in terms so remarkably explicit. Among other types and figures of heavenly things which the Jewish prophets used, are personal types, of which the text is an example. Here Joshua is expressly made the type of Him who was both King and Priest. This could not apply to Joshua himself, seeing that he was only a priest. I. THE EMPHATIC APPELLATION GIVEN TO THE MESSIAH,—THE BRANCH. The verb whence the word is derived signifies "to grow," "to sprout." It is specially applied to trees, some of which in part decayed, and that to the very roots, will often send forth new shoots, which shall surpass, in greatness and fruitfulness, the original stock. This expression, as applied to Christ, is—1. Eminently prophetic (Isa. xi. 1). The stem of Jesse was decayed. At the time of its lowest depression, the Branch, the Messiah, shot forth. 2. As descriptive of His personal progress to glory and dominion. Of the progress of His religion in the world. And of the work of Christ in the heart. 3. As indicating the secret and mysterious mode of His operations. The metaphor is taken from vegetation, the process of invisible influence which out of rude elements frames the stately tree, and from a bud develops the goodly branch. There is an unseen principle at work, and that principle is the working of God Himself. We see this in the progress of our Saviour from sufferings to glory. And in the progress of His religion in our world. II. THE GREAT WORK TO WHICH THE MESSIAH WAS APPOINTED. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." A parallel may be presented between the material temple and the spiritual house. In conclusion notice—the union of the kingly and priestly offices in Christ. (*R. Watson.*) *The man whose name is the Branch* :—I. THE PERSON HERE SPOKEN OF. Who is this wondrous, mysterious man? Not certainly Joshua, the high priest, on whose head the crowns were to be placed. For the message is addressed to Joshua, as concerning some one else. Joshua, the crowned high priest, is the type of another, greater than himself, to whom he and all others are to look for blessing. These words seem to point to one already known, to one whose name is familiar. And so it is. Isaiah had borne testimony regarding Him (Isa. xi. 2-9, xxiii. 5, 6, xxxiii. 15, 16). Is not this the substance of the Lord's message to every generation of the sons of men? Is not this the great central message of the Book of God, and of every faithful messenger of His? Must not this be the keynote of our preaching? The Branch is none other than the Messiah, our blessed Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. It tells of one who has taken our nature. Our Redeemer is man. But not man alone. He is the God-man. Son of God and Son of Man, a Divine, and therefore an all-sufficient Saviour. II. HIS WORK. "He shall build up the temple of the Lord. This work was entrusted to Zerubbabel, but he was only a type of the true temple-builder. For the true temple is the spiritual temple, the temple into which all believers are built, and of which Jesus Christ is the foundation-stone. And this Builder is also the Owner, the Ruler, a Priest, a Royal Priest. The headship of Christ is a personal matter; the great question for each one is, Am I a loyal subject of the Church's Head and King? Is He the ruler of my life? It is also said, "He shall be a Priest upon His throne." What you and I need is a priest to remove guilt, to make atonement for sin, to satisfy Divine justice, and reconcile us to God. "Him hath God exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (*William Findley, M.A.*)

Vcr. 13. *He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory.—Christ glorified as the Builder of the Church* :—Heaven singeth evermore. And this world is singing too. The tune to which heaven and earth are set is the same. And mark how the music of the Church is set to the same tune as that of heaven and earth, "Great God, Thou art to be magnified." Is not this the unanimous song of all the redeemed below? In the text the Lord Jesus Christ is alluded to. The context runs, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch"—a title ever applied to Messiah. I. THE TEMPLE. It is the Church of God. All Christians constitute the Church. I mean all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, for these make up the one universal Church. This Church is called the "temple" of God, and Christ is said to be its builder. The temple was the place where God specially dwelt. It is true that God is everywhere, but in a special manner He dwelt in the temple. If you would find God, He is everywhere in creation. If you would know what is the secret place of the Most High, you must go where you find the Church of true believers, for it is here He makes His continual residence known. The temple was the place of clearest

manifestation. He who would see God the best of all, must see Him in His temple. The Church is like the temple in that it is a place of worship. As there was only one temple, so there is only one Church. **II. CHRIST IS THE CHURCH'S ONLY BUILDER.** Make a parallel between Christ's building the Church, and Solomon's building the first temple. In this Solomon fails to be a type of Christ. Christ builds the temple Himself. And Jesus Christ excels Solomon, for He provides all the materials. **III. GLORIFY CHRIST.** The glory which He shall have will be a weighty glory, an undivided glory. He shall have *all* the glory. Practical application—Are we built up upon Christ? Then let us evermore honour Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Builder of the spiritual temple:*—This passage relates to the dispensation of the Gospel, when it would be proved that Jesus Christ by His person and work did actually rebuild the spiritual temple, which fell into ruins by the disobedience of our first parents. **I. THE BUILDING.** 1. The ruinous state of the temple. 2. Whose temple it is. "The Lord's." 3. The builder of this temple is Christ. 4. The agent employed is the Holy Ghost. **II. THE GLORY OF OUR SALVATION BELONGS UNTO THE LORD.** In redeeming us from sin; in justifying our souls; and in preserving us for glory. **III. THE NATURE OF HIS GOVERNMENT.** He rules in heaven, having accomplished His work. He rules over the world generally. He rules over the Church collectively. And over each believer in particular. He rules in the Word, in the Gospel, and in every Christian duty. **IV. HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE.** He lives as a priest to make intercession. By appearing in the presence of God for us. By presenting His sacrifice and righteousness. By declaring His will of our final glory. **V. THE NATURE OF THE COUNSEL THERE SPOKEN OF.** Some explain it as between the Father and the Son; or between the altar and the throne; or between Christ and His Church; or between Jew and Gentile; or between the soul and God. (*T. B. Baker.*) *The temple:*—**I. THE TEMPLE.** 1. Because the Church is consecrated to the service of God. 2. Is hallowed by His residence. 3. Is honoured by His self-manifestation. **II. THE BUILDER.** Because He—1. Prepares the materials. 2. Employs the workmen. 3. Superintends the workmanship. **III. THE GLORY.** 1. From the unlikelihood of the materials. 2. From the magnitude of the obstacles. 3. From the diversity of the workmen. 4. From the perfection of the work. (*G. Brooks.*) *Christ, the Builder and Ruler of the temple:*—Of the *man* here spoken of it is affirmed that "His name is the Branch, and that He shall grow up out of His place." The Branch that was to grow out of the root of Jesse was to be more than man; for who could bear that wondrous name, "The Lord our Righteousness," but the Lord Himself? The text refers to One who should combine in His own person the fulness of Divinity with all that is essential to the constitution of our nature. **I. THE WORK HERE ASCRIBED TO CHRIST.** "He shall build the temple of the Lord." The prophet was commanded to make two crowns, and set them on the head of Joshua. Under the Levitical economy the high priest wore a crown, and in ancient times the crown was the badge of royalty. Joshua was thus a striking type of Him who is at once the High Priest and the King of Zion. As the person of Joshua typified that of Christ, so the work to which Joshua was called was typical of that which Christ was to accomplish. The temple Christ was to build is the Church universal, consisting of all who in every age and nation are washed and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Why the Church is called a temple is not difficult to perceive. It is so called in allusion to the sacred edifice which, by Divine command, was erected in Jerusalem. That edifice was dedicated to the service of God, and so are all who believe in Jesus. In the Jewish temple the Lord was pleased to reveal His glory; and so He does in the Church, but more spiritually and more fully. He manifests Himself to all that love and serve Him. The Jewish temple was regarded as God's residence, for the visible emblem of His glory dwelt between the cherubims. And is not His life-giving presence with His Church on earth? Has He not promised to be always with His people? In the one temple were observed the rites which He was pleased to institute; in the other, He is worshipped in spirit and truth. Of this temple Jesus is the builder. Before a structure can be reared the foundation must be laid; and Christ has laid the foundation of His Church, virtually, in the counsels of eternity, when He undertook to accomplish the work of our redemption; actually, in the fulness of time, when He obeyed and suffered in our stead. He is Himself the rock on which His Church is built. On Himself as foundation God rears the spiritual temple. This He does by the instrumentality of His Word, and by

the agency of His Spirit. The soul, when united to the Saviour, undergoes a thorough change of character as well as of condition. Christ imparts His virtues to the soul that rests on Him as the foundation of its hope. Christ sanctifies it by His Word and Spirit, and thus it becomes a living stone, reflecting the glory of Christ Himself. Such is the way in which Christ carries on the work that is here ascribed to Him. As one sinner after another is converted, one living stone after another is added to the temple which He is building. Amid all the uproar and turmoil of this ungodly world, this work is silently but surely going on. How glorious shall the temple be, when the last living stone shall complete the harmony of its vast proportions! Then, purified from every soil, and resplendent with the beauties of righteousness and holiness, it shall stand out before the universe the noblest monument of the Divine perfections. What a signal honour to be fellow-workers with Christ in speeding on this blessed consummation! **II. CHRIST BEARS THE GLORY AS THE RULER IN THE TEMPLE.** It is to His glory in this respect that the text more especially refers. There is a very obvious and important distinction between His government of the universe, and His headship over the Church. The Church is a society of a special nature, requiring special laws and institutions for its government and guidance. It is a kingdom not of this world, though in this world. The glory which Christ bears as ruler in the temple is represented in Scripture as the fruit of His sufferings. This honour was secured to Him in the covenant of redemption, as the stipulated reward of obedience unto death. Application.—1. Relating to the duty of individuals. To yield submission to Christ's authority. 2. Relating to the duty of a Church—or any particular society of professing Christians. Is it not a Church's duty to have respect in all things to Christ's authority—to regulate its procedure by the principles and the precepts of His Holy Word? (*David Couper.*) *Christ, the Builder of the Church:—***I. THE PERSON SPOKEN OF.** Observe the circumstances of the prophecy, and see how undeniably they all point to Christ, the High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle. **II. THE WORK ASSIGNED HIM.** "To build the temple of the Lord." The true and spiritual Church of God, which is spread over all ages and all nations, which consists of all believers, all faithful men and sanctified persons throughout the world, gathered out of the vast multitudes of mankind, and brought into one mystical body. It is the glory of the Son of God to be the builder of this temple. The Redeemer builds the temple of the Lord by the virtue going forth continually from His kingly and priestly offices. **III. AN APPROPRIATE REWARD.** Two particulars are mentioned, possessing each a deep interest in connection with the missionary work; the one holding forth our encouragement, and the other our duty. He whom we serve is invested with the government; and He shall bear the glory. Then let us—1. Beware of building without Christ. 2. Give all the glory to Christ. 3. Contribute with a self-denying liberality of our labour and our substance for the work of building the temple of the Lord. (*J. Scholefield, M.A.*) *Christ the Branch, and the Builder of the spiritual temple:—*Our text is a prophecy set forth and highly adorned with metaphor. The text—1. Announces the Saviour by a singular yet significant title. "Behold the man whose name is the Branch." 2. It predicts—the allotment to Him, and the accomplishment by Him of a most important and magnificent work. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." 3. It recognises—the great Builder's right to have all the praise, whilst it assigns to Him a well-deserved reward. "He shall bear the glory." Two inferences—(1) The cause of real religion is in the hands of Jesus Christ. (2) All success in the prosecution of any important part of the glorious work of building up the temple of the Lord must be looked for and derived from the great Master-Builder. (*Josiah Redford.*) *The spiritual temple of Jehovah:—***I. EVERY TRUE BELIEVER IS A TEMPLE OF GOD.** 1. A temple is the residence of Jehovah; and in this view every true believer is a temple of the living God. It is the prominent design of the Gospel to enthrone Jehovah in the affections, dispositions, and habits of men. 2. A temple is consecrated to the service, the worship, and the glory of God. In this sense every true believer is a spiritual temple of the Lord. Christian believers are represented in Scripture as renewed in the spirit of their minds, as built up spiritual houses, as consecrated in every part to the service and glory of God. 3. A temple is the scene of Divine manifestation; and in this sense also every true believer is a spiritual temple of the Lord. Every true believer exhibits in his own person, in his principles, in his habits, in his privileges, and in his bright hopes, a manifestation of God, a practical exemplification of the Saviour's

work, a public and accredited testimony of the truth of the doctrines of Scripture, as imprinted on his mind, as brought to bear with powerful effect on his life.

II. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN BUILDING, BEAUTIFYING, AND COMPLETING THIS TEMPLE.

1. Christ, by His mediatorial interposition, has paved the way for the erection of the temple of God. 2. The glory of building the temples by His Holy Spirit belongs also to Him. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, begins, carries forward, and completes the building of the spiritual edifice. It is the glory of the Gospel dispensation that it is complete in all its parts. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the process of sanctification is carried forward. 3. The glory belongs to Christ because He has provided those *means* by which, under the ministry of grace, the temple is built. 4. The glory belongs to Christ, inasmuch as He constantly superintends the Churches, takes a tender interest in all their concerns, sympathises with them in all their vicissitudes, and completes the purposes of God ultimately in regard to them. This subject displays (1) In a very interesting and pleasing manner the glory of our great Redeemer. (2) It tends also to elevate our conceptions of the Christian character. There is something in the very idea of a temple that is associated with holy and sacred pursuits, with holy and hallowed enjoyments. (*Robert Burns, D.D.*) *The living temple* :—To understand this Scripture we must consider when the prediction was uttered, and to what it primarily refers. To relieve the anxious mind of Joshua, the high priest, and to animate his soul with the prospect of happier days, the prophet Zechariah is sent with a special message from the Lord, to assure Joshua that the temple should be built; that his fears were without foundation; that his prayers should be answered, and his utmost wishes accomplished. An outward sign was given. Two crowns were placed on the head of Joshua, as emblems of priesthood and royalty; and were then to be deposited in the temple, as memorials of what God had determined to accomplish in future times. Thus the Jews were led to contemplate a more durable and glorious temple than that which they were then building. In the language and symbols of prophecy, they were told that the Messiah, whose name is the Branch, would be much more to this spiritual building, than Joshua was to their external temple. He would be Priest and King, Redeemer and Lawgiver, Prince and Saviour. When He humbled Himself to appear in the nature of man, He seemed to be no more than a feeble stem from the root of Jesse. Yet this tender plant sprung up and spread forth its branches, and became a sheltering to the weary, and still flourishes with undecayed vigour; the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations; and the fruit thereof sweet to the taste. In various passages of the New Testament, believers in Jesus are declared to be the temples of God; temples of the Holy Ghost; living temples, built up a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Christ. I. CONSIDER EVERY REAL CHRISTIAN AS THE LIVING TEMPLE OF THE LORD. Observe this dignified and distinguished character here ascribed to the righteous: each one of them is a temple of the Lord. A soul, the temple of the Lord, suggests the sublime ideas of solemn consecration to His honour of worship and sacrifice, of the Divine residence, and of peculiar manifestations; such manifestations as discover a present Deity, and render His glory in us evident to our souls. 1. Believers in Jesus are temples of the Lord, because they are separated from idolatry and impurity, are consecrated to sacred purposes, and are dedicated to the honour of Him whom they worship. 2. Believers in Christ are the temples of God, because they offer up to Him dutiful worship and acceptable sacrifice. Not sacrifices of propitiation or atonement, but sacrifices of daily thankoffering for the mercies of God, and the blessings of His great salvation. Every faculty and affection of the Christian soul may be considered as engaged in the service of this living temple. 3. Believers in Christ are the temples of the Lord, because in them He resides to manifest His glory; and them He blesses with all the satisfying consolations of His presence. In every renewed person much of the image of God is displayed; the power of God in forming, from such unlikely materials, a new creature, or a new creation: the holiness of God, in stamping upon every child of the family some lineaments of their Father's image; and the sovereign mercy of God, in rescuing from deepest ruin, and imparting the noblest hopes and happiness, to the praise of the glory of His grace. In all saints, so far as they are sanctified, we may trace some resemblance of God. God is said to dwell in His people as His temple, when He manifests His glory to them, and admits them to delightful intercourse with Himself. This honour have all the saints; but it is enjoyed by them in very different degrees, according to the measure of

their faith. **II. THIS TEMPLE IS, IN ALL RESPECTS, THE WORKMANSHIP OF THE ADORABLE REDEEMER.** He who is the Branch, builds the temple—1. In His mediation between God and man. 2. He lays the foundation of that living temple by bestowing that living faith which unites us to Himself, and interests us in all the blessings of His mediation. 3. He not only lays the foundation of the spiritual temple, but He rears the superstructure by His grace and Spirit. Every grace and duty of religion is a living stone in that temple which every believer is rearing unto God on earth. All these graces and duties are intimately connected, and by their union the spiritual building is rendered fair and useful. 4. The Almighty Builder carries on to perfection the good work which He has begun. By His dispensations He carries forward the perfections of His people. He carries on to perfection by the ordinances of His grace. By the powerful energy and gracious influences of His Holy Spirit, working in them to will and do of His good pleasure. **III. THE CHEERING AND ANIMATING PROMISE, "HE SHALL BEAR THE GLORY."** This is now fulfilling on earth, and shall be fulfilled for ever in heaven. Amidst meditations on God's gracious ways with them, at every new survey, saints feel their hearts warmed with gratitude, and they say, "Not unto us, not unto us." "He hath built the temple, and He shall bear the glory." (*A. Bonar.*) *The Church the temple of God:*—This is a prophecy of the Messiah. The prophet puts two crowns on the head of Joshua the high priest, and then speaks to him, not only as the raiser up of the desolated temple, but as a type of an enthroned Saviour, the builder of a spiritual and far more glorious structure. "Behold the man whose name is the Branch," &c. **I. THE CHURCH IS GOD'S TEMPLE.** By the Church is meant all that the word imports in its highest and its widest sense—all God's real servants, all His believing and pardoned and sanctified people of all ages and places. When God builds, His habitation shall have a name and character of its own—it is a temple. View the Church simply as God's house, then we look on it as something which God dwells in, and rests in, and delights in. View it as God's temple, then a sacredness comes over it. The house becomes—1. A consecrated place, a place appropriated and set apart for holy purposes. 2. The idea of worship and devotion is connected with this term. It implies not only that God designs His people to show forth His praise in heaven, but that they do show it forth there; they answer there the end for which they are taken there: God is served, and worshipped, and magnified by them. **II. THE LORD JESUS IS THE BUILDER OF THIS TEMPLE.** Elsewhere spoken of as the foundation or chief corner-stone, He is here described as the great Builder. No one figure can suffice to set forth His importance. Therefore they apply figure after figure to Him. They do not heed what we deem incongruities and contradictions. Three things the builder of a temple has to do. 1. To form the plan of it. He has to settle in his mind what its form and size shall be, and of what materials it shall consist. 2. A builder has to prepare his materials. At least the builder of a temple has. He does not find them prepared for him by nature, the wrought stone in the quarry, and the carved beam in the forest. Nor can they prepare themselves. And we, brethren, are not naturally fit for heaven, nor can we make ourselves or one another fit for it. 3. A builder has to join his materials together, to put each one of them into the place for which it is prepared. And this also is the work of Christ. **III. THE TEXT BEARS US OUT IN ASSERTING THAT IT REALLY IS A VERY GLORIOUS BUILDING.** It does not expressly say this, but it implies it. There is to be a glory result to Christ from it, and this glory is doubtless to proceed in part from something excellent and magnificent in the building itself. What a subject opens itself to us here! Does beauty make a building glorious, a noble plan and excellent workmanship? Oh, what so beautiful as the Church of the first-born? Bear in mind two facts in reference to the glory of this temple. 1. It is such that it satisfies Christ Himself. 2. This temple has occupied the Mighty Jehovah far longer than any of His works. From this fact also we infer its gloriousness. **IV. THE LORD JESUS WILL HAVE ALL THE GLORY OF THIS TEMPLE.** Two reasons why Christ is so little honoured on earth as the author of His people's salvation. The greatness of the salvation is not known, and we do not see how entirely the work is His. God's design in this building was His own honour. Is Christ the Builder of God's temple? Then this text calls on all of us really to regard Him as such. And if the Church is the temple of the Lord, then we should cherish in our minds a high reverence and love for it. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. A Priest upon His throne.—*The Priest of the world and King of men*:—It is in accordance with the law of prophetic development from the beginning that the external circumstances of the nation at the moment should supply the mould into which the promise is run. Here, the kingless band of exiles are heartened for their task by the thought of the Priest-King of the nation, the Builder of an imperishable dwelling-place for God. **I. THE TRUE HOPE OF THE WORLD IS A PRIEST.** The idea of priesthood is universal. It has been distorted and abused; it has been made the foundation of spiritual tyranny. The priest has not been the teacher nor the elevator of the people. Yet there the office stands, and wherever men go, by some strange perversity they take with them this idea, and choose from among themselves some who shall discharge for their brethren the double office of representing them before God, and of representing God to them. That is what the world means, with absolute and entire unanimity, by a priest—one who shall be sacrificer, intercessor, representative; bearer of man's worship, channel of God's blessing. This is the result of the universal consciousness of sin. Men feel that there is a gulf between them and God. The Jewish people, who have at all events taught the world the purest theism, and led men up to the most spiritual religion, had this same institution of a priesthood for the very centre of its worship. What is the priest whom men crave? The first requisite is oneness with those whom he represents. We have a Priest "in all things made like unto His brethren." The next requisite is that the priests should possess, at all events, a symbolic purity—expression of the conviction that a priest must be cleaner and closer than his fellows. And we have a Priest who is "holy, harmless, undefiled." And again, as in nature and character, so in function, Christ corresponds to the widely expressed wants of men, as shown in their priesthoods. They sought for one who should offer gifts and sacrifices on their behalf. They sought for one who should pass into the awful Presence, and plead for them while they stood without. They sought for a man who should be the medium of Divine blessings bestowed upon the worshippers, and we know who hath gone within the veil for us. "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." **II. THE PRIEST OF THE WORLD IS THE KING OF MEN.** "He shall be a Priest upon His throne." In Israel these two offices were jealously kept apart. The history of the world is full of instances in which the struggles of the temporal and spiritual power have caused calamities only less intolerable than those which flowed from that alliance of priests and kings which has so often made monarchy a grinding tyranny, and religion a mere instrument of statecraft. Our Priest does rule. The "kingdom of Christ" is no unreal fanciful phrase. The foundation of His rule is His sacrifice. Men will do anything for him who does *that* for them. His rule is wielded in gentleness. Priestly dominion has ever been fierce, suspicious, tyrannous. The sway of this merciful and faithful High Priest is full of tenderness. The end of His rule is, that His subjects may be made free in obedience. **III. THE PRIEST-KING OF MEN BUILDS AMONG MEN THE TEMPLE OF GOD.** Christ is Himself the true temple of God. Christ builds the temple. Christ builds this temple because He is the temple. By His incarnation and work He makes our communion with God and God's dwelling in us possible. Christ builds the temple, and uses us as His servants in the work. Christ builds on through all the ages, and the prophecy of the text is yet unfulfilled. Its fulfilment is the meaning and end of all history. In one of the mosques of Damascus, which has been a Christian Church, and before that was a heathen temple, the portal bears, deep cut in Greek characters, the inscription, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." Those words are graven over the temple which Christ rears. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ—Priest and King*:—**I. NOTICE THIS SIGNIFICANT DESIGNATION OF THE LORD JESUS—"The Branch."** The family of David was like a decayed tree, the stump of which alone remains; but from so lowly and unlikely an origin, a shoot or scion would emanate, which would again become a noble forest tree, and perpetuate the memory and influence of the royal line. Certainly David's race had reached a low ebb when Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, because they were of the house and lineage of David. Through a branch the fulness of the root is carried to the fruit, which swells in ruddy beauty on its extremity, and presently falls into the hand of the wayfarer: so Jesus is the blessed channel of communication between the fulness

of God and the thirsty wastes of human need. II. THE COMBINATION IN CHRIST OF THE PRIESTLY AND KINGLY OFFICES. "He shall be a Priest upon His throne." Man's nature demands a priest. Conscious of sin and defilement, he rears an altar wherever he pitches his tent; and, selecting one of his fellows, he separates him from the ordinary duties of life, and bids him stand as mediator and priest between God and himself. It was thus that Micah addressed the young man, the Levite of Bethlehem-Judah, when he said, "Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and priest; and I will give thee ten pieces of silver by the year, and thine apparel, and thy victuals." If an argument were needed to prove the unity of the human family, it surely would be suggested by the universal distribution of temples and altars over the world, as though men were everywhere alike in this—that they know themselves to be sinful, and desire to find some way of propitiating and approaching the Almighty. In the Levitical system, and, above all, in Jesus Christ, God has met this universal craving of the human heart. Man also requires a king. God had designed to meet this need by Himself being Israel's King, that they should not be "like other nations," but a peculiar people unto Him. How remarkable it is that the Kingship of Jesus should have been so accentuated in His trial! It was the centre around which the storm raged. Pilate challenged His claims: "Art Thou a king, then?" and Jesus asseverated them: "Thou sayest that I am—a king." The faded purple robe flung over His shoulders, the reed in His hand, the mocking bending of the knee, the crown of thorns on His brow, were but the grotesque and heartless mockery of His claims. And since He has passed into the glory, He is still the Priest-King. Not Aaron, but Melchizedek, is the true type of our Saviour now. As Aaron, He made atonement and propitiation for sin; but as Melchizedek, He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. "This Melchizedek was king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God." As priest, Jesus pleads the merit of His blood; as king, He exerts power on our behalf. As priest, He pacifies the guilty conscience; as king, He sends thrills of His own victorious life into our spirits. As priest, He brings us nigh to God; as king, He treads our enemies under His feet. It is of great importance to us all to think of our Saviour in this dual aspect. On the one hand, we get all the benefit of His cross and passion; on the other, all the benefit of His resurrection and session at the right hand of God. May it not be that the weakness of thy Christian life is due to the fact that thou hast viewed Him only in the light of Calvary, and hast not, with Stephen, seen Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High—a prince as well as a Saviour—a Saviour because a prince? He accounts Himself absolutely responsible to achieve the uttermost salvation of those who trust in Him. If there is some sin which defies thee, at least it shall not be too strong for Him. And if the outflow of His delivering power towards thee seems restrained and ineffective, be sure that, in some one particular, which He will be quick to show thee, if only thou art willing to be informed, there has been a failure to yield Him the obedience which is due to Him as thy king. III. AS THE PRIEST-KING, CHRIST BUILDS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. Twice over this is affirmed; but what untold comfort the assurance must have brought when first addressed to that little band of exiles! Their temple site was strewn with ruins: it seemed almost hopeless to contend with those heaps of rubbish, impossible to rear a fabric worthy of the past and adequate for the future; but these words must have greatly heartened them. As the hand of inspiration drew aside the veil, they beheld another and greater than either Joshua or Zerubbabel, working with them and for them, and bearing the chief responsibility in all the toils and labours of their new erection—*He*; not they. They would work with new energy and courage, knowing, as they did, that they were fellow-workers with God. What difficulty could daunt, what enemies thwart or frustrate, the work of His right hand? If these words should be read by any who are losing heart because of the difficulties presented by their parish, their church, or the souls of their charge, let them be reassured, as they behold the trowel in the hands of the Priest-King; and let them be sure that He will succeed. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *A Priest upon His throne*:—As the enthroned king, Jesus reigns over His church as the vicegerent of God. He as king reigns over the intellects, the hearts, the wills, the bodies of all who yield allegiance to Him. He distributes to all His people the gifts of God according to His will. At His hand every good and perfect gift must be sought, and from His hand received. He giveth gifts to men through the power of His delegated authority received from the triune God. He is the true Joseph reigning

over the kingdom of the true Pharaoh. As Pharaoh raised Joseph from his prison, and made him ruler over all the land of Egypt, so the eternal Father has raised Jesus from His cross and tomb to enthrone Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. As Pharaoh's commission to Joseph was "Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled," so Christ is revealed to us as being over God's house as its delegated king. As Pharaoh's gifts were distributed by Joseph to the needy Egyptians, so God's good gifts of grace come to us through the kingly ministry of Jesus. It is from Jesus seated on the throne of grace as the priest upon His throne that we are bidden to seek pardoning mercy and aiding grace in every time of need. This revelation of Jesus as being the giver of grace as Heaven's enthroned king, is one that does not receive the recognition it demands. This is of course a necessity in all those theological systems in which the continuous priestly ministry of our ascended Lord is denied or ignored. But even where His ministry of priestly intercession is recognised He is not seen to be the priest sitting on His throne. That all the blessings of the kingdom of the incarnation come to us through His intercession is confessed. But men fail to see that these blessings are given to us by Him as the bountiful king of that kingdom. Nay, not unfrequently men shrink in dread from the statement that every good and perfect gift coming from the Father of Light is given to us not only by the hand, but according to the will, of the ascended Lord. Yet unless this truth be grasped Jesus' mediatorial ministry is not fully confessed. That He is the mediator of the new covenant is a matter of faith. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Now His mediation means that through Him, "the Word made flesh," we draw nigh to God in worship and God's gifts of grace come to us. This truth does not involve the idea that God has ceased personally to reign and to give gifts. The recognition of Jesus' delegated sovereignty does not involve the denial of God's essential sovereignty as an ever-living fact. When by Pharaoh's authority Joseph ruled Egypt this was not the virtual abdication of his power by Pharaoh; nay, it was the strengthening of his dynasty and the perfecting of his rule. Between him and Joseph there was perfect oneness of conviction as to the policy to be adopted in that crisis of his nation's life. In raising Joseph to his high position, and giving him liberty of action, he was but carrying out in the most effective way the policy his own wisdom approved. So the enthronement of Jesus as man, as king of the Church, is not the dethronement of God. For the sovereignty of the Son of Man is a delegated sovereignty, and its glory must exalt the throne of Him whose delegate He is. The wisdom and the love of the only Potentate is revealed in the king He has enthroned. And still more is this seen to be true when we remember the absolute union of thought and action that there is between them. What our King hears He speaks. "What the Father doeth that doeth the Son likewise." In an union so close there is no place for conflict of action or variance of will. Not by constraint but by union Jesus in His delegated sovereignty rules according to the will of God. He is a throned king, and gives His gifts according to His own free will. But even in His free rule He is the minister of the Father's pleasure because of His absolute conformity with the will of God. With full assent of mind then grasp the truth of Jesus' delegated sovereignty. See Him throned by God in the Church as the giver of His supernatural gifts. See in the revelation of Jesus as enthroned in Heaven, and hence ruling over His Church in Paradise and on earth, the fulfilment of Zechariah's glorious vision. Gazing by faith on Jesus at God's right hand, in Him, "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch," who has "built the temple of the Lord," and who in it "bears the glory," and "as a priest upon His throne" sits and rules. (*G. Body, M.A.*) *Of Christ's offices in general*.—There are three. 1. The office of a prophet. He builds the Church by the Word of the Gospel, which it is His work to promulgate as a prophet. 2. The office of a priest. To expiate the sins of His people, to purchase peace for them, and to manage their cause with God. 3. That of a king: for He has a throne, which denotes His kingly office. He is "a priest upon His throne," denoting the reward of His sufferings. In Him the glory of all these offices is to meet. The text affords foundation for the following doctrine—Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of prophet, priest, and king, both in His estate of humiliation and exaltation. I. THE VERITY OR REALITY OF THESE OFFICES IN CHRIST. 1. From plain scripture testimony. (1) To His having or being possessed of these offices. (2) To His executing these offices. 2. From

His name Christ, or Messiah, the anointed one. The unction signified—(1) His being set apart to the mediatory work. (2) His being fully furnished with gifts and qualifications suitable to these offices, in respect of His human nature, to which the Spirit was given, not by measure, but in fulness. II. THE NECESSITY OF HIS EXERCISING THESE OFFICES. This will be clear if we—1. Consider our misery by sin, ignorance, guilt, and bondage. We were ignorant of the way of returning to God again; and therefore Christ as our prophet must teach us; our priest must make atonement for us; our king must bring us back again, leading captivity captive. 2. Consider the salvation which the elect were to be made partakers of. 3. Consider Christ as mediator of the covenant, who behaved to deal with both parties, in order to bring them together. 4. Consider the work of conversion; what the soul needs. 5. Consider our daily necessities. 6. Consider the promises, which are the stay and staff of the Christian's life, without which they could never bear up. III. WHEN DID CHRIST EXECUTE THESE OFFICES? As He was the Redeemer of the Church in all ages so did He execute these offices in all ages of the Church. But more especially after His incarnation, and that in His twofold state of humiliation and exaltation. These three offices are not to be divided, especially when they are executed in a way that is effectual for the salvation of the subjects thereof. Wherever He executes one of these offices in a saving way, He executes them all. Inferences—1. How great and glorious is our Lord Jesus Christ, who was meet to bear all these offices at once, and exercise them at once, so as one does not mar or clash with another! 2. Let this commend Christ to you as a full and a suitable Saviour. 3. You cannot take Christ as a Redeemer, if you take Him not in all His offices. 4. Employ this mighty Redeemer in all the offices wherewith He is invested, and which, as mediator, He exercises for the benefit of the ruined race of mankind. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 1-3. When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer, and Regemmelech, and their men to pray before the Lord.—*The left ones in captivity:*—It must be observed that though all had not so much courage as to return to their own country as soon as leave was given them, they were not yet gross despisers of God, and wholly destitute of all religion. It was indeed no light fault to remain torpid among the Babylonians when a free return was allowed them; for it was an invaluable kindness on the part of God to stretch forth His hand to the wretched exiles, who had wholly despaired of a return. Since then God was prepared to bring them home, such a favour could not have been neglected without great ingratitude. But it was yet the Lord's will that some sparks of grace should continue in the hearts of some, though their zeal was not so fervid as it ought to have been. All then are not to be condemned as unfaithful, who are slothful and want vigour; but they are to be stimulated. For they who indulge their torpor act very foolishly, but at the same time they ought to be pitied, when there is not in them that desirable alacrity in devoting themselves to God which they ought to have. These men remained in exile, but did not wholly renounce the worship of God; for they sent sacred offerings, by which they professed their faith; and they also inquired what they were to do, and showed deference to the priests and prophets then at Jerusalem. It hence appears, that they were not satisfied with themselves, though they did not immediately amend what was wrong. There are many now, who, in order to exculpate themselves, or rather to wipe away (as they think) all disgrace, despise God's word, and treat us with derision. (*John Calvin.*) *Religious beliefs and religious services:*—I. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS THAT ARE RIGHT. There are three beliefs implied in this commission entrusted to Sherezer. 1. The efficacy of prayer. They were sent to pray before the Lord, or, as in the margin, "to intreat the face of the Lord." That men can obtain by prayer to the Supreme Being what they could not obtain without it, is one of the fundamental and distinctive faiths of humanity. 2. In the intercession of saints. These men were sent to pray before the Lord, not merely for themselves but for others. 3. The special ability of some men to solve the religious questions of others. This Sherezer and Regemmelech appealed

unto the "priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?" They wanted a certain religious question answered, and they appealed to a certain class of religious men who they believed had the power to do so. II. RELIGIOUS SERVICES THAT ARE WRONG. The Jews had performed religious services; they had "fasted," they had "mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years." This was right enough so far as the form is concerned; but in spirit the service was wrong, hence here is the reproof. 1. Their services were selfish. Mark the reproof. "Did ye at all fast unto Me?" Was it not from selfish motives that ye did all this? Was it not with a view of obtaining My release, and securing My favour? 2. Selfish motives the Almighty had always denounced. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 4-9. Did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?—*Rebuke of mere ceremonies*:—God had, through successive ages, exhorted the Jews to true repentance, and condemned their dissimulation, that they might not think that true religion was made up of fasting and of similar things. Fasting being of themselves of no moment, a beginning ought to be made with true religion and spiritual worship. When this question about the fast was raised by the captives, much disputing prevailed among the people. The Jews ever reverted to their old ways, being blindly attached to their frigid ceremonies, and thinking in this manner to propitiate God, so the prophet derides their preposterous labour and toil. "See," he says, "the only question now is, whether there should be fasting, as though this were the principal thing before God; in the meantime, godliness is neglected, and real calling on God; the whole of spiritual worship is also esteemed by you as nothing, and no integrity of life prevails: for ye bite one another, plunder one another, wrong one another, and are guilty of lying; ye heedlessly close your eyes to such vices as these; and at the same time, when fasting is neglected, ye think that the whole of religion falls to the ground. These are your old ways, and such were commonly the thoughts and doings of your fathers; and it appears evident that ye trifle with God, and that ye are full of deceits, and that there is not in you a particle of true religion. For God formerly spoke loudly in your ears, and His words were not obscure when He exhorted you by His prophets; He showed to you what true repentance was, but effected nothing. Is it not then quite evident that ye are now acting deceitfully, when ye so carefully inquire about fasting?" This reproof was needful, in order more sharply to stimulate them; it was wholly necessary to discover their hypocrisy, that they might not be too much pleased with external performances. (*John Calvin.*) *Fasting*:—A question about the propriety of continuing the stated fasts under the altered circumstances of the people brings a delegation to the prophet to solve this doubt. The date of this transaction was two years after the symbolic visions of the preceding portion. But the Jewish people needed something more than information in regard to the continuance of this fast. The whole doctrine of fasting had become overlaid with an incrustation of formalism and superstition that needed to be broken up. Fasting had become not a means but an end, a mere form, as it is in Mohammedan and papal countries at this day, and had attached to it an *opus operatum* that wholly destroyed its real value. They thought that God must bless them, indeed was bound to bless them, if they rigidly observed these outward rites, whatever was their inward character. Thus formalism acted in the time of the restoration, precisely as it acted in every subsequent period of the Church; and before a mere question of ritual observance could be settled, it was important that their minds should be set right on the deeper questions of their spiritual relations with God. The prophet, instead of answering the question about the fast of the fifth month, proceeds to rebuke them for their selfish and stupid will-worship, and their ignorance in regard to the whole subject of fasting, not only as to this, but as to all the stated fasts that they had been observing. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The self-centredness of fasting*:—It is not enough to fast. That may be a trick; there may be a way of doing it which robs it of all its virtue and of all its significance. God takes our ceremonies to pieces and says aloud, What is the meaning of all this—your church-going and hymn-singing, and apparently decent observance of religious ordinances? Is it in reality unto Me, or it is unto yourselves? Fasting is not postponed fasting. Yet this is what it has been turned into many times. Fasting has become a process by which we have got ready for eating. We have kept as it were on

one side all the things we have abstained from, and then, when the fasting day was over, we transferred the whole of them to the table and gorged ourselves with the very things we had fasted from. That is not fasting. When you fast from your bread, you must give your bread away—"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry?" Fasting is not to lock the cupboard where the bread is, and to say, We shall not want you to-day, but to-morrow about this time we shall be prepared for the feast. No, the loaf must be given away, and there must not be left one crust in the house. When we feast the poor, we truly fast ourselves. God will not have any other fasting. As for church-going, what is the meaning of it? Is it to relieve the tedium of a dull night? Is it to hear something that will titillate the senses or momentarily please the fancy? Is it to get rid of something at home? Or does it express the spirit of adoration, the necessity of the soul's immortality? Is it a coming to God because He is God? Is it worship, or a form of entertainment? The Lord thus searches into our ceremonies and says, What do they mean? So also with our feasting: the criticism of God is not partial: the judgment of heaven attends our banqueting and asks questions whilst the foaming goblet is in our hands. "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" (vii. 6). But, O Thou loving God, Thou art also our Creator, and are we not so made that we cannot get away from ourselves? The Lord answers, Yes, you are so made: but you forget there is a second creation, a miracle called incarnation, and following upon that a sacrament called Pentecost, the Whittide of the Spirit's descent, so that a man shall be himself, yet no longer himself, yea another self; God will give him another heart. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is not his old self one whit, but a new creature, with new aspirations, new necessities, new desires, with the restlessness which leads to contentment, with the ambition that despises the constellations because they are too small for its religious capacity. You are right when you say, you cannot get away from yourselves, your prayers are selfish unless you take great heed to them; but if you be rooted in Christ, living branches in the living Vine, why then you shall perform this miracle of being yourself and yet not yourself; of the earth, yet of the heaven; standing upon the earth, yet having a celestial citizenship and franchise. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

How to keep a truly religious fast:—The inquiry of the text concerns the fast of the fifth month, which was observed as a sad remembrance of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem. The exiles had three other fasts. Did they really serve any religious end and purpose? Did not the people content themselves with a mere external show and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins, nay, and add to them on these occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? Were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them. Notwithstanding the outward solemnities of fasting and prayer, there was nothing of a religious fast; "Did ye at all fast unto Me, even unto Me?" The prophet Isaiah calls a true fast, the fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. I. IN GENERAL, WHAT IS IT TO FAST UNTO GOD? 1. A truly religious fast consists in the afflicting of our bodies by a strict abstinence. 2. In the humble confession of our sins to God, with shame and confusion of face. 3. In an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that He would avert His judgments, and turn away His anger from us. 4. In intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal blessings upon ourselves and others as are needful and convenient. 5. In alms and charity to the poor, that our humiliation and prayers may find acceptance with God. II. IN PARTICULAR WHAT IS THE DUTY OF A DAY OF SOLEMN NATIONAL REPENTANCE AND HUMILIATION? Apply the above five essentials of a true fast to the particular circumstances of the day. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*)

True and mistaken fasting:—The prophet expostulates with the people concerning their monthly fasts, whether they did indeed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere show and pretence of a religious fast. It is necessary to consider the original and occasion of these monthly fasts. When carried into captivity, the Jews appointed four annual fasts. (Zech. viii. 19.) The question is,—Did these fasts truly serve to any religious end and purpose? Were not the people rather worse than better for them? They were sensible of the judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience. These fasts could not therefore be acceptable to God.

I. WHAT IS IT TO KEEP A TRULY RELIGIOUS FAST ? 1. A truly religious fast consists in the afflicting of our bodies by a strict abstinence that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. 2. In the humble confession of our sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. 3. In an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that He would avert His judgments and turn away His anger from us. 4. In intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal blessings upon ourselves and others as are needful and convenient. 5. In alms and charity to the poor, that our humiliation and prayers may find acceptance with God. **II. WHAT IS OUR DUTY ON A DAY APPOINTED FOR SOLEMN HUMILIATION AND REPENTANCE THROUGHOUT THE NATION ?** 1. We should humble ourselves before God every one for his own personal sins and miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the public guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the nation. There cannot be a general reformation without the reformation of particular persons which do constitute and make up the generality. 2. We should heartily lament and bewail the sins of others, especially the great and crying sins of the nation. This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all ages. Illustrate by Jeremiah, Lot, David, Daniel, Ezra, &c. We should lament and bewail the general prevalence of impiety and vice which has diffused itself through all ranks and degrees of men, magistrates, ministers, and people. 3. We should earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and make our humble supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleased to avert those terrible judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall on us; and that He would be entreated by us at last to be appeased towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of His anger. 4. We should pour out our most earnest supplications for the preservation of their majesties' sacred persons. 5. Our fasting and humiliation should be accompanied with our alms and charity to the poor and needy. 6. We should prosecute our repentance and good resolutions to the actual reformation and amendment of our lives. This is the proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good resolutions. Without this, all our fasting will signify nothing. (*Archbishop Sharp.*)

Ver. 7. Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets.—*God's Word by former prophets* :—**Doctrine**—1. External performances of external duties of religion are nothing in God's sight, where there is not study of obedience to all His revealed will, nor will howling under misery avail, while wickedness is kept under their tongue. 2. The Lord in all ages is uniform and like Himself in approving and enjoining of duty, and in disliking of sin, yesterday and to-day, the same for ever: for the Lord here requires the same He required of their fathers. 3. The longer the Lord by His Word hath been pressing duty upon His people, they ought to heed it the more, lest judgment prove the sadder; for, He preseth a doctrine that had been long since cried, to be so much the rather heard. 4. The Lord's chastising a people for sin and disobedience, doth not warrant them to look on their deliverance from chastisement, as a full assurance of their being reconciled, as if their strokes had made up all; but being delivered they are to make conscience of obedience, otherwise the controversy still stands, whatever deliverance they get, and they may expect to smart again. Therefore, after all their captivity, they must hear and obey. 5. It may help us to take heed to what God says in a sad time, when we consider that if it had been hearkened unto, it might have prevented much misery; for so is this doctrine commended, it was cried "when Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity," &c.; that so the thoughts of their former prosperity, which had ended in sad desolation, might let them see the ill of former neglect, and stir them up to be more serious. (*George Hutcheson.*)

Ver. 12. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone.—*The disease and cure of the hard heart* :—A man does not become profligate or altogether wicked at once. One vice makes way for another. The people in Zechariah's time had arrived at such a prodigious height of vice, that it is said, "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone." Adamant is the hardest of all stones: it is found by the best chemists to be indissoluble. The similitude is proper to exhibit the real state of the human heart; which cannot be melted, or reduced to the genuine image of Jesus, by human art or power.

I. THE DISEASE OF THE HARD HEART. 1. Of the symptoms or nature of it. It discovers itself in a wayward temper, a pride and stoutness of heart against God, particularly the calls of His providence, and the admonitions of His holy Word. This is the genuine character of wicked men. God is not in all their thoughts. They extinguish the remains of natural conscience. In an inflexibility against the word of truth, and the ordinances of religion. The inflexible adamant heart defeateth the gracious designs of the Gospel. It is inflexible to the motions of God's Holy Spirit. And this is the crowning sin. He knocks by the motions of His Holy Spirit, yet the hard heart refuseth to give Him admittance. 2. The different kinds of this disease. (1) There is a natural hardness: a part of that natural corruption, that original guilt and inbred poison of our nature. (2) There is an acquired hardness of heart. There are those who voluntarily strengthen themselves in their natural disobedience, and reject the counsel of God against themselves. How careful we should be to form our hearts for the Redeemer; to open those gates that the truths of the Gospel may be admitted. (3) There is a penal hardness of heart. There is a degree above voluntary hardness, as voluntary hardness implieth something above natural. In Scripture God is said to harden men's hearts in two ways—by leaving them in their natural state; and by giving up to a reprobate mind. (4) This hardness is either in part or in whole. Some complain of hardness and insensibility, as the present frame and temper of the soul. What contributes so much to hardness of heart in believers is, their giving too great scope to carnal delights. These may be tasted, but a large draught intoxicates. (5) This hardness of heart is severely felt by the genuine disciples of Jesus. It is neither felt nor complained of by carnal and wicked men. But to be past feeling is a sure symptom of death, as well spiritual as natural. There is no life without feeling. Learn—(1) From this view of the human heart, the character of the real Christian. (2) That nothing short of the teachings of the Holy Spirit have ever proved sufficient to affect the heart with a practical sense of the vileness of sin and its own hardness. (3) Learn what that sacrifice is which is most acceptable and pleasing to God. 3. The causes of this spiritual malady. (1) Ignorance. The blind mind, the obstinate will, and hard heart, inseparably accompany each other. (2) Unbelief. The most powerful arguments and most engaging motives of our holy religion are brought from things unseen. Unless we feel the powers of the world to come, neither the joys of heaven nor the terrors of utter darkness will properly work on our fears or encourage our hopes. (3) Custom in sinning hardens the heart. (4) Hypocrisy. This dangerous character appears to consist of two branches: dissimulation, by which we deceive others; and formality, by which we deceive ourselves. (5) Pride. As in the case of Pharaoh. Pride is at the bottom of every vice. (6) The deceitfulness of sin. Sin deceiveth by general investives. By delays. By coming plumed in the feathers of profit, or pleasure, or honours, or preferences. By presenting herself in a coat of many colours, especially in making her address in all the charms of sensual pleasures. She attacks the soul in Jacob's voice, and in an angel's form. Sin, by continuance, increases upon the soul. In hardened sinners, vice prompts men to presume upon impunity. **II. THE CURE OF THIS SPIRITUAL MALADY.** 1. Serious and frequent meditations on the perfections of the Divine nature, especially His glory and power. 2. Faith in the great doctrines of the Gospel is a sovereign remedy for the most inveterate disorders of the soul. 3. Faith in Gospel ordinances is another sovereign remedy. 4. Faith in the great atonement made by our exalted High Priest is another absolutely necessary ingredient in the cure of the adamant heart. The dignity and infinite excellence of this sacrifice will appear from its Divine appointment; from the nature of the sacrifice itself; from its noble and infinitely precious fruits; from those vast multitudes who have been saved by this sacrifice. 5. Another ingredient towards the cure of the hard heart is a proper knowledge of the guilt and demerit of transgression. The smallest deviation from the Divine law is entailed with the curse. (*J. Johnston.*) *The guilt of hardness of heart:*—There are periods in the life of every person who hears the Gospel in which his attention is called, in an especial manner, to the subject of religion; and one of the most common discoveries made at these times is this—that the heart is insensible,—that there is in it no corresponding emotions to the magnitude, or to the admitted importance of the great truths which have now become the subject of special attention. Insensibility upon the subject of religion is inexcusable. Notice that you are not destitute of sensibility and susceptibility. You are not incapable of feeling. Religion

does not indeed consist in emotion. It consists, first, in a right belief, then right feeling, then right purpose, then right action. You are not destitute of those susceptibilities to which the truths of the Gospel make their appeal. Nothing is so adapted to excite these constitutional susceptibilities as the great truths of religion. Consider the subjects of immortality, the being and character of God. God is love. Then why do you not love Him whom you should love supremely? We are capable of reverence, and God is the most venerable being in the universe. There is in Him independence, eternal existence, majesty, power, dominion, sovereignty, the terribleness of wrath, greatness of mercy, all of which qualities are capable of inspiring the soul of man with the profoundest feeling of reverence. "Fearful," said Moses of God, "fearful in praises." Consider the great work of redemption. God from His holy throne looking down upon a lost race. God meeting the demands of His own justice, and in order to sustain the principles of His moral government, condescending to be Himself the victim of the law, and a sacrifice to its penal demands. Will you tell me, you who confess to this charge of religious insensibility, will you tell me why you have never sympathised with the Divine compassion? You have looked upon that scene of the Father giving up His only begotten Son to save a lost race, and you never felt that, you never admired, never loved, never thanked, never praised Him for it! It is not that God has made you so, not that religion is not calculated to enlist your feelings on its behalf, there must be some other cause. Your hardness of heart is the result of apostasy. It is the issue, the fatal issue of a process, directly and completely adapted to the end, and incessantly practised up to the present moment. Who is it that is now complaining of moral insensibilities? Is it that person who has cherished the teachings of maternal kindness, and the sentiments inspired from time to time by the solemn admonitions of providence, and the more solemn warnings of life? Oh, no! I apprehend a fair review of your life will take away your surprise at any present hardness of heart. You have the power of commanding your thoughts, of fixing your attention on any subject. You can then command your thoughts, control the current of your thoughts, and the attention of your mind, keep your mental eye fixed upon all that is pure, lovely, noble, vast, glorious, upon God, the human soul, immortality, redemption, the great, the vast interests of the human race. Keep your thoughts up, and your soul will go up; keep your thoughts high, and your character will be elevated; keep your thoughts high, and your hopes will be pure, elevating, high. I am not speaking of this life only, I go beyond that. You will notice, in regard to your own mind, that some subjects approve themselves to you, by the operation of the passions. The passions have their own objects, and when they are at work in the soul, they bring into the imagination those thoughts and visions which are apt to feed themselves. Bodily appetites have their passions, and they control the trains of thought. What I wish to observe is, that the passions, the appetites, the senses, the general conversation of life, the character of the literature of the day, all tend to make you worldly and sinful and not religious. They do not suggest the great truths of religion, nor tend to keep them before the mind. Spiritual subjects must be kept before you by an effort of your will; your thoughts must be raised by meditating upon the Divine will. The hardness of heart which you may be feeling to-night, runs back through the history of your life, and could be traced to a period quite remote from the present. The text is true, "You have made your heart as an adamant-stone." What a comparison this is to make! Like an adamant-stone all moral culture is lost upon it. (*E. N. Kirk.*) *Gospel hardened*.—I was on a visit lately at a country village. The first morning I was there, I was awakened very early by the sound of a horn blowing, which continued for about a quarter of an hour. It disturbed me every morning, at the same hour, and on speaking of it to my friends, they assured me that I would soon get accustomed to it, and it would then cease to disturb me. And so it proved. I could soon sleep undisturbed, though the horn blew as usual. In a spiritual sense I think this is the most dangerous state into which a man can fall. When they hear the Gospel preached to them at first, they seem to waken out of a sleep, and get disturbed and uncomfortable; but if they do not take advantage of what they hear, they get accustomed to it, and by and by can listen to any Gospel sermon without being moved by it. Such a man's state is worse than at the first, for God's Spirit has ceased to strive with him. (*Christian Herald.*)

Ver. 13. I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.—*God refusing to hear*

prayer.—I. THE NEGLIGENCE OF MEN. 1. They do not hear the dispensations of God in His providence. 2. They do not hear the invitations of God by His servants. 3. They do not hear the commands of God in His Word. II. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. 1. He will not hear the cry of the lost, as expressive of regret. 2. He will not hear the cry of the lost, as expressive of disappointment. 3. He will not hear the cry of the lost, as expressive of fear. 4. He will not hear the cry of the lost, as expressive of despair. (*G. Brooks.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1-6. **I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.**—*The blessed community of men yet to appear on the earth*.—I. Here is a community SPECIALLY INTERESTING TO THE GREAT GOD. "Again the Word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury." The rendering of Dr. Henderson is worth citation: "And the word of Jehovah was communicated to me, saying: Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I have been jealous for Zion with great zeal, yea, with great indignation have I been jealous for her." Jerusalem was a city on which God had chosen "to put His name"; there was His temple, the ark, the mercy-seat, and the memorials of His power and goodness in the history of Israel. This city had been destroyed by the Babylonian invaders. Instead of losing interest in His persecuted people, His feelings were intense concerning them. The Eternal is interested in all the works of His hand, interested in men even in their state of infidelity and rebellion; but specially interested in those whom He regards as His people. "Unto that man will I look who is of a broken and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at My Word." II. Here is a community IN WHICH THE ALMIGHTY SPECIALLY RESIDES. "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." Jerusalem was in a very particular sense the dwelling-place of God (*Exod. xxix. 45; Lev. xxii. 12*). There are two senses in which the Almighty dwells with good men. 1. By His sympathy. The loving mother dwells with her loved child; yes, though separated by continents and seas. Jehovah's sympathies are with His children. 2. By His presence. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." III. Here is a community DISTINGUISHED BY REALITY AND ELEVATION. 1. Reality. "And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth." What is moral reality? A practical correspondence of the sympathies and life with eternal facts. All whose thoughts, affections, and conduct are not in accord with the immutable moral laws of God, live in fiction, "walk in a vain show"; and in this state, most if not all communities are found. Alas! "The city of truth" is not yet established, it is in a distant future. It is distinguished by—2. Elevation. "And the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain." Where are the communities of men now found in a moral sense? Down in the hazy, boggy, impure valleys of carnalities and falsehoods. But this community is up on the holy mountain, it is in a place of high moral exaltation. IV. Here is a community IN WHICH THE VERY AGED AND THE YOUNG LIVE IN SOCIAL ENJOYMENT. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age." Beautiful city this! The children not filthy, half-starved, diseased Arabs in crowded alleys, but bright creations gambolling in the sunny streets. V. Here is a community WHOSE ESTABLISHMENT, THOUGH INCREDIBLE TO MAN, IS CERTAIN TO GOD. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of the people in these days, should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes?" As if the Almighty had said, The creation of such a social state amongst you may appear an impossibility; but it is not so to Me. (*Homilist.*) **Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth.**—*The Church the city of truth*.—This declaration originally referred to the re-building of Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of true religion among the Jews after the Babylonish captivity. It had, however, a more particular and ultimate reference to the final conversion and restoration of Israel and Judah, when the glory of the latter days should arrive. I. THE CHARACTERISTICS BY WHICH THE CHURCH OF

CHRIST, OR HIS GENUINE DISCIPLES, ARE DISTINGUISHED, AS HERE DENOMINATED, THE CITY OF TRUTH. 1. It may be called this, because it is founded on Christ, who is Himself the truth (Eph. ii. 19, 20). 2. Because in it, and by them, the truth is believed. Faith, in opposition to unbelief, is that which chiefly distinguishes the spiritual citizens of Zion, from the children of the world and sin. The children of Zion dwell in the city of truth. Truth is the object of their faith—the truth revealed by God for the salvation of sinners. 3. Because the truth is obeyed in it. Were true Christians distinguished from other men merely by their speculative opinions, it would be of little importance, comparatively, whether they believed the truth as it is in Jesus, or not. But Christians are characterised by the obedience of faith. Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, their hearts and consciences are made to bend to the authority of the Divine law, which is “holy and just and good.” They are gradually purified more and more through obeying the truth. II. THE QUALITIES OF ITS WORSHIP, AS ENTITLING IT TO THE APPELLATION OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, OR THE MOUNTAIN OF HOLINESS. It was on Mount Moriah that the temple stood, so this mountain of the Lord may figuratively signify the worship of God as established there. With the most emphatic propriety, the worship of the Christian Church may be designated the mountain of the Lord of hosts, and the Holy Mountain, on account—1. Of its exalted nature. In this respect it rises above every other kind of service, as the lofty mountain above the lowly plain. For, in worshipping God as the God of salvation, all the most elevated and noble faculties of the soul are brought into action, and made to bear on the sublimest and most perfect objects. 2. On account of its holy character. It is the service of God, and therefore must partake of qualities which correspond to His nature, which is the perfection of holiness. Likeness to God’s image, to a certain extent, is indeed essential to the enjoyment of fellowship with Him. 3. On account of its purifying influence. Assimilation of character is one of the commonest and most natural effects of friendship. What a purifying effect, therefore, should not the exercise of Christian worship have on the character of the citizens of Zion. Christian devotion is the pure bulwark of Christian virtue. III. THE CHARACTERS OF CHRISTIANS AS THE CITY OF TRUTH, AND OF THEIR WORSHIP AS THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, MUST BE ASCRIBED TO THE EFFECT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE MIDST OF THEM. While Israel was captive the city of Jerusalem was inhabited by the profane and idolatrous. The people returned with a better spirit, and the service of the temple was restored when its walls were rebuilt. The heart of man had become the seat of profaneness and sin. The spiritual descent of the God of grace and of mercy into the hearts of sinners has changed this scene, has emancipated the slaves of sin from their galling thralldom. The character of true Christians is the glorious work of Jehovah, the effect of His return to their hearts. Nor is it less true that the holiness of their worship is owing to His presence. It is the realised presence of His majesty that makes it solemn, and the actual manifestation and experience of His grace that renders it pure. (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *A city of truth*:—No other city bears that name: the lie would be too great even for modern speculators. There must always surely be some lie that men cannot tell. By the “City of Truth” understand the home of truth, the address of truth; every citizen has an address, that is, a place where his friends may find him, where his letters may reach him. Jerusalem is to be called the City of Truth: every man is a truth-speaker, because every man is a truth-lover. A lie could not live in this Jerusalem which the prophet has painted; the lie would be no use. Put a very bad man into the company of very good men, and the man is unhappy; he does not understand the language, he feels that he is a long way from home; he would be glad if the door would open and he could find a way of escape; he says, This is not my native air; I do not understand these people; what are they talking about? I have no interest in their subjects; they do not speak my language; they do not discuss the topic I like best; I would God I were out of their society! It is just the same if we personify falsehood, and send the impudent audacious visitor into the city of truth. Every man would look on with amazement; sensitive spirits would shrink back in fear and horror and shame; no hospitality would be offered to the trespasser. The liar has only to look upon a flower, and the flower is blighted. A false hand has only to touch a little child, and the little child shrinks into old age by reason of inexpressible horror and fear. The liar, therefore, would not find a residence in Jerusalem. No owner of houses would have him. The time will come when the liar will be uneasy, simply because he is false: the stars will fight

against him, the earth will try to vomit him into some lower realm of creation, and all pure things will not hate him in the sense of inflicting upon him all the penalties of animosity, but will turn away from him with unutterable disgust. There is no city of truth now. When we read the prophecies of the ancient bards and seers of Israel, we are to understand that they are looking on through centuries, and are gathering flowers from the gardens that are to be, and singing songs that will be sung in the far-away but assured time. What city now could live if it were true? What society could exist three days if it were frank? Who would insure human friendship beyond a very limited number of months if man were to speak to man exactly what he thinks of him? An official robe may be a lie; a civic banquet may be an aggregation of falsehoods; what is called business may be a baptised way of swindling one another. Is there any likelihood of a city now becoming a city of truth? Not until it is burned down, and rebuilt, and built upon the foundation-stone of righteousness; not until Jesus Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone; not until everything gives way before the presence and persuasiveness of the infinite Gospel of Christ. Herein every city must be its own judge. When we speak of the city, what do we mean? Some outline of stone and brick and thoroughfare? Not at all. The city is only bad because the citizens are not good. When the individual citizens are honest men the total city will be a city of truth. Imagine a beautiful picture; a pilgrim, with a staff in his hand, and with sandals on his feet, has set out upon what he is told will be a long journey, and after he has travelled many days he says to some fellow-traveller or wayside friend, Where is the City of Truth? Perhaps the inquiry will awaken amusement in the man who hears it; perhaps it will awaken real pleasure, and the man will answer with a beaming face and an eloquent tongue, There is the home of reality, sincerity, uprightness, genuineness; see, over here, towering like a church, the whole outline beautiful with the sky that bends over it like a benediction. How is it that when men form themselves into cities they live upon compromises, concessions, mutual understanding, and elaborate legal documents which nobody can understand? If we could understand our legal documents we could not live together three months. Yet men speak of the difficulty of understanding the Bible! The lawyers must not speak of this, for they are the very creators of mystery: doctors must not speak of this, for they live in Latin, and without Latin nobody would believe them capable of treating the simplest disease; if they called water "water" some other doctor would be sent for; and even merchantmen must not be too severe against the mysteries of the Bible, for they have their terminology, their significant alphabetic signs, and their masonic tokens, which they can be exchanging with one another whilst the customer is looking at them, and the customer may be innocently "commissioned"—if there is such a word as that; if there is not, let us now make it; the customer becomes the subject of a remunerative "commission," and yet knows nothing about it, because all the signs are pre-arranged, and the whole calculation proceeds without the client's consent. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The holy mountain city:—*What is its characteristic?—it shall be called . . . "the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain." Mountains make towns; mountains support hotels. Did not some simpleton say, What a curious thing it is that rivers always come near towns? Some men do speak upside down; they are not wholly to be blamed, every man has not every gift: but the fact is just the contrary, it is the town that goes near the river. The Thames never came near London, but London built itself on the banks of the Thames. And why did the Thames become so very important? Because it is so very clean? I will leave that to the popular judgment. But because the Thames is a fine high-road to the sea, and the sea beats upon the farthest shores, offers a still broader highway for the transit of the commerce of the world. As with rivers, so with mountains. Men get as near some mountains as they can. They have not yet built upon the top of the Matterhorn, but they would if they could. I am not aware that there is a hostelry upon the summit of Mont Blanc, but I have no doubt there are men who would put a hostelry there to-morrow if they had the ability to do so. From some mountains you must build at a certain distance. They do not permit familiarities. Sometimes we have to calculate the quality and read the history of a mountain before we build near it. Vesuvius must be calculated with, must be consulted; because Vesuvius is a mountain of proverbially fitful temper, and when Vesuvius does speak we do not want to be present. But there are mountains in the Bible that men would live upon; they are green to the very top, their summits are paradises, if not in the

poor, narrow, horticultural sense, yet in some ideal sense of uplifting, as if they would bring us nearer heaven than any other mountains ever brought us. What shall be said of Lebanon and Tabor and Hermon? What shall be said of hills shaggy with forests, strong with rocks, rich with honey, garnished and carpeted with choicest flowers? When the pilgrim asks his way to the city of truth, the guide will point him to the mountain and say, The city nestles under yonder hill, and that hill is a benediction, a defence, and a stairway to loftier elevations still. There are some men who do not see mountains, who do not care for mountains, who cannot interpret mountains, and who consequently prefer what they call tablelands; they like to see a great stretch of sky. Other men could not live without high hills, they say the air gets purified somehow by circulating round these great elevations; besides, they love to climb. Man is surely a climber by nature. What is that singular instinct in him which leads him to look up? When did the ox look up? When did the beasts of the field count the stars of twilight as they leaped within the vision of man? Surely it belongs to man, singularly, to look up, in the fullest sense of the term, significantly, devoutly, wonderingly, and hopefully. Sometimes it comes into us that we must have wings, faculties we have not yet discovered, and if we could but discover them we should flee away to some pre-natal clime, to some other birthplace, to some long ago and forsaken home. There are other men who cannot be satisfied until they have put down in memorandum books the names of the mountains they have seen. Who gave the mountains these names? The mountains do not know them; the mountains are not dogs to be called by names. Others want to see the mountains as they stood before man was made. Thus we have a variety of nature to deal with—the prosaic, the poetical, the hermitage-loving spirit that yearns for solitude and boundlessness and the eloquence of silence; and the other nature that pines for the city, the gaslighted thoroughfare, the rattle and the tumult of public life. When the spirit of the living God comes into us we shall all love mountains, we shall say with the poet, “God made the country, and man made the town,” and in that time of spiritual uplifting, when all our faculties are aglow with Divine fire, mountains will be ways to heaven, and all things growing upon their verdurous sides shall be hints and tokens of the eternal paradise. Religion always works this mystery in a man’s nature; it elevates his taste, it dignifies his imagination, it gives nerve and pith to every faculty he has. No man can be a Christian in reality and remain a little narrow-minded creature. No small mind, in the sense of a mind that loves smallness, can ever love Christ. Every Christian is a great man. We may of course have to redefine the term “great,” and have to make many who are first last, and many who are last first, but if elevation of thought, purity of desire, radiance of hope, dawning immortality, and all the moral inspiration belonging to it—if these enter into greatness, then no man ever called Jesus “Lord” without entering into the possession and the enjoyment of that blessed inheritance. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 4, 5. *Old men and old women, . . . boys and girls.*—*Inhabitants of the holy city*.—What a lovely civic picture, what a charming representation! Dear old travellers, sweet old mothers, each with a staff in hand and leaning upon it for very age, and these making their way through groups of romping boys and girls full of laughter and glee and young joy. We cannot part with this word “playing.” Whoever thought the word “playing” was in the Bible? Always have great suspicion of any boy or girl who cannot play. See the picture, let it pass like a panorama before your eyes: old men, old women, little boys, little girls, children of every age, crowding the glad city, which is the city of truth, and which is dignified by the presence of the holy mountain. If all were old the city would be depressed, if all were children the city would be defenceless, but having old and young we have also the middle line, the average line, the active business energetic element, and there you have a complete city. It would have been a poor picture if the Lord in distributing His gifts had given to one man five talents, and to another one; the whole pith of the story would have been lost. Who does not see that but for the middle man in that parable there would have been no parable at all? The leap from one to five is too much; contrasts may be too startling; they may be so startling as to be tragical, and so tragical as to be discouraging; but the king gave to one man five talents, to another two, and to another one; preachers are eloquent upon the first and the last, and forget in too many instances that it is the average man that represents society. “Boys and girls playing in the streets.” Many parents are too dainty to allow their children to play in the

streets; there propriety draws a line. Poor propriety, it is always drawing lines: that is about the only thing it can do. Whoever saw a boy or a girl who would not play whenever an opportunity occurred? Children must be made to feel that playing is religious. All children should just be as merry as possible. Both boys and girls should be really glad, frolicsome, playful, and therefore simply natural and human. Any young thing that does not play is a paradox. Why do not men relax their strenuous business life sometimes, and be boys again? Especially why do not fathers of families be boys among their own sons and daughters? How commonsense is the Bible! How graphic in its pictorial delineations, how rational in its conceptions of human necessities, and therefore how likely to become the right book when it comes to speak of inner mysteries, and upper possibilities, and further issues, and ultimate destiny. Is it possible for boys and girls to be Christians? Certainly; and almost impossible for anybody else to be Christians. The Church has been fruitful of mistakes, but probably hardly any mistake has been greater than the discouragement of the young in this matter of giving themselves to Jesus Christ. There have been men who have said to children affectionately, You cannot understand these things yet, you must wait a while. I undertake to pronounce that instruction to be unsound and untrue. We are not saved because we understand. If so, then salvation is of works, for understanding is an intellectual work, and men are saved by cleverness, by ability, by mental penetration, because they see certain things through and through. I will not be saved so: let me be saved because Jesus wants to save me, loves me, and tells me that when we get together by and by in the long days of eternity He will tell me all about it. The church should be full of boys and girls. At present there are signs that boys and girls are being made more and more welcome to the Church. These signs should be gratefully hailed, for they are the signs of a deepening and widening Christian life. We cannot characterise all boys and girls as good, but surely there is a time when all boys and girls want to be good. This is the time to claim them for Christ. Jesus Himself took children very early; they were children that could not walk, they were "brought"—mark that word, for it indicates a good deal that is not expressed—to Him, and He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Boys and girls, there is one difficulty: people are extremely fond of us when we are babies; they would die for us then, or nearly so; they would sit up all night, they would expend their tenderest affection upon us, but when we are seven years of age, and from that to fourteen, we are looked upon somewhat coldly; then we shoot up into young men, and seem to recover part of the attention lavished upon us when we were babies. There is a zone of young life where young life has very much to take care of itself under the guidance of the schoolmaster—that sweet friend, that dear, dear soul that would do anything for us! Then be it ours to see that the young, when very young, are made to feel that there is something that cannot be seen, something better than fatherhood and motherhood as known upon the earth. Never burden a child with religious teaching. Never let a child know that there is such a thing as a Catechism. Never make the Bible a task-book, saying, You must commit to memory such and such verses, or suffer my displeasure. Never associate penalty or suffering of any kind with the Bible, with the Sabbath Day, or with church-going. In due time the Catechism will have its place, and Bible-learning will have its place, and church-going will have its place, but do not turn these early into burdens or penalties or associate with them the darkness of a shadow. Let the Sabbath Day be a day of jubilee, wedding day, resurrection day; a time when the joy bells ring their merry peals to call all men to the Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Children in the streets*:—The image here presented is one of great force and beauty. The city rises before us as the glow of sunset begins to steal over Olivet, and the lengthening shadows begin to warn the labourer home. The streets are not silent or deserted, as they have hitherto been, but there sits the old man gazing on the scenes of peaceful beauty before him, while the aged companion of his earlier years sits by his side, to enjoy with him the freshening breeze that comes cool and sweet from the distant sea, while before them and around them are the merry shout, the joyous glee, and glad gambols of happy childhood, whose ringing echoes mingle sweetly with the tinkle of the bells and the lowing and bleating of the flocks that come softly from the hills as they hie them homeward to the nightly fold. There is an exquisite beauty in this picture that would strike a Jewish mind with peculiar force, to which the promise of old age

and posterity was one of the richest that could be made. Indeed, the presence of the two extremes of life is one of the usual signs of prosperity. When war, famine, pestilence, or anarchy, have been raging, there are but few of either class, for their feebleness makes them the earliest victims. Hence, in the streets of Jerusalem, there were but few of either in her desolation, for even those who did remain abstained from coming forth their houses through fear. But the time was coming when security would be so general, that old and young would meet in the peaceful streets without fear of molestation or injury. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

The human society in the city of God:—The dear old capital, the centre of their reverential affections, and seat of their worship, beautiful for situation and holy for its history, will put on its thriving look again, and be the same blessed home to them that it was before. Observe that this Jerusalem was the city of God—a city that He has fashioned and filled after His own design, just as He wished it to be. This future Jerusalem was no mere mortal metropolis, built by human ambition, or populated by some sordid colony. It was to be modelled after a heavenly pattern. It was to embody the Divine ideal of a perfect, pure, and happy state. There is no mistake, then, in the city's composition, and no accident in its arrangements. If the Lord does not mean to have old men and old women in it, they will not be seen there; if boys and girls are found playing in the streets of it, we may be sure they did not stray in as vagrants, or get dropped there as foundlings; they are there by the express appointment of the Father of all the families of the earth. We may take these sentences, therefore, as a graphic outline of what God would have a Christian state of society to be, not in heaven, but in this world. In the scriptural imagery of symbolism, Jerusalem is a type of the Christian Church. Where the Gospel of Christ has done its perfect work, where Christianity has realised itself in social institution, and has penetrated all our private and public life with its practical regulation, there the whole of our being will come under its control; all its periods, from childhood to old age, will take the stamp and bear the fruit of this holy and gracious power in the heart; every capacity will be invigorated to its best exercise by Christian faith; our common work will be better and safer and happier work for being done in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christ; done by a Christian will, with a Christian purpose, in a Christian spirit, with Christian hands and brain and feet. Our faith is really the bread of our life. The Church is meant to open straight into your homes. The man and the children in the street, as the text says, should be the constant signs and witnesses of the kingdom of God within them—men about their business, children at their play, so toiling and trafficking, or so playing, as to make it plain that the stamp of the regeneration is upon them, the image of Christ within them. There is nothing in our domestic habits too small to bear this stamp and seal of the law of Christ, nothing too commonplace to be a test of sanctification. . . . In these villages and cities there are many men who treat the whole system of positive Christianity, both doctrine and ordinance, with indifference. They live by the side of Christian institutions very much as they would live by neighbours speaking another language, and following different pursuits. What can break up this strange and heathenish unconcern? It is due largely to the impression men have that religion lies aside of life, and apart from its vital interests. Religion is regarded as a class-concern, or a periodical and occasional concern, at anyrate a partial and narrow concern. It lays hold on a peculiar and exceptional faculty in the mind. It comes to some, and not to others, and those others must be excused. There is much of this sentiment abroad, and it kills, in not a few, all effort to be Christians. Nothing will be more convincing, in exploding this error, than a daily demonstration, in our own persons and conduct, of the opposite truth. Turn and look into the face of Christ as He walks the world in the majesty and beauty of His holiness. Is there anything that looks like a class-piety there? Do you gather from anything He says, that His followers are to have two divided lives, serving mammon a part of their time and God a part, the world with their busy energies, and God only with some sentimental states brought out at special seasons? Analyse the very essence and marrow of the Christian life. What are the parts of it? Faith, hope, charity. Is any one of them a class-possession? Christianity intends that every man and woman and boy and girl shall be the better for it, and every corner and instant in the character and life of each shall be the better. It would make strong men more manly, pure women more pure, light-hearted children lighter-hearted, because the love of Christ casts all fear out. We must expand our ideas, and give them life, by convictions of the "way

of coming" to Christ, and being made one with Him in this world. It is a very simple road. Theology becomes only a blind guide when it complicates and mystifies it, and puzzles the unsophisticated mind with metaphysical cross-examination. Do you want to be a Christian? Then you have already begun to be one—but you have only begun. The greatest part of salvation on our part is in the being willing to be saved. (*Bishop Huntington.*) And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.—*Children for evermore* :—The prophet is speaking of the restoration of the temporal Jerusalem, of the return of her inhabitants when the long night of their captivity by Babylon's streams is over. His words may be taken as prophetic of the heavenly Jerusalem. In the golden city there will be children—children for evermore!

"Ob, there's nothing on earth half so holy
As the innocent heart of a child."

It would seem to us as if there could be no heaven without the children: and as if we could not wish those that are in heaven to grow up. Shall there be no sweet childlike voices bearing their part in the "Song of Moses and the Lamb"? The children of the heavenly city are described as "playing." Children are children all the world over. And when we come to speak of the eternal world, we meet with children there—real children, happy children, "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." (*C. L. Balfour.*) *Children in the city of God* :—I. BOYS AND GIRLS MAY BE IN THE CITY OF GOD. They may know about Christ. They may be justified in Christ. They may be converted by the Holy Spirit. They may love Christ. They may imitate Christ—who spent a great part of His time in performing children's duties. II. THOSE BOYS AND GIRLS WHO ARE IN THE CITY OF GOD ARE VERY HAPPY. They are when they look back; when they look forward; when they look down; when they look up. They are happy now. They shall be happy hereafter. III. BOYS AND GIRLS WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN ARE VERY SAFE. They are in the streets of a city, walled and eternal. Neither God, the devil, wicked men, poverty, diseases, nor death, will harm them there. IV. BOYS AND GIRLS, WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN, MUST NOT GO OUT OF THE CITY OF GOD TO SEEK AMUSEMENT. To be very fond of amusement is not good. Duties in variety may often afford amusement. (*James Stewart.*) *Recreations, false and true* :—The man who imagines that his instincts for healthy recreation must be either ignored or destroyed if he is to live a Christian life is deluded by a dangerous untruth. I prefer the word "recreation" to the word "amusement." The latter may be no more than idle rest, the former is definite in its promise of renewal. There appear to be two somewhat different sets of considerations which claim our notice according as one or the other immediate purpose in Christian life presses with emphasis. If self-protection is our main idea, some things do not show themselves within range of vision, which are not only visibly present, but well up toward the front, if our main thought is aggression, conquest, possession of the whole world of human life for Christ. That cannot be a "recreation" which results in mental and moral and spiritual languor. Dissipation is the true name for that. The thing is poison to him, whatever it may be to others, and he must refuse it. Take the case of the children of our Church and homes, still retaining for the present the idea of protection, safety. We know that the circle of social relation, and that of Church relation, are not bounded by the same line. Even if Christian parents were more wisely careful in the matter of their children's choice of friends than they sometimes show themselves to be, it is not as far possible to-day as it was thirty years ago to exclude the "currencies" of the world: and it is almost impossible to guard against the penetrative power of current literature, let our will and our watch be ever so resolute. By what attitude, with regard to amusements, can our young people be sent forth most safely into the multitude of men and the tumult of life? My strong conviction is that we should, in full frankness, teach them to distinguish between things that differ. They will understand that evil is evil, and that good is good. We need, then, set up no jealous bar against this or that recreation, or any amusement which is really such, and for all their life they will be capable of judging the wrong and right of things, also of the expediency of this or that, in a way which the most complete quasi-papal *Index* would never afford. Take dancing. Late hours so spent afford no recreation. Indiscriminate companionships, indelicacy of dress, wastefulness in dress, never under any circumstances

can be right. Brand the wrong as evil, claim your children's verdict, and it will be given without hesitation, and then see, if you like, whether those things need intrude. They seem ridiculously non-essential. There are games which have been and are largely abused for purposes of gambling, and which have been eschewed or regarded as objectionable on that account. Gamblers are ready to turn every occasion into an opportunity for the exercise of their vice. To say that chess, or whist, or billiards is wrong, because betting and gambling have been connected by some men with the game, is scarcely a sensible conclusion. The theatre is often unquestionably poisonous and corrupting. But is it true beyond all doubt that evil is essential to the theatre? Has the theatre, distinguishing it from the drama, ever had a fair chance? The very presence of this power to-day, to say nothing of former generations and other lands, shows surely that there is not only an instinct to act, but a desire to see dramatic portrayal, such portrayal being an aid to the understanding and realising of a conception admittedly the fruit of a genius which is a worthily-used Divine gift. Must this necessarily injure the man or woman who attempts the task, and the society, in the midst of which such means are organised? Is the case of musical performance essentially different? Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is, in the music of it as well as in the libretto, a magnificent drama. Is an organised dramatic portrayal necessarily an evil? I cannot think it. But the principle of cautious self-protection and avoidance is not the whole, or the highest part, of Christian life and duty. The attitude of aggression is a true and necessary one, and aggressive Christianity has a voice and a work in this sphere of amusements and recreations. In the matter before us isolation is not security, and victory is the only safety. Watch as we may, warn as we may, if we do not rescue such amusements from evil surroundings, the temptation they present will again and again overwhelm. Forms of recreation are not the outcome of chance, they are a response to something which is part of us. If the people who organise the standing institutions receive no support from good people in any attempts to respond in worthy ways to the demand for amusement, they will be tempted to degrade their provision to a lower level. We must offer recreative substitutes for that which we condemn. We have to win and conquer and possess the world for Christ, and not be content to say a thing is wrong without, at all events, an attempt to set it right. It is neither Christian nor heroic to hand down difficulties to our children without an endeavour to grapple with them. . . . To many devout Christians the very necessity for considering such subjects as have occupied us, is almost a pain. They have never felt unrest. They can scarcely understand the besetment by which others say they are assailed. The fact is that, a generation ago, the majority of people did not occupy their minds with matters which we could not evade if we would. I think even conflict is healthier than stagnation. Work and play are as necessary parts of our life as worship. The greatness of the Gospel, the glory of God in Jesus Christ, is its power of salvation to the uttermost. (*D. Jones Hamer.*)

Boys and girls playing in the streets of the city:—God has a city still. In it live all who love Him and serve Him. They are walled about with God's love and care. They have the temple of His presence. Like Jerusalem, it is a city of peace; it is pleasant for situation, the joy of the whole earth. The Heavenly Father would have His city full of boys and girls, playing in the streets. I. WHY GOD WOULD HAVE THEM IN HIS CITY. 1. Because He loves them so much. The Heavenly Father will never have the children shut out from anything that He has provided for the people. He does not forget any little one. He does not think that you are too young, or too ignorant, or too weak. His city will not be right unless you are there. And He wants you now. 2. Because it is dangerous outside the city. There were in the old days wild beasts prowling about,—jackals and hyenas; and perhaps a fierce old lion came down from the hills to see what he could find. And outside the city to-day there is the old lion that goes about "seeking whom he may devour." And there are many robber bands that strip people of everything, and make slaves of them to hard masters, and even kill them. Sins like drunkenness, and vice, and dishonesty, I mean. II. HOW MAY WE GET INTO THIS CITY? Its gates are shut to keep out all enemies, and the watchmen with spears keep guard above the battlements. A long way off from the city there stands a man looking and longing to enter it. Why does he not come in? He has been an enemy of the King, a rebel against His laws. He could never get in there, at the gate of the law. Then I see that they are making a new gate. Over it they have written the words, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise

cast out." No watchmen or archers guard it. But there is One with such tender love and compassion that none could ever shrink from Him. It is the King's Son. Forth from this gate come messengers, offering free pardon for all. The King's Son has borne their punishment,—suffered in their stead,—that He might bring them all into the city of God. And now, whoever will, may come. III. WHAT ARE THE BOYS AND GIRLS DOING IN GOD'S CITY? They are playing; they are very happy. The moment children get unhappy they leave off playing. 1. They are happy because their sins are forgiven, and they know that God loves them. 2. They are happy because of the wall that is about them, the wall of God's love and care. Have you ever heard of the old woman who always used to pray, "O God, be a wall about us"? It was in the dreadful days of Napoleon Buonaparte. He was driven back from Russia, and fierce Russian soldiers were following him. Everybody was greatly frightened, thinking that the soldiers would come upon them and take all that they had, and perhaps kill them. But when this old woman heard of it, she said, "O God, be a wall about us!" Her neighbours laughed, and even her little grandson said, "What does grandmother mean by talking about God being a wall about us?" "Ah," said the old woman, "you will see, you will see; He can take care of us and be a wall about us." The soldiers had to march close by her house, but in the evening she prayed to God, and went to bed as usual. In the night the soldiers passed; but they did not see her dwelling. There came a very heavy fall of snow, and it drifted against the hedge of the cottage garden so high that the soldiers could not see it, and all passed along without knowing that there was a house there. Thus God really built a wall about her. He sent down the light snow from heaven and piled it up for her defence. 3. They are happy because they can play in the city. If God had not told Zechariah to say this, I am afraid some people would have thought of something very different. They would have said, the children must be very quiet; they must be seen more than heard; they must always be going up to the temple, and always praying, and singing hymns. But when God brought the boys and girls back to His city, the streets were to be full of them, "playing in the streets thereof." Because they were in the Holy City, they were not to try to be men and women; they were to be boys and girls still, full of fun and fond of playing, and loving to run and shout. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *The children of the king*.—Zechariah's heart is plainly in the sight he describes. Gladness grows in him as he watches in vision the children at play, and hears their ringing laughter. And his spirit is the spirit of the Bible, which everywhere shows the warmest interest in the joys of children. Who of the world's teachers but Christ took children in their arms, laid hands on them, and blessed them? He thinks His praise imperfect when there are no little voices in the choir. The religion of Christ has quite changed the thoughts and feelings of men about children. How do children fare where the Bible is not known? You owe your childhood, all its kindness and happiness, to Jesus Christ, the lover of children. Jerusalem was the city of God on earth, and the picture of the city of God in heaven. In heaven there shall be a mighty multitude of happy children. Illustrations may be borrowed from the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation, which is the book of God's city. I. THE GLORY OF THE CITY. 1. There is perfect safety in it. 2. It contains everything needed for life and joy. 3. The King is the centre of the city. Near the Rhine stands the city of Carlsruhe, or Charles' Rest, so called after its founder. It has the shape of an outspread fan, and all the streets branch out from the palace, in front of which stands the bronze statue of the grand duke. II. THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY. A city derives its glory more from the people than from the places in it. III. THE GATE OF THE CITY. You do well to ask, "Shall I get into the city?" Penitence is necessary. Those only who have loved holiness on earth can enter into the city of holiness. Thank God that the day of mercy is not past, and that the gate of mercy still stands open; and enter in by hearty faith in the Saviour of sinners. (*James Wells.*) *The new humanity*.—This charming word picture is a representation at once vivid and sublime of the new human race. It sets before us a city in the time of prosperity and peace. In time of peace children crowd in the open spaces, and engage in gleeful play. The spiritual idea is—men and women of the Gospel age—their characteristics as represented by the city street scene. Old photographs of new people. I. THE NEW HUMANITY IS CHARACTERISED BY YOUTHFULNESS. Childhood is peculiar to Christianity. God's religion is the only one that makes a speciality of children. Jesus made children a type of believers. "Of such is the

kingdom of heaven." Childlikeness is characteristic of Christians in a state of grace and in a state of glory. 1. In a state of grace. Children are humble, obedient, forgiving, contented, hopeful, loving. So are Christians. 2. In a state of glory. Christianity reveals a future state, where the good are ever young. Heaven is the land of the living. Religion a life of eternal juvenility transfigured with eternal glory. I. THE NEW HUMANITY IS CHARACTERISED BY ENJOYMENT. "Playing." All young life is playful—the colt, kitten, lamb, child. The Gospel is a system to make men glad. Joy is a duty. God is our best friend—our Father. Christians possess the secret of happiness—relation to Him. Externally, all may be forbidding, but there are hidden springs within. The Christian, though poor, is rich. III. THE NEW HUMANITY IS CHARACTERISED BY SAFETY. "In the streets." 1. God's affection for them proves this. He has loved man best of all. His affection is means to an end. All the attributes of God work for His love. 2. God's sacrifice for them proves this. God willingly sent forth His Son. 3. God's work in them proves this. His resources are boundless, and His purposes unalterable. To commence is to consummate. He who is Alpha is also Omega. 4. His promises to them prove this. "We severally and jointly promise to pay,"—so reads the promissory note. The Trinity are personally and collectively pledged to save the believer. We can trust them. The bridge of God's promises grips the Rock of Ages. IV. THE NEW HUMANITY IS CHARACTERISED BY MULTITUDE. "Full." Jesus will save a multitude untold. 1. The plan in operation proves this. "Power of God." "Mighty through God." 2. Divine promises to Christ prove this. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance." 3. The expectations of Christ prove this. "Many shall come," &c. Apply—(1) Seek the new nature. (2) Live the new life. (3) Then will come the new song in the new Jerusalem. (B. D. Johns.)

Ver. 6. Should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.—*The limits of the marvellous*.—Here is a prophetic picture of a time of peace and prosperity. To the man of his time the prophet's picture seemed wholly incredible. They were not prepared for such an optimistic view of things. The scene, however desirable, seemed utterly incredible. Then to their despairing mood comes this soul-inspiring message from God: "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, shall it also be marvellous in My eyes?" There is no room for marvelling when God is taken into account. Many things that are marvels to men are but the orderly and ordinary carrying out of God's purposes and plans. The miracles of Jesus were not miracles to Him. They were the spontaneous exercise of His ordinary healing and restorative powers. Finite minds have a tendency to be crushed by consternation in the presence of the marvellous, except they have learned to see God in all events. The only steady and strengthening principle of human life is God, and faith in His wisdom and power. These disheartened captives were in a despairing mood. Hope had deserted them. They had given up their work in despair. When the prophet assured them that the work would be completed, that Jerusalem would be restored, and that peace and security would yet be enjoyed within its walls, they shook their heads incredibly. They said: "It is too good to be true." They failed to take God into account, and hence were crushed and disheartened. God comes to them and says: "It may seem incredible to you, but it is not incredible to Me." And God comes to us all in the same way, and tells us that we are not to limit His power or to doubt His love. He is behind all events, making them work out His own gracious purpose. The true solution of the marvellous is found in the recognition of God. Illustrate by two men who are bent on making the world brighter and better. One yields to despair because he has been limited to means and agencies. The other clings to the belief that a remedy may be found for the ills of society, because he sees God overhead, and recognises His power to regenerate society. The same is true of our own personal experience, especially of the higher experiences of the Christian life. The timid heart often shrinks from claiming the perfect peace that God promises to them that love and trust Him. The true answer to our marvelling mood is that God will do it. He will lift the worried, fretting soul up out of its own feebleness. The same principle holds good in those strange and bewildering experiences that so often surprise and perplex the believer. But the hand of God may be recognised in the times of doubt and darkness. No matter what form the trial may take, the way out of it is the same. And in the matter of service

there are many things that surprise and perplex us. We are often sadly perplexed at our failures, and sometimes we are greatly surprised at our successes. Such a view of God, as an ever-present factor in all human experiences, cannot fail to enlarge our lives, and to lift us up above the countless petty perplexities and annoyances that tend to fret and worry the life. We thus learn to look at life as a whole, taking in its entire plan and scope, as seen and known by God. We need this view of God also to steady us and strengthen our faith as we look abroad upon the spiritual life of Christendom. We look for fruit, and behold there is barrenness. What marvellously slow progress the Church is making! But God is the same God still, and therefore we are not to yield to despair, and cease to labour and to pray. The Churches may be dead, but God still lives. We may strengthen our faith and encourage our drooping hearts by remembering God's gracious dealings with ourselves in early life. He came to our desolate hearts, and filled us with His own fulness, and made us sing for joy. God, who wrought such wonders in us, can do the same in His Church. (*Samuel Macnaughton, M.A.*)

Things marvellous to men not marvellous to God:—This is a wonderful age, not merely in the number of strange and unprecedented things happening in it, and in the strange and unprecedented character that belongs to it as a whole, but also in the prominence of wonder as an element in the view which it takes of itself. It is wonderful, because it is an age full of wonder. It does not seem as if there ever could be a time which so stood off, as it were, and looked at itself, in which so many men lived under a continual sense of the strangeness of their own circumstances. You will see how important such an element must be in the character of an age which possesses it, if you remember what it is to an individual. A child who thinks himself singular and different from other children grows up under the power of that thought more than any other which is in his mind about himself. Whatever kind of effect is produced by it, this is an element in the life and growth of every man—this wonder at the age he lives in, at the world, at men, at himself—this wonder that everywhere pervades our wonderful, our wondering age.

I. WONDERFULNESS OF LIFE. What is the reason that this sense of the wonderfulness of life, this sense of the strangeness and mystery everywhere, has such a different effect upon different men that it brings one man peace and another man tumult, that it brings to one man hope and despair to another? No doubt the reason lies deep in the essential differences there are between our natures, and cannot be wholly stated. One cause of the difference, and not the least one, lies here: in the difference of our ideas as to whether there is any Being who knows what we are reminded every hour we do *not* know; whether there is any Being in whose eyes this age, so strange to us, is not strange and bewildering, but perfectly natural and orderly and clear. We are too ready to think that God is surprised with this endless surprising strangeness that comes into our human life. Our only hope lies in knowing that there is One whom nothing disappoints and nothing amazes. Wonder is so much a part of ourselves, and such a constant experience, that we can hardly leave out wonder from the thought of any high nature. In the strong remonstrance with which Zechariah met the incredulity of the people there is the substance of what I have been saying. "It is all strange to you," God by His prophet seems to say; "but does that prove it will be strange to Me? You must not limit My knowledge by your wonder." Where we are ignorant, God is wise; where we are standing blindly in the dark, He is in the light; where we wonder, He calmly knows. God knows: this should bring us comfort, in a sense of safety and of enlargement.

II. THE SENSE OF DANGER. Where does so much of the sense of danger and the sense of unsafety in life come from? It is from the half-seen things that hover upon the borders of reality and unreality; from things which evidently are something, but of which we cannot perfectly make out just what they are. It is not clear, sound, well-proved truths which frighten men for the stability of their faith; it is the ghostly speculations, the vaguely outlined, faint suggestions that hover in the misty light of dim hypothesis, that make the dim uneasy sense of danger that besets the minds of so many believers. Behind all my conceptions, and all other men's conceptions, of what things are, and how things came to be, there always must be the first fact about things, about what they are, and how they came to be; and that fact must correspond exactly with the knowledge which is in the supreme intelligence of Him who knows all things accurately and completely. If my conception of that fact, however it was reached, differs to-day from His knowledge of the fact, danger must be in the persistence of that difference,

and safety in its being set right. Ignorance is always dangerous; knowledge is never dangerous. He who believes truth only as the way to God, he who regards opinions as valueless except as they agree with the infallible judgments of God, and so bring him who holds them into sympathy with God and keep him there, he is the man for whom all life is safe, and whose faith faces the changing thoughts and destinies of the world, however astounding they may seem, without a thought of fear. III. THE SENSE OF FREEDOM. Such a man is also free. The safety of life and the enlargement or freedom of life must go together. No man is safe who is not free; no man is free who is not safe. Our effort, our action, our whole life in the thought and will is limited by that which we account possible. The conception of what is possible enlarges and widens as the quality of any being's life becomes higher; and so the loftier being is able freely to attempt things which the lower being is shut out from if he lives only in the contemplation of his own powers and never looks beyond himself. Freedom to attempt belongs to the larger vision. If He who sits at the centre of everything, and sees the visions of the universe with the perfect clearness of its Maker—if God can really speak so that we can hear Him, and say, "It is impossible to you, but it is not impossible to Me; it is marvellous in your eyes, but it is not in Mine"; if He can say that of any task that is overwhelming men with its immensity, that word of His must snap our fetters, must set free the little strength of all of us to strike our little blows, must enlarge our lives, and send them out to bolder ventures with earnestness and hope. IV. THE ESSENCE OF FAITH. It seems to me as if, through all these ages of Christendom, God had been trying to teach the Christian world to enlarge its notions of the possibility of faith by the perpetual revelations of His own. God must be teaching us all that faith is the essential relation of the human soul to His soul-faith, the deep rest of the child's life upon the Father's love-faith, the reception by man of the word of God, which comes to him in voices as manifold as the nature of God Himself,—that faith, a thing so deep, essential, and eternal, is not to be conditioned on the permanence of any one of the temporary forms in which it may be clothed. The fearful believer says, "I do not see how it can be, it is so strange"; but God answers him out of all the richness of Christian history, "If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it also be marvellous in Mine?" Apply this truth to the personal life; for there, most of all, a man needs the enlargement that comes of always feeling the infinite knowledge that God is about him, encompassing his ignorance with Himself. How easily, with our self-distrust and spiritual laziness, we shut down iron curtains about ourselves, and limit our own higher possibilities! This is truest in religious things. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **I will save My people from the East country, and from the West country.**—*A twofold Divine restoration.*—I. A DIVINE TEMPORAL RESTORATION. The reference here is to those Jews who had been scattered abroad over various countries through the Babylonian Captivity and other disastrous causes. The point is, that the restoration here promised is a temporal restoration to their own land and country. God is constantly restoring His people to those temporal blessings they have lost. He restores often—1. To lost health; 2. To lost property; 3. To lost social status. In all His people's distresses He bids them look to Him. II. A DIVINE SPIRITUAL RESTORATION. This may mean, I will become their God in good faith or in reality, both on their side and on Mine. This is incomparably the most important restoration. 1. Man may lose his God, and be "without God in the world." 2. The loss of God is the greatest loss. A man separated from God is like a branch separated from the root, a river from the fountain, a planet from the sun. 3. Restoration to God is the transcendent good. He who can say, "The Lord is my portion," possesseth all things. This restoration the Almighty is effecting now in the world. "He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." (*Homilist.*) **And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.**—*The future of the Jews.*—The terms of this prediction carry us beyond any facts at that time existing, and refer to events then future. It predicts a return of the Jews from the West as well as the East, whilst at this time the only dispersion existing was toward the East in Babylon. Hence an universal dispersion is implied in this universal restoration, the terms, from East to West, being inclusive of the entire earth. This general dispersion did not occur until the final fall of Jerusalem, since which there has been no general restoration of the Jews, either in a literal or a figurative sense. Hence the main

facts predicted are yet future. That they include a literal restoration of the Jews to their own land is probable, but that this is the main purport of the prophecy is just as improbable. There is something more than a mere political restoration required by the general drift of the prophecy, which is spiritual, not temporal, and which therefore demands a spiritual reunion to the spiritual theocracy, or the blood-bought and blood-washed Church of God. And this is particularly demanded by the covenant formula of ver. 8, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God," which is always the exponent of spiritual blessings, and the fact is put beyond all question by the explanatory addendum, "in truth and righteousness," which expressly affirms that this restoration and union are not to be outward, visible, and temporal, but inward, invisible, and spiritual. They will be a sincere and justified people, as He will be a true and pardoning God. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **For before these days there was no hire for man.**—*Society before the temple was built*:—A neglected temple always means a ruined society. These words are not to be applied locally or parochially; they express an eternal and unchangeable principle: a neglected God is a frowning heaven, a frowning heaven is a desolated earth. We must more and more insist upon the importance of the religious spirit in its relation to policy and commerce and agriculture, and the whole mechanism and build and meaning of society. Unless we cultivate our own spirituality to a high degree we may soon be tempted to forego this argument, or allow ourselves to be victimised into the belief that it is not an argument but a sentiment. The first thing which the Christian man has to do is to keep up his spirituality to the very highest point. By keeping up spirituality I mean the cultivation of that insight which sees more than surface, more than so-called phenomena; that penetrating insight that sees behind all these things a Spirit, a Providence, ruling, moulding, and directing all things. We walk by faith, not by sight: Lord, increase our faith! We see nothing as it really is; the reality is beyond the appearance. Why be satisfied with the door? smite it that it may fly open, and let the opening door be an invitation to enter and partake of the hospitality of God. Always in Biblical history, when men turned from God, God turned away from them: "Therefore it has come to pass: therefore I scattered them with a whirlwind among all nations: he that honoureth Me I will honour, he that despiseth Me I will lightly esteem." This is not arbitrary, this is not the changeable rule of a changeable court; this is simply the utterance of an eternal necessity. The sun says, He that will not have me shall have darkness and death. Is the sun cruel? Nay, the sun is clement and pitiful by announcing that fact; the sun offers its dower of light and warmth and comfort. So when we speak in Gospel words about the wicked being driven away in his wickedness, and about man neglecting to build the temple, and therefore having no harvest to reap, we are not delivering the arbitrary decrees of some fancy-created Jove; we are announcing the law of the universe, whoever made it. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *A Divine call to a Divine work*:—The call is urged on two considerations—I. **THE WRETCHEDNESS CONSEQUENT ON THE NEGLECT OF DUTY.** They were then destitute of three elements essential to the well-being of any people. 1. Industry. "There was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast." The people were purposeless, lazy, and in a state of general lethargy and collapse. No great project inspired their interest, engrossed their attention, enlisted and marshalled their powers. The lack of industry is a curse to any people; it is an injury to health, as well as an obstruction to material and social progress. Another element of well-being of which they were destitute was—2. Peace. "Neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction." The lack of earnest occupation naturally led to intestine broils and contentions. Nothing is more natural and more common than for people without employment to wrangle and dispute with one another. Men who are full of business have no time to quarrel. 3. Social unity. "For I set all men every one against his neighbour." II. **THE IMPROVEMENT WHICH ENSUES ON THE RESUMPTION OF DUTY.** "But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous," &c. This means, but now, as you have resumed the work and rebuilt the temple, I will bless you. There are three blessings here promised. 1. Temporal prosperity. "For the seed shall be prosperous," &c. Material nature is in the hands of God, and He can at any moment make it a curse or a blessing to men. Here He promises

to make it a blessing. 2. Social usefulness. On the resumption of the great duty which Heaven had enjoined on these returned captives they should be a blessing. 3. Divine favour. Where there was Divine displeasure there would be Divine favour. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days.**—*The danger of resistance to the Divine messages*:—It is a decisive evidence of sound wisdom to profit by the faults, the errors, and the calamities of other men. Two sources from whence we ordinarily obtain knowledge and caution. The first is, our own experience, by which we too frequently buy knowledge at a very high cost. The second is, the experience of those who have lived before us; and this knowledge is as good in its quality, and obtained at a much easier rate than the former. In Scripture we have many histories of individuals and histories of communities. I. A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN. 1. The immediate agent by whom the communication is made—the Spirit of God. It is this Holy Spirit who is the author, the immediate author, of all communications from God to man. It should give a great solemnity to all that is addressed to us, to recollect that it comes to us by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. 2. There are instruments appointed for the communication of this message. “By the prophets.” The ministration of fellow-men—ancient prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. 3. The nature of the communication thus made. It is a message of instruction, conviction, consolation, and warning. II. THE RESISTANCE AND OPPOSITION WHICH IN EVERY AGE HAS BEEN MADE TO THE MESSAGE. Mark the varied forms in which this opposition is here described. When is it that resistance may be said to be made to the Spirit, in the Word? 1. When men estrange themselves from the means of grace and salvation, and place themselves beyond the reach of those means, it may be justly feared that they are in the state of those who refuse to hearken. How many do place themselves in such situations! 2. When men perversely act in direct contradiction to the light they have received. All sin is heinous in the sight of God. But that is especially heinous which is committed in direct opposition to the light we have received, whether that light have been communicated by the instructions of an earlier age, by the ministrations of the prophets, or by means of any of the various institutions which have been set on foot in our day. 3. Where there is a determination to persevere in a course of sin, against the remonstrance of conscience and the Word of God. This is surely pulling away the shoulder, and stopping the ears, and hardening the heart. 4. When to the impiety of unbelief is added the iniquity of scorn and contempt, and when ridicule is poured by men of determined minds on things sacred. III. THE TREMENDOUS CONSEQUENCES TO WHICH SUCH CONDUCT INEVITABLY EXPOSES. To the wrath of God; the Divine displeasure. Here presented as “great wrath”; and “great wrath from the God of armies, the Lord of hosts.” Lessons—I. Admire and adore the condescension, patience, and grace of God the Holy Spirit. Condescension in that He visits our world with the messages of mercy, and brings home to our ears and to our hearts the sounds of reconciliation and salvation. Patience, in that He still visits us and waits to be gracious; still strives in the hearts of the unregenerate—still visits His people with the dews of the heavenly grace. 2. This subject affords a clear demonstration of the depravity of human nature. If I could find no other proof of human depravity, I should find it in this enmity of man to all that is good and gracious. 3. Learn the debt of gratitude you owe to the Son of God. For you would still have gone on in the way of enmity if He had not visited you. It was the sovereignty of God’s distinguishing grace which gave you eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to feel. 4. We tremble for some of you. Because you have heard these things again and again; you have seen the Cross of Christ reared in your midst—and some of you are still stopping your ears and hardening your hearts; instead of yielding up to the convictions of your minds, you are struggling against them. (*George Clayton.*) **I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.**—*A goodly heritage*:—Wherever there is the teaching of the Holy Spirit it is sure to convince men personally, in their own consciences, souls, and experiences, of their need of God’s Christ. I. THE POSSESSIONS. The people will be distinguished by that which they are to possess. 1. The city of freedom, the new Jerusalem. There is no sense in which in this possession freedom is not implied. The Jerusalem that is above all is free for us all. The first feature is freedom from sin. 2. This Jerusalem shall be a city of truth. This truth, that

from first to last we are saved entirely by the grace of God. This grace is entirely by the Lord Jesus Christ. The second thing to be careful upon is that regeneration is one part of the work of grace. 3. This city is called "the mountain of the Lord." So called because the Lord is there. II. HOW THE PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TO POSSESS THESE THINGS. The Jews in their return from captivity, and coming back to their land, and the Lord making the land fruitful, are the things indicated here. It was on Christ's account,—that was the deep foundation reason why they came back from captivity at all. And how is it you return to Zion? It is because God chose you in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. By virtue of the secret relationship existing between you and Jesus Christ you are brought to possess these things. (*James Wells.*)

Ver. 13. So I will save you.—*Man's need and God's provision*.—I. MAN IN HIS NATURAL AND FALLEN STATE. "As ye were a curse among the heathen." Sinners are under the curse of God. Mankind in general, as transgressors, all whose sins are unpardoned, are under the curse of God. Those who are in their natural and carnal state are a curse, to themselves. The dispositions which they cherish, the practices which they adopt, injure their health, blast their reputation, often ruin their circumstances, and lead to sorrow and wretchedness and death. And sinners are a curse to others. They diffuse evil, they propagate mischief, they are corruptors. II. THE GRACIOUS PURPOSE OF GOD IN REFERENCE TO MAN, AS MADE KNOWN IN THE GOSPEL. "So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing." This salvation has been procured for man by the atonement and intercession of Christ. This salvation is free to all, without any exception, without any limitation. This salvation can only be experienced by those who exercise "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." III. THE GRACIOUS AND DELIGHTFUL RESULT OF THIS DESIGN IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHILDREN OF MEN. "Ye shall be a blessing." Those who are saved inherit the blessing of God. Those who are saved are a blessing to themselves. (*J. H. Bumby.*)

Vers. 16, 17. Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour.—*Truth*.—Concisely stated, the doctrine of the text is, think truth, love truth, speak truth, and do truth—live in its atmosphere, make it your ruling principle. Let the clear light which it sheds out throw a radiance on your course, so that your life be transparent as a summer-day. The charm of truth is the charm of simplicity. He who knows the value of truth, and strives to exhibit it, bears the mark of God: he cannot be far from the kingdom of God. The text contains two affirmative and two negative precepts—speak the truth, execute judgment, and do not imagine evil in your hearts, do not love a false oath. I. PRESUMEDLY INNOCENT INROADS UPON THE DOMAINS OF TRUTH. 1. There is innuendo and insinuation. The wise look which says so much, and commits itself to little. 2. Common prattle and gossip, meddling, as it generally does, with the more intimate concerns of third persons, seldom respects the limits of truth. Nowhere is caution more needful than in ordinary conversation. 3. Promises are lightly and readily given, and often as lightly and readily broken. 4. Lack of firmness necessitates sacrifice of truth. One does not like to be singular, one does not like to be disagreeable. 5. In speaking of one's self or friends, the temptation, not always resisted, is to throw them out in the best light and make great persons of them, that it may be seen how grand, how clever we are, and how choice is the circle of our acquaintance. 6. The species of falsehood commonly called "fibs," "white lies," or in the slang diction of the college, "crams." 7. The unconscious workman's dallying with his work is a sin against truthfulness. II. FLAGRANT BREACHES OF THE LAW OF TRUTH. Open and deliberate lies, intentional and heartless deception. In opposition to all falsehood, whether of the lighter or heavier sort, whether respectable or vulgar, whether in deed, word, or gesture, whether by omission or addition, the Word of God says, "Speak every man truth to his neighbour." III. HOW DOES SCRIPTURE ENFORCE THIS? By what revelations; by what further precepts? 1. The wrongfulness and fate of untruth are clearly explained. 2. What more would you have to recommend truth than that it is assimilation to the Divine character? He is a "God of truth, and without iniquity." "Just and right." If our thoughts, words, and deeds were regulated by the standard of truth this would be heaven upon earth. Be satisfied of a man's integrity, sure that he ever means to do the right, and would scorn to act meanly, and you may make that man your friend. To work the world

out into a society of friends, to transform it into a brotherhood, is, in brief, the aim of Christ. That ideal is the reality of heaven. (*A. Hawkins Jones.*) *An universal revival of religion*:—I. THE ESSENTIAL PRE-REQUISITES. Four pre-requisites or preparatories for an universal revival of genuine religion. 1. There must be truthfulness in speech. "These are the things which ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour." Truthful speech is somewhat rare in all social circles, and in all departments of life. Fallacious statements abound in markets, senates, courts, and even families. Truthful speaking involves two things—(1) Sincerity. To speak a true thing insincerely is not to speak truthfully. A man must conscientiously believe that what he speaks is true, before he can be credited with veracity. Truthful speaking involves—(2) Accuracy. A man may speak with sincerity, and yet from ignorance or mistake may not speak according to fact; and unless he speaks according to fact he can scarcely be said to speak truthfully. His speech unintentionally conveys falsehood. Hence truthful speaking requires a strong sense of right, and an adequate acquaintance with the subjects of the speech. 2. There must be rectitude in conduct. "Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates." In the East the courts of justice were held at the gates of the city; and perhaps the primary reference here is to the pronouncing of judgment on cases that were righteous and tended to peace. But rectitude of life is even more important and urgent than rectitude in judgment. 3. There must be benevolence in feeling. "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour." We must not only keep our hands from evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they imagine not any evil against our neighbour. 4. There must be abhorrence of falsehood. "Love no false oath." II. The SIGNAL MANIFESTATIONS. It is suggested that where these pre-requisites are found, i.e. where a revival takes place, three things are manifest. 1. An increased pleasure in religious ordinances. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts." "The fast of the fourth month was on account of the taking of Jerusalem (*Jer. xxxix. 2, lii. 5-7*); that of the tenth was in commemoration of the commencement of the siege (*Jer. lii. 4*). The Jews are distinctly informed that these fasts should be turned into festivals of joy."—Henderson. The first sign of a true revival of religion in an individual or a community is a new and happy interest in the ordinances of religion. Another sign is—2. A deep practical concern for the spiritual interests of the race. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also." There will be a mutual excitation amongst the people to seek the one true and living God. "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." "Speedily," there is no time to be lost; religion is for all, and for all an urgent duty. Another sign is—3. An universal desire to be identified with the people of God. "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men—a definite number for an indefinite multitude, indicating many rather than a few—shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew." Conclusion—When will this universal revival of religion take place? The signs are scarcely visible anywhere. We can only hasten it by attending to the pre-requisites. (*Homilist.*) *Lying and false oaths*:—Honesty and policy cannot live in the same heart. Who can make anything of the liar? He is the worst of all men. He has lost the higher qualities of manhood, yet the base deceiver can shudder when he sees a poor drunken man who may be a saint compared with himself. The liar cannot be converted, unless it be by the whole force of the Deity. He is hollow, he has killed his conscience, he has sold his honour. Never allow a liar to come into your house. The liar is a composite sinner; he sins all round, or would sin in any direction and every direction if it would serve his purpose so to do. Have faith in every man that loves truth. Though he fall seven times a day he shall stand at eventide. Any sins that lie along the line of passion are nothing as compared with sins of deliberation, plan, scheme, thoroughly wrought out, purposed. I have known many a soul overborne by gusts from the bottomless pit, not wanting moral beauty and fine quality, but I have never known a liar that was worth being touched by the point of the longest instrument ever fashioned by human hands. Lying is so subtle, too. It is not vulgar deception in all cases. There is a falsehood that is calculation,

a very fine process of putting things together and totalling them up into certain results and considering whether those results are worth realising. Lying may be speechless. It is a mistake to say that lies are always "told": lies are acted, lies are suggested, lies are inferential. Christ came to give us the spirit of truth. Truth is a spirit. It is not a mere way of stating facts. A man may contradict himself in his statement of facts and be true at the soul. Verbal discrepancies are nothing: the meaning of the heart is everything. When an honest soul corrects itself there is nobility in the very act of self-correction; you see the candour, you appreciate the withdrawal or the addition or the modification of former statements, as the case may be. A truthful man never thinks of his own consistency; a truthful man cannot be inconsistent. So-called inconsistency in his case is accidental, superficial, transient, explicable. The man's consistency is in his soul: what he means to be, that he is. Of all liars perhaps the young liar is the worst. It ought not so to be. The boy, the young man, should not lie. He should be so heroic and fearless as even to blurt out the truth when he does not tell it in sequential order. It should not occur to his young soul to falsify. Yet if one were to write the history of young hearts in any family and in any city, society could not live; we would fly away from one another as men fly from suddenly disclosed serpents. "Love no false oath," saith the text. "False oath"—what ironies there are in expression! "False balance"—what an affront to geometry! "False oath"—what an offence to righteousness! "False prophet"—what a shock to the spirit of the sanctuary! "False brethren"—who can live? The Bible grows upon our conscience and our whole moral nature by the sublimity of its criticisms and the loftiness of its spiritual appeals. The Bible will have truth everywhere, because it will first have truth in the soul. Do not treat the symptoms of your case: get at the radical disease. It is poor curing that is done by mere plasters. Only the cure that starts from the centre and works out towards the circumference brings with it summer redness to the cheek, summer brightness to the eyes. God condemns sin and all evil things in detail because they are ruinous to the man. They are spoiling the work of God's hands, they are overturning the purpose of God's heart. The sinner is a suicide. "He that sinneth against Me," saith the Scripture, "wrongeth his own soul." Think of a man committing plunder upon his own nature, stealing from himself every element that makes him a man! I have known liars that succeeded for a few months; I have before my mind at this moment three liars, all under five-and-twenty years of age, who lied and robbed and did evil with both hands, and to-night they are refuse; they are avoided by all who know the rottenness and pestilence of their character. Thus sin takes a man down line by line, faculty by faculty. Sin sucks the Divine juice out of a man. You cannot allow one evil thought to pass through your sensitive brain without leaving that brain weaker and poorer. The temptation came and left ruin behind. The temptation itself is not sin unless it is yielded to, but if the temptation have hospitality one moment in the brain it takes off some fine film, some subtle veil through which the brain saw somewhat of God. The poet can drink himself into idiocy; the genius, the master magician of words, can so treat his body that his soul will not think for him. It will give up and abandon the altar where once it burned. God sees therefore that sin ruins the man. The sinner himself goes down. The things are not only hateful to God, they are ruinous to the people who practise them. You cannot over-eat yourself, and pray; you cannot soak your body in evil liquids, and then sing, you can sound the notes, but the subtle, spiritual, Divine music is gone. When fire has left the altar what is the altar? (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. *Therefore love the truth and peace.*—*The love of the truth*:—This solemn admonition may seem to derive additional weight from the consideration that it is almost the concluding message which the prophet Zechariah delivered to his countrymen. (Probably only the first eight chapters were written by Zechariah.) The admonition was well suited to the particular condition of the Jews at that time. The warning is even more applicable to us, baptized Christians. As Christians it is expected of us that we should "love the truth and peace." Attend especially to the love for religious "truth." Many take for granted that it signifies little whether they embrace the truth or not. Religion is not a matter which comes much into their thoughts. It is a common sentiment, that if a person is but sincere in his religion, it signifies little what that religion is, true or false; if he is but sincere and in earnest, he is, they think,

equally acceptable in the sight of God. Others cannot be said to "love the truth," in that they do not put their hearts and minds to it, but satisfy themselves with shallow and imperfect views on the greatest and most concerning of all subjects.

1. Those who have no care for religious truth. It is a dictate not merely of religion, but even of natural piety and common sense, that we should make such inquiry as we can into the truth of our spiritual condition.
2. Those who think sincerity sufficient. Persons who think one belief is as good as another, strike at the very foundations of all religious truth.
3. Those who do not put their minds and hearts to the truth. Their religion, though good so far as it goes, is yet of a very shallow and imperfect character. Let not serious and thoughtful minds be frightened at the name of bigotry, or any other term of reproach, but steadily cherish in themselves a substantial love of God's holy truth, always remembering that the truth will stand, and nothing else will. There is a good kind of bigotry, when we resolve to stand firm on faith and obedience, in faith relying on God's Word, and in obedience on His will, however made known to us. (*Sermons by Contrib. "Tracts for the Times."*)

Love to the truth and peace:—Unperverted love is one of the noblest, most useful, and comprehensive affections of the heart. Essential to the moral nature of man, it is, as refined by the energies of the Spirit, and suitably exercised, the fulfilling of the law, the sum of religion, and our assimilation to the God of love. No arguments can be necessary to prove that truth is better than error, and peace than contention. In order that the returned captives might at once express their gratitude for the past, and insure continued and increasing prosperity, the prophet delivers the injunction in the text, "Therefore love the truth and peace." It is not restrictively the truth of judgment, nor the speaking of truth between man and man, but religious truth in general, or the mind and will of God made known to them in the law and by the prophets, which the house of Jacob are here required to love: and therefore, agreeably to the economy under which she is placed, the truth to be loved by the Christian Church is the entire system of evangelical doctrine, or "the truth as it is in Jesus." The peace which is to be loved in conjunction with the truth, is that good understanding and spirit of conciliation, which ought to characterise the embodied friends of religion.

I. TRUTH AND PEACE ARE SUBJECTS OF HIGH IMPORTANCE IN THEMSELVES AND TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. That evangelical truth is highly important, and ought to be dearly valued, will be conceded by all, the moment we think of it as God's revealed will to men for salvation. With the true knowledge of it, eternal life is closely, inseparably connected. In a general view, it is the only appointed and approved means of the world's moral transformation. To the individual believing sinner, it is the blessed instrument of his illumination and progressive sanctity. An accurate comparison of it with truth of every other kind would only serve to establish its glorious superiority. We learn the unspeakable value of the truth from the wonderful concern that the God of truth Himself has had and uniformly manifested about it. The supereminent importance of evangelical truth might be demonstrated from the evil nature, the ruinous consequences of error. But, in connection with truth, peace also is of high importance in itself and in the Church. Peace of any kind, and particularly peace in the household of faith, if built upon right principles, will be dearly valued by every wise and good mind. In proportion as the friends of religion live peaceably among themselves, they are just what it becomes them to be. Peace of the right kind has a most benign influence on the spiritual interests of the Church.

II. IT MAY BE THE ATTAINMENT OF THE CHURCH TO HAVE THE POSSESSION OF THE TRUTH AND PEACE AT THE SAME TIME. Absolutely, or without any exception, this has rarely or ever been. Still in some happy degree it may be the attainment of the Church in her aggregate state. Christendom, it must be confessed, furnishes at present no very favourable specimen of the point in hand. But this neither disproves our position, nor forbids the hope that it shall yet be realised.

III. THOUGH BOTH ARE VERY PRECIOUS, TRUTH IS YET ENTITLED TO THE FIRST AND PRE-EMINENT CONSIDERATION OF THE CHURCH. Rightly do we associate truth with the very idea of the Church. We cannot think of what the Church owes to the truth, and not insist that, next to its Divine Author, it merits her first consideration. To it she owes her very existence. In forming, however, a comparative estimate between truth and peace, it would not be right to exalt truth at the expense of peace. Everything bland in language, and courteous in demeanour—everything comprised in the meekness of wisdom and the gentleness of Christ—every attainable degree of patience and candour in research—these and a thousand other

things are to be offered, and willingly offered, at the shrine of holy concord. It is possible to give away too much, even for precious peace. Such a case would occur if amity were purchased by the surrender of any saving truth. For the sake of internal tranquillity, the Church may and ought to give away much of her own; but she has no right to barter the truth of God for peace with man. On the other hand, however, so inestimably precious is truth, that more than its worth cannot be given for it. Such views are, indeed, in letter and spirit at variance with a given species of modern liberality. IV. THE BEST AND SUREST PEACE IN THE CHURCH IS THAT WHICH HAS TRUTH FOR ITS FOUNDATION. The precedence of truth is not a mere arbitrary, but, if we would enjoy true peace, a necessary distinction. Truth is as essential to the being of peace as the cause to the effect, and must precede it, as the foundation must be laid before the superstructure. V. THE GREAT THINGS WHICH THE LORD HATH DONE FOR THE CHURCH, OR ENGAGES TO DO, LAY HER UNDER SACRED OBLIGATIONS TO LOVE THE TRUTH AND PEACE. Obviously the text assumes the form of deduction. Learn from this subject—1. The moral nature of the true glory of the Church. 2. That genuine love to the truth and peace would be a presage of good to the Church. 3. That the ministers of religion have a most honourable and delightful employ. In a ministerial sense, peace-makers between God and man, and so also between man and man. Our vocation gives scope to all our powers and our unwearied exertions. 4. This subject gives us right to insist that the members of our association should be, without exception, the sincere and ardent lovers of truth and peace. (*Robert Muter, D.D.*) *On reading works of fiction*.—When the use and love of fiction is so general, it would be of little avail to speak against it. God has made the imagination part of our nature for wise purposes, no doubt; and so long as those purposes are ascertained and kept in view, there cannot be much danger. The mind cannot be always on the stretch. If fiction is occasionally used to refresh weary powers, to lift up into the world of fancy for a time, one who is tired of walking on the dusty road of existence, such an indulgence is not to be blamed; nor is it inconsistent with that love of truth which is essential to the mind of a man as well as the character of a Christian. But there is danger of excess in this indulgence; these luxuries cannot be the daily bread of the mind. The effect of these fictions on the mind exactly resembles the effect of rich and stimulating food on the body. That caution is necessary may be seen from the tendency of this taste for fiction to become excessive and engrossing. And fact proves it to be an unhealthy taste, and one which cannot be indulged without injury to the mind. There is no danger that the taste for reading true history will ever become excessive:—it is healthy in itself, and indicates right action in the mind. The taste for fiction dislodges and removes better tastes from the mind. Let your taste for fiction be so much indulged that you can no longer relish reading for improvement, and the injury is done; the mind is no longer healthy. There is another danger, arising from the fact, that the mind is passive, perfectly passive, in this kind of reading. In reading for improvement the mind is active. In reading for amusement the mind is not in action. It originates no trains of thought; it gains no new strength, nor power of action; but, on the contrary, subsides into a luxurious, dreamy state, very much resembling that produced by narcotics, and which, fascinating though it is, destroys all moral and intellectual energy, and makes self-indulgence the ruling principle within. There is little force in the common saying, that good moral instruction can be given in a fictitious form. Nobody doubts this; but there is another question. Can such instruction be taken in a fictitious form? Emotions which do not lead to action grow less and less every time they are repeated. Tears are shed, as usual, for they cost nothing, but the heart grows cold. Fictions only produce a fictitious benevolence. A reader of fiction becomes the sure victim of the immoral and unprincipled author whom he reads. His moral and religious sensibility will be impaired. Of course all writers of fiction are not immoral. If there are not many writers of this description, if the majority are of a higher order, still the very best of them will do injury, because they will create a taste for fiction which can only be fed by fiction. When the works of the best writers are exhausted, the reader will resort to others less worthy; he will not perceive the degenerating change that goes on within him; he will not be conscious that his moral sense is dead and all his soul in ruins. This unconsciousness of danger is one of the most fearful things in all diseases of the mind and heart. If any one would know the signs of danger, I say, that if he has lost the taste, or never formed

the taste for reading for improvement, there is injury already done. If he finds that it gives him no pleasure to exert his powers, that improvement alone has no attractions, that he turns to his fiction like the intemperate man to his glass, then the charge, "Love the truth," should be a serious sound to him. It reminds him of a perverted taste, of a neglected duty; and of a change, too, which must be made before the purposes of life can be fulfilled. (*W. B. O. Peabody, D.D.*)

Vers. 20-22. **Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.**—*Nations meeting for prayer*:—A scene like this has never yet been witnessed upon the earth. The prophecy was partially fulfilled when, from the time of the rebuilding of the temple to the coming of the Saviour, a more than usual number of Gentile proselytes from the nations around sought admission into the Jewish Church, and attended the annual festivals. **I. THE OBJECT OF THIS GATHERING OF THE NATIONS.** "To pray." The time is coming when the nations will crowd to the feast of devotion. The result of the awakening of the nations will be a universal movement for concentrated prayer. **II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS GATHERING OF THE NATIONS FOR PRAYER.** They are described as many cities, strong nations, and all languages. Isaiah, wrapt in the vision of the future, beholds all the tribes of mankind, instigated by one common and irresistible impulse, flocking along the road to Zion, panting to be within its holy walls, and to pour out their prayers in her courts. **III. THE PROMPTITUDE OF THEIR DECISION.** This heaven-originated movement for universal prayer will be felt to be a matter demanding immediate attention. "Let us go speedily." When the Spirit is poured out from on high, all the speed and promptitude with which men pursue inferior ends will be consecrated to religion. Universal man will feel it his first duty to serve God. **IV. THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF THIS MOVEMENT.** No mighty movement takes place among masses of mankind until individuals have been moved. The world is but the aggregate of single individuals. Every individual must act his part. If men smother the enkindled fires of ardent devotion in their own breasts, till they see the zeal of others manifested, that day of prayer for all nations will never dawn. Every man is to invite to prayer, and at the same time resolve for himself. Then seek to be distinguished as a devotional Christian—a man of prayer. Then you will seek the society of men like-minded with yourself, and thus the holy flame will be borne onward, till every soul is enkindled, the Church revived, and the world saved. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *God everywhere for those who seek Him*:—1. We are here reminded of our high and distinguishing privileges, as subjects of the Christian economy, in relation to the outward institutions of religion, and all that is commanded in the worship and service of God. When we would offer our devotions in His presence, we need no longer travel from one city to another, ascending to the house of the Lord. Wherever we seek Him, He is equally near, and equally accessible. Great and important purposes were once attained by the selection of a definite abode, wherein to place the sensible demonstrations of His majesty. It was in accordance with the infantile condition of the human mind on the great subject of religion. It repressed the tendency to mingle with the idol-worship of the surrounding nations. It secured the permanency of the ordinances of the true God, till the coming of Messiah. By the final cessation of such services, soon after the death of Jesus, it marked that the Messiah had appeared, that the fulness of the times had been accomplished. 2. We are led to reflect upon that singular and elevated relation we now personally sustain to Him who was once known and worshipped only under the appellation of the God of Abraham. We have come to the family and household of the saints. This incorporation of the idolatrous heathen with the seed of the promise—this accession of the Gentiles to the Church—while it presents a subject of gratitude and wonder, is fitted also to expand our sentiments and to confirm our faith; and it leads us to anticipate a day when the Gospel shall universally prevail. 3. An interesting and attractive picture of a period of spiritual prosperity. (1) The period thus described is marked by the diffusion of the spirit of prayer. (2) Under the aspect of unity and mutual co-operation. (3) Signalled by the prevalence of activity, energy, and zeal. "Let us go speedily. Let us go to seek the Lord of hosts." (4) The last characteristic of the period so depicted is the inseparable and intimate connection of all its other features with the decisiveness of individual piety. "I will go also." 4. Apply these reflections to purposes of immediate and practical utility. (*R. S. M'All, LL.D.*) *Spiritual prosperity described*:—The text is part of the answer given to the question asked in chap. vii. 2, 3. 1. There are many false notions abroad

respecting religious prosperity—crowded Churches—forms in the aisles—full exchequer; such things are taken by some as a sure sign of a Church's vitality. Flying here and there—doing this, that, and the other in three minutes, and making a great noise, are looked upon by some as signs of saintship, and indications of true religious prosperity. And they may be, but not necessarily so; because outward manifestation is not always a sign of true strength. But we have true signs, unmistakable signs, described in the text. I. **DELIGHT IN PRAYER.** "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." 1. Thus there is a gathering together. It is a regular prayer-meeting, and it is in answer to united prayer that blessings come. Illustrations: Day of Pentecost. Liberation of Peter. And it is only when Churches feel the importance of this that a true revival comes. 2. Not only must we pray, but we must seek the Lord as well—give God no rest until He answers prayer. II. **HARMONY AND CO-OPERATION.** "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying," &c. When will the different Churches of the different denominations learn the importance of united prayer? When shall we have done with our little differences and distinctions, and kneel as one family round the throne? God speed the day. III. **A SPIRIT OF ZEAL.** "Let us go speedily." 1. There will be no lagging behind. It is not, Let us have a prayer-meeting to-morrow; let us turn unto the Lord soon; but, Let us do it now. IV. **PERSONAL DEDICATION.** "I will go also." 1. It is no uncommon thing for people to ask others to do what they don't like to engage in themselves. How inspiring it is to hear the exhortation, "Do this, and I will do it too." "You go and pray before the Lord; I will accompany you." When this spirit is actuating the members of a Church, the result will be surely seen—in the earnestness and goodwill which exist—sinners saved—church-roll increasing—joy in heaven—comment of the world. "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (*Christian World Pulpit.*) Revival:—Suggesting the benefits of a spiritual revival. 1. That the possession of religious life awakens interest in others. "And the inhabitants, &c., shall go," &c. 2. That a revived religious life sets value on prayer. "Let us go to pray before the Lord." 3. This revived life realises the importance and value of time. "Let us go speedily." 4. Revived life constrains us to seek companionship. "Let us go." Christians are gregarious. 5. Revived spiritual life ensures a powerful influence over our companions. They said, "We will go with you." (*J. H. Snell.*)

Ver. 23. *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.—A wise and good resolution:*—The kingdom of God was to be no longer confined to one nation or people; but multitudes in different climates, and the most distant parts of the earth, should submit to Christ as their ruler, and trust Him as their Saviour. The term "Jew" in this connection is descriptive of character rather than of person, and is to be understood of any one who is an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile; any humble and sincere believer, who adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. In the days here predicted such characters shall be highly esteemed. I. **THE RESOLUTION.**—"WE WILL GO WITH YOU." This language implies—1. Approbation and affectionate regard. When grace opens the eyes of a sinner, and takes possession of his heart, those persons and things are contemplated with delight, which before were the objects of aversion and scorn. 2. Earnest desire and a holy determination, if permitted, to associate with the people of God. The same disposition of mind which causes us to cleave to the Lord makes us of one heart with His people. 3. It implies an union of interests as well as of affection. True religion teaches us to renounce all other interests and attachments, to forsake our own people and our father's house, and cast in our lot with the people of God. 4. A holy ambition to learn of the people of God and to imitate their example. Congeniality of sentiment and feeling is the foundation of religious union, and where that union subsists there will be a desire after a nearer assimilation. 5. Fellowship and communion in Gospel worship and discipline are also included. To those who properly consult their own interest and the glory of God, fellowship with the saints will not only be an article of faith, but an object of fervent desire. One of the ancient fathers thought it a greater honour to be the member of a Christian Church than head of the Roman Empire. This will not only contribute to our safety, by providing a defence against apostasy, but also to our comfort and usefulness; for communion with the saints is oftentimes a step towards communion with God. II. **THE GROUND OF THE RESOLUTION.** "For we have heard that God

is with you." We have heard from the Divine Word, wherein this blessing is promised and declared. We have heard it from yourselves. You have acknowledged His protection and the consolation arising from the Divine presence. We have heard it from others, who observed how your faces shone when you came down from the mount. God is naturally and necessarily present with all His creatures; but He is in a gracious and special manner present with His own people. He draws near and manifests Himself unto them as He does not unto the world. They experience the care of His providence, and enjoy the smiles of His countenance. He walks with them through the wilderness, He communes with them by the way, He puts His everlasting arms underneath them, and they doubt not of their interest in His favour. Then they can glory in tribulation, bid defiance to the powers of darkness, and look death in the face without fear. We may hence learn—1. That seclusion from all society is neither the Christian's duty nor his privilege. 2. As the presence of God with His people is the principal inducement for others to join themselves to their society, how solicitous should they be to improve this sacred privilege, by seeking much communion with God. The ways of Zion would not so often mourn, if Zion's God were more frequently in the midst of her. When primitive believers were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the Churches were greatly multiplied (Acts ix. 31). 3. Young converts will learn from hence that it is their duty to unite in Christian society, when the Word and ordinances are faithfully administered. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Christian attraction*.—I. THE ATTRACTORS. They are called Jews. Generally a very despised people. Were all the countries to come to learn of them? Yes, to learn of them the knowledge of "Him whom to know is life eternal." Jesus Christ, His disciples, the writers of the New Testament, &c., were all Jews. The word Jew is not used here so as to distinguish Israelites from Gentiles, so much as saints from sinners; the Church of God, whose members may be derived from any nation, as they may live in any period. II. THE SUBJECTS OF THIS ATTRACTION. "Ten men," &c. This marks the number and also the variety of the proselytes or converts. It means simply a large and not a definite number. Among the Jews ten was the number of perfection. When they would render a number countless, they did it by attaching the word ten. By the ignorance of some, and the sneers of others, and the bigotry of still more, the people of God are now often improperly diminished. If there be a sense in which they may be considered a few, there is a sense also in which they are many, very many. A time is coming when a "nation shall be born in a day." Whatever croakers may think or do, there are better days for the world before us, than the world has ever yet seen. Variety is indicated as well as number. "Out of the languages of the nations." The Jewish religion, though of Divine origin, never could, in the nature of things, have become a general or universal religion. There is nothing in Christianity that is local, nothing that is restrictive. It regards man, not so much circumstantially considered, as essentially. It regards man in his grand wants. The Gospel provides for the whole of these wants. III. THE GROUNDS OF THE ATTRACTION. The Divine presence. As to His essential presence God is with *all* His creatures. God's presence in the way of promise or privilege means something distinguishable from the perfection of His nature. God is surely with such persons as He was not once; surely He is with such persons as these, as He is not now with others. IV. THE MEDIUM OF THIS ATTRACTION. It is the knowledge of their state and privilege. Nothing can affect us unless it be known. Though others may make known their religion, they must principally make it known themselves; and for this purpose they must not only be religious, but they must appear religious. Never be ashamed of your religion. If you have any religion, it will not be easy to conceal it; it will break out some way or other. Repentance will get into the eye, and be seen in tears. Meekness will sit in a man's face, and smile like a fine morning in May. It is not easy to restrain powerful emotion. Practically make known your religion to others: actions speak louder than words. Let your tempers tell; let your humility under applause tell; let your liberality with growing wealth tell; let your patience under affliction tell; let your readiness to forgive injuries tell. Let all these tell whose you are, what you are, whence you are born, and whither you are bound. V. THE EFFECT OF THE ATTRACTION. Knowledge is necessary to influence, but all knowledge is not influential. Uninfluential knowledge is worse than none. The knowledge of these people was effective; it constrained them to "lay hold," &c. This is a simple and striking expression. It

reminds of the little child pulling at his mother's clothes. Man is a social creature as soon as he comes under the power of religion: the social principle will be sanctified as well as other things; and the man will now be able easily enough (though you could not pull him away before) to give up the scenes of vice and vanity. Conclusion—1. See what it is that makes people valuable, and which should render them interesting and inviting to us. 2. Think of those who, instead of feeling the Divine presence an attraction, feel it to be a repulsion. 3. If such advantages are derivable from connection with the pious, be you concerned to obtain union with them. 4. Let your religion be not only impressive but attractive. Some professors have so much of the repulsive about them that it is not likely any person will ever "take hold of their skirts, saying, We will go with you." Whitfield says, "God lives with some that I should not live with, and that I could not live with." (*William Jay*.) *Our obligations to the Jews*:—So far from joining in the illiberal scorn, too generally poured by men, called Christians, on the dispersed Jews, I feel for them as I should for a father, who had, indeed, disgraced himself, and whose conduct could not even be palliated; but who, after all, was still a father. I. EXPLAIN AND ILLUSTRATE THIS WONDERFUL PROPHECY. The God of the Jews, long unknown, except to that obscure and oppressed people, is now the professed object of worship throughout the mightiest and most distinguished nations in the world! This is a fact which cannot be denied or doubted. Such an extraordinary revolution has taken place; and the prophecy of our text was suited to excite the expectation of it. But in what way, and by what means and instruments was it effected? Unless these also accord with the prediction, the fulfilment must be allowed to be imperfect and dubious. From the text we see that whatever means should be employed by the Jews, compulsion was not one of them; the conduct of the persons concerned was perfectly voluntary and the effect of conviction. Even the persuasion and fascination of oratory, as separated from the conviction of the understanding and conscience, producing the outward profession, would not be an unequivocal completion of the prophecy. The instances of Gentiles converted to Judaism, before the coming of Christ, can by no means be considered as fulfilling this prophecy. But reflect on the events which followed the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Divine Redeemer, the "Light of the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." Not only did the apostles, and especially the great apostle of the Gentiles, attract the attention of immense multitudes among the heathen, by faithful preaching; by stupendous miracles, as benevolent as powerful; by a holy example; by patient sufferings, "not counting their lives dear unto themselves"; and by indefatigable labours, without any other recompense from man than additional sufferings; not only did evangelists and subordinate ministers prosper, but Jews, converted to Christianity, though not ministers, though obscure in station and of slender abilities, by an union of universal conscientiousness, cheerfulness in poverty, patience under persecution and in the most distressing circumstances, and meekness, with persevering benevolence, amidst all manner of provocations and injuries, won over multitudes of the idolaters to "go with them." At what other time, or in what other way, has this prophecy been actually fulfilled? II. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROPHECY HAS LAID US UNDER OBLIGATIONS TO THE JEWS WHICH EXCEED ALL CALCULATION. We "owe even our own selves" to the Jews; in addition to the common debt of goodwill, and compassion, and liberal, active love, which we owe to men in general. Shall we then make only feeble and heartless exertions, where the salvation of the Jewish people is concerned? III. A STILL MORE SIGNAL FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY IN THE TEXT WILL MOST CERTAINLY TAKE PLACE, AND AT NO VERY REMOTE PERIOD. In the final event the nation of Israel shall be restored from their dispersions, placed under the government of their promised Messiah, and (as far as I can judge) reinstated in their own land. (*Thomas Scott*.) *Purpose of God regarding the Jews*:—Curious inquiry into the future, and confident prediction as to times and seasons, are both to be eschewed. The former is unprofitable; the latter is most presumptuous. But we must not run from one extreme to another. It is as much our duty now to "discern this time," as it was the duty in our Lord's day to discern *that* time. We ought to look behind us, around us, before us, and anticipate the next act of the world's mighty drama. The dispensation of Gentile mercy has now lasted for nearly 2000 years. But it is not designed to be eternal. We have plainly laid down for us in Holy Scripture the signs which shall mark its closing in, when God shall turn Himself to the Jew again. And we are as much bound to look at

these signs now as the Jew was in his day. These signs are four in number. Two given by our Lord Himself, and two by the prophet Daniel. 1. "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). Our Lord's second sign is a painful one. "Iniquity shall abound" (Matt. xxiv. 12). Daniel's first sign is, "Many shall run to and fro." His second is like unto it. "Knowledge shall be increased." Let us look around us, behind us, before us; do we see anything like the fulfilment of these predicted signs? He must be blind indeed who does not see the first sign advancing rapidly to its fulfilment, in the Gospel of the kingdom published to all nations. There are now afloat in the world about two hundred million copies of a translated Bible. This enormous circulation is seconded by corresponding preaching. But the world is not yet converted? No, for Christ's sign is not its conversion, but His Gospel preached as a witness. The Christian Church is now gathering the first-fruits of the earth. Everyone has the fulfilment before him of Daniel's sign, "Many shall run to and fro." In this the prophet gives us exactly the characteristic of the present age. Daniel's second sign is equally manifest in our time. It is the amazing progress of science which has enabled us to avail ourselves of the powers of nature. With all this running to and fro, and all this advance of knowledge, is the world to go on improving in its spiritual and moral character? Our Lord's last sign, "iniquity shall abound," affirms the contrary. And His apostle explains in detail the meaning of His Master's words (2 Tim. iii. 1-4). There are too many signs that these perilous times are already upon us. Never in the experience of civilised Christendom has crime been so audacious as now. As the times of the Gentiles seem closing in, the Jew is coming again into prominence. May we then expect that the Jew will come up once more as a nation, to act his part in the world's great drama? Distinguished expositors tell us that the prophecies respecting the Jews have all been fulfilled in the past, and no prophecy whatever respects the Jews in the future. When were the solemn words of the text fulfilled? Judah returned from Babylon, indeed, but it was to remain in the midst of the nations, a humbled and despised people. But they shall be fulfilled when, in the words of St. Paul, the Jews shall be as life from the dead to the nations of the earth, and a world's love and gratitude and devotion shall be their spontaneous and most abundant recompense. (*William Tai, D.D.*)

Uniting with God's people.—The passage seems primarily to refer to the general conversion of Gentile nations. We consider the text as it may apply to those who, having been awakened to a sense of their ruined condition, resolve to consecrate themselves to God and His people. I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GOD BEING WITH HIS PEOPLE? 1. God's essential presence is everywhere. 2. God's glorious presence is in heaven. 3. His terrible presence is felt in the abodes of the lost. 4. His providential presence is seen in the government and regulation of the world. 5. His presence referred to in the text is His gracious presence. He is with His Church in the exercise of His love and favour. As their Head, Friend, Prophet, Mediator, and King. II. THE EVIDENCES OF GOD'S PRESENCE. External splendour, great wealth, a multitude of members, are not evidence. 1. Scriptural doctrine is an evidence. 2. So is purity of ordinances. 3. So is brotherly love. 4. When Divine changes are produced in the power of the Gospel. 5. When the reproach of the Cross is endured. III. THE INFLUENCE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE CHURCH SHALL PRODUCE ON THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT. "We will go with you," &c. This resolution implies—1. Dissatisfaction with their present condition. 2. Earnest desire to be united with God's people. (*J. Burns.*)

The supernatural in religion.—By supernatural is meant that which is above nature, above and beyond what natural causes, coupled with human agency, might produce. The reason why effort is made to take the supernatural out of religion is that already God is taken out of the universe. Having already taken an intelligent, reasoning, personal God out of the universe, as a matter of course everything supernatural must come out of the Bible, and out of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ; and there is nothing anywhere above nature, and above the power of human agency. This is the philosophy—this is the religion that modern rationalism proposes to give to mankind. But in taking all that is supernatural out of religion, it takes away religion itself. The supernatural may be predicated of religion in two distinct senses. 1. Historical. Every system of religion that has claimed the assent of the human mind, and the acceptance of the human heart, has claimed a supernatural origin. This claim arises out of a law of mind. The effect must be in harmony with the cause. The supernatural of the Christian religion is evinced

in the two great branches of evidence—miracles and prophecy. 2. Another depart in religion is more important. Its intrinsic character as it now is. All that is supernatural in religion, whether it be considered historically or intrinsically, arises out of the being or presence of God in it, or with it. If there is a God He may surely do that which is above nature itself; for if He created all things, that act of creation was something above nature. God is the author of nature, the author of its laws, and of its being. The great underlying cause of the supernatural, historically and intrinsically in religion, is, God present with His people. The idea of the Divine coming down to mankind and communing with men runs through every form of religion. If there be a God, He is somewhere, in some relationship; He is with or without the power of fellowship. If He be without it, He is below the lowest living creatures He has made. If He be with it, He is above all. He can speak to an archangel; He can speak to my heart. There is only one possible reason why God should withdraw Himself from men, and that reason is sin. God's presence among His people will be manifested, will assert itself. There are several ways in which the presence of God among His people indicates itself. 1. In the superior knowledge of God that prevails among His people. How come we to have a more accurate knowledge of God than the pagan nations? 2. There is an indication of God's presence among His people in their superior, intellectual, moral, and religious condition. Compare Christian and pagan nations in this regard. 3. There is a manifestation of God's presence with His people in the direct impression that is made upon the consciousness of men. In the olden time, God revealed Himself under visible forms. God has been educating the race away from its dependence on the senses. Our Lord Jesus Christ formed a point of transition. Now, there is a manifestation of God to the human consciousness, so that when God comes into my soul I can recognise Him, and know that it is God who is coming in. 4. God's presence among His people is manifested in the works of power accomplished. "No man can do these miracles which Thou doest, except God be with Him." 5. God manifests His presence and power in the singular experience that He gives to human souls. Take as a practical lesson from this subject, that our greatest need is God, God in Jesus Christ, God by the Holy Ghost dwelling within us, shining out of the eye and out of the life, and God living in us, so that we form part of the Divine life, so that it shall shine out of us. O for the presence of God to be more and more distinctly apprehended among His people. (*Dr. Kynett.*) *Admission of the Gentiles*:—The form of this prophecy is highly dramatic. The scope of it is to predict the introduction of the Gentiles into the theocracy, and the consequent enlargement of the Church. This is described by a bold and beautiful personification. To seize the hem of the garment is a gesture of earnestness, importunity, and perseverance, which is emphatic were it done by only a single person, but when done by ten persons, it becomes significant of an intensity of anxiety, and a depth of conviction, of the very highest grade. When this prediction was uttered nothing seemed more hopelessly improbable than its fulfilment. The Jews were a poor, despised, obscure tribe in the heart of Syria, whose existence was only known to the mighty world by their furnishing a trophy to the victorious arms of Babylon. Greece was just rising in the firmament of human history, and as she ascended to her brilliant zenith, her track was marked by the sweeping of the phalanxes of Alexander, and the legions of Antiochus, over the hills and valleys of Judæa. And yet this prophecy remained unfulfilled. At length the time arrived, and there came to Jerusalem "men out of every nation under heaven"; see Acts ii. Learn, that all true piety is instinct with the missionary spirit, desire for the salvation of others. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1-8. *The burden of the Word of the Lord.*—*The dark and bright side of God's revelation to mankind*.—I. The DARK side of the Divine Word. Notice two things—1. In this aspect it is here called a "burden." The word "burden" is almost invariably used to represent a calamity. Thus we read of the burden of Babylon, the burden of Moab, the burden of Damascus, the burden

of Tyre, the burden of Egypt, &c. 2. In this aspect it bears upon wicked men. The doomed peoples are here mentioned. They are in "the land of Hadrach." Whether Hadrach here means the land of Syria or the common names of the kings of Syria, it scarcely matters; the people of the place of which Damascus was the capital were the doomed ones. Besides these, there are the men of "Hamath," a country lying to the north of Damascus and joining the districts of Zobah and Rehob. And still more, there are "Tyrus" and "Zidon," places about which we often read in the Bible, and with whose history most students of the Bible are acquainted. "Ashkelon," "Gaza," and "Ekron," are also mentioned. These were the chief cities of the Philistines, and the capitals of different districts. All these peoples were not only enemies of the chosen tribe, but enemies of the one true and living God. History tells us how, through the bloody conquests of Alexander and his successors, this "burden of the Word of the Lord" fell with all its weight upon these people. Observe—(1) That the Bible is heavy with black threatenings to the wicked. (2) That these black threatenings will inevitably be fulfilled. All the threatenings here against the land of Hadrach, Hamath, Tyrus, Zidon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon, and the Philistines were fulfilled. II. THE BRIGHT SIDE of the Divine Word. There is a beam of promise here (vers. 7, 8). The following is Dr. Keil's translation of these verses: "And I shall take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth, and he will also remain to our God and will be as a tribe prince in Judah, and Ekron like the Jebusite. I pitch a tent for My house against military power, against those who go to and fro, and no oppressor will pass over them any more, for now have I seen with My eyes." The promise in these words seems to be twofold—1. The deprivation of the power of the enemy to injure. The Bible promises to the good man the subjection of all his foes. 2. Divine protection from all their enemies. The Bible promises eternal protection to the good. (*Homilist.*) *Prophetic fulfilments*.—1. Every fulfilled prophecy is a distinct proof of the truth of the Bible—of its having been "given by inspiration of God." Prophecy is a miracle. We generally apply the word miracle to supernatural manifestations of power; but it is equally applicable to supernatural manifestations of knowledge. Knowledge of futurity belongs only to God. Jehovah frequently appeals to such foreknowledge of the future as one of His distinctive attributes. The accomplishment of Divine predictions stands out, incontestably, in the records of ancient history. 2. The true value of the evidences of revelation arises from the value of what is revealed. Were it of trivial importance, that would be itself a strong presumptive proof—almost, indeed, a conclusive one—that what professed to be a revelation had no real title to be so regarded. That which revelation does make known has in it to us a value beyond the powers of man or angel to estimate. It "shows unto us the way of salvation." This is its great discovery. It is no mere republication of the lessons of nature. It is not a mere volume of precepts. It does confirm all that nature teaches. It does set before us a perfect code of morals. But it does more: it addresses us not as creatures merely, but as sinners. It makes provision for us in this capacity—for our deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and punishment of sin, and our restoration to the favour, the image, the enjoyment of God; and that for the eternity of our being. It is this that stamps every proof of the divinity of the Bible with such importance,—every species of evidence, and every variety of each species. The investigation of the evidence is what every man in his sane mind should feel to be the most momentous inquiry in which he can possibly be engaged. 3. The past fulfilment of prophecy should establish our "faith in God" regarding all that is yet future; and especially our "faith in God" as still in all His providential administration, having His eye upon the Church. His entire, extensive, and complicated administration is ever working out the development of the plan of salvation. 4. The enemies of God and of His people have cause to tremble. He will not leave either Himself or His people unavenged. He that "toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye." It may at times be difficult to see on which side lies His favour; in seasons when "the ungodly prosper in the world," while "waters of a full cup are wrung out" to the faithful. In such seasons, love seems to be hidden, and even as inverting the order of its manifestations, and tempting the Christian to say—"How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" But when the whole comes to be set by God, and seen by men in the light of the final judgment, all will be clear. The distinction, then, between His people and His enemies, will

be fully, finally, and irreversibly marked; an everlasting separation made, and the "great gulf fixed between them." (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) *National judgments*:—1. The condition of all men is laid open to the eye of God, and He will appoint judgment or mercy according to that condition (ver. 1). 2. Worldly-wisdom is at last greatly inferior to that wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord (ver. 2). 3. However secure nations or men may think themselves in sin, their sin will be sure to find them out. Never has sin more proudly entrenched herself than in godless, but magnificent Tyre. Never has every element of earthly prosperity seemed more completely under control than in her case. And yet they were all swept like chaff before the whirlwind of the wrath of God, when the time for the fulfilment of His threatenings had come. Hence though nations now trample on law and right, and seem long to flourish in their sin, let not the child of God be impatient. Let him remember that two hundred years passed away after the utterance of these threatenings against Tyre, and she seemed stronger than ever, and yet when the day of doom had dawned, the galleys that left her on their stated voyages the peerless queen of the seas, when they returned found her but a bare and blackened rock, a lonely monument of the truth, that our God is a consuming fire. If then, God thus executes His threats, even on a mighty commonwealth, in spite of His delay, let not the fact that judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily cause the hearts of the sons of men to be fully set in them to do evil. Let men remember that it is a falsehood to violate a threatening as much as to violate a promise, and that God will not make Himself a liar to save man in his sins (vers. 3-7). 4. Amidst all the tumults of nations, the true people of God are safe, being guarded by the arm of Almightyness (ver. 8). (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*)

Vers. 9, 10. Thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation.—*Palm Sunday*:—This prophecy was generally recognised by the Jews as referring to the Messiah. First of all, prophecy spoke only of Messiah's glory. It was not until the era of the Captivity that we find Christ spoken of as the Man afflicted and stricken, the Hind pursued by the buffaloes and dogs, the King lowly, and riding upon an ass. When the prophet declared that Messiah should come riding upon an ass, it was taken as an indication that He should be a prophet-king. In the Talmud it is said for this reason that to dream of an ass is to dream of the coming of salvation. To the Gentiles this, like other features of our Lord's work, was a constant subject of mockery. The Persian King, Sapor, promised the rabbis that when their Messiah came who should ride upon an ass, he would send Him a horse. It was a common scoff among the Mohammedans that whereas Mohammed was "the rider upon a camel," Christ was "that rider upon an ass." Christ only entered Jerusalem riding on an ass, to bring before us a necessary illustration of His character and office. 1. Though He was King of kings, yet He is the Lowly One. The Hebrew word expresses the condition of a man who has been brought low by affliction and sorrow, possessing in himself the fruit of this sorrow in lowliness and submission of mind. In this sense the word is used of Moses, the "meekest of men." Messiah is "stricken and afflicted." Our Lord applies this character to Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." And this trait must especially distinguish all who follow Him into His kingdom. 2. Lowliness not only expressed the character of the King, but the character also of the kingship. The victory of Messiah is to be over the very things which are esteemed mighty in the world. As in nature, the brute force of the beast is conquered by the skill of man, and the forces of matter overcome by the power of mind, so in the kingdom of Christ all powers of body and mind are subdued to the power of the Spirit which is made perfect in human weakness. All through the history of Israel, God's hand had thus been made manifest in the casting down of strongholds. When, therefore, Jerusalem rejected the Messiah, she became like the fallen powers which were before her, a power of this world, aiming at success by the world's methods, looking forward to the world's splendour, and receiving the world's downfall for her reward. She knew not the day of her visitation. Let us not indulge only in pity for the fallen city which opposed itself so madly to the kingdom of Christ. The world—even the Christian world—is very far from this subjection to the kingdom of Christ. When we see how faintly Christian principles as yet influence the policies of nations, our impatient spirit is filled with dismay. We are ready to believe that Christianity has gained extension at the cost of intension, that men have been made Christians at the cost of Christianity, and that it had been better

if the conversion of Europe had been slower rather than speedier. If it be so, what remedy is there so effective and so apposite as the intension of Christian claims upon ourselves, individually and now, the realisation now of the severe claim which Christianity makes upon the will and the life of each of us? A country is conquered by the capitulation of one castle after another; even so Christ's kingdom comes by the yielding up of individual hearts. What a glorious triumph we can make for Christ in our hearts to-day! With hearts bowed down in lowliest sense of sin, emptied of all self-trust, filled with the sense of God's love and passion for the world, we shall be ready then to receive the lowly King, and to be made partakers of the kingly spirit. (*H. H. Gower.*) *The ideal monarch of the world:* —I. Here is a monarch, the ADVENT OF WHOM IS A MATTER FOR RAPTUREOUS JOY. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem." Christ's advent to the world was announced by the gladsome music of angelic choirs. "Glory to God in the highest," &c. Why rejoice at His advent? Because He will —1. Promote all the rights of mankind. 2. Remove all the calamities of mankind. II. Here is a monarch the DIGNITY OF WHOM IS UNAPPROACHED. "Thy King cometh unto thee." "Thy King." Thou hast never yet had a true king, and there is no other true king for thee: this is "thy" King. 1. The King who alone has the absolute right to rule thee. Thou art His, His property. All thy force, vitality, faculty, belong to Him. 2. The King who alone can remove thy evils and promote thy rights. III. Here is a monarch the CHARACTER OF WHOM IS UNEXCEPTIONABLY GOOD. 1. He is righteous. "He is just." The little word "just" comprehends all virtues. He who is just to himself, just to his Maker, just to the universe, is the perfection of excellence, is all that Heaven requires. 2. He is humble. "Lowly, and riding upon an ass." Where there is not genuine humility there is no true greatness; it is essential to true majesty. Pride is the offspring of littleness, it is the contemptible production of a contemptible mind. IV. Here is a monarch the MISSION OF WHOM IS TRANSCENDENTLY BENEFICENT. 1. It is remedial. "Having salvation." Salvation! What a comprehensive word, deliverance from all evil, restoration to all good. Any one can destroy; God alone can restore. 2. It is specific. "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim," &c. He will put an end to the "chariot," the "horse," the "battle-bow," of war, and "speak peace" to the nations. Peace! This is what the nations have always wanted. War has been and still is the great curse of the nations. V. Here is a monarch THE REIGN OF WHOM IS TO BE UNIVERSAL. The language here employed was universally understood by the Jews as embracing the whole world. He claims universal dominion, He deserves it, and will one day have it. Learn—1. The infinite goodness of God in offering the world such a King. 2. The amazing folly and wickedness of man in not accepting this Divine offer. (*Homilist.*) *The personal and official character of Messiah:*—I. ROYAL DIGNITY. "Thy king cometh unto thee." The designation is emphatic. "Thy king," as if they had never had another. That royalty was to pertain to the coming Messiah might be shown from many predictions. He was to "sit" on the throne of David for ever. His being a king was anything but an objection to the Jews. But the kind of royalty was not at all to their minds. His kingdom was not to be "of this world." Its throne was not to be in this world. He was born of royal lineage—born a King; though, strictly speaking, His mediatorial reign did not commence till, having finished His work on earth, the Father said to Him, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS CHARACTER AND ADMINISTRATION. "He is just." The designation is to be understood as at once personal and official: for, indeed, were there not the former, there could be little reason to count upon the latter. This attribute is frequently ascribed to Him, as characterising Himself and His government. Jehovah calls Him "My righteous servant." His throne is founded in the very charter of righteousness. And His whole administration is conducted on the principles of the purest and most unbending righteousness. III. HIS SAVING GRACE AND POWER. "Having salvation." Salvation was the very object of His coming. "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." The very design of His atonement was to render salvation consistent with the claims of righteousness: so that Jehovah might be "a just God and a Saviour." When He had completed His work, He was to "have salvation," not only as being Himself delivered from death, but as possessing for bestowal on mankind all the blessings of "salvation"—beginning in pardon and ending in "life eternal." IV. THE HUMILITY AND MEEKNESS OF HIS CHARACTER. "Lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

This attribute of character distinguished His entire course ; all His intercourse with men—with His friends, and with His enemies. Even His triumphs were lowly—"riding upon an ass"; and not one that had been trained for the use of royalty, but, as would appear, a rough unbroken colt. Although the ass was not the very mean and despised animal there that it is with us, yet comparatively it was so. The horse was the animal used in war; and consequently, in the triumphal processions of kings and conquerors; and on such occasions, arrayed in costly and elegant caparisons. V. THE MODE AND MEANS OF THE EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM CORRESPOND WITH ITS SPIRITUAL NATURE. "I will cut off," &c. This, at the coming of the Messiah, was literally true respecting the civil and military power of the Jewish people. At the very time when they were looking for a Messiah who was to break the yoke from off their neck, establish their temporal freedom and power, and lead them on to universal conquest, their power was finally overthrown and destroyed, their temple and city laid in ashes, and themselves scattered abroad among all nations. Yet the kingdom of the Messiah grew and prospered. This itself showed its true nature. It was not, as the Jews anticipated, to be a Jewish kingdom. It was to have subjects among all peoples. And these subjects were not to be gained for Him with the sword of steel, but by the "Sword of the Spirit," which is the Word of God. His kingdom consisted of all, wherever His truth spread, whom that truth made free—spiritually free. All thus made free come under willing and happy subjection to His gracious sceptre. Force never made one subject of the King of Zion. VI. ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS REIGN—"PEACE." "And He shall speak peace to the heathen." This is a feature of His reign frequently celebrated. By His gospel He speaks peace to sinners of mankind. There is no exception. VII. THE EXTENT OF HIS REIGN. The language employed here was universally understood by the Jews as embracing the whole world. In due time, "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ." (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The Saviour King* :—To us who read this prophecy in the light of its fulfilment in the advent and work and glory of Christ, all is plain and clear. Not so much by our Lord's particular act in riding into Jerusalem on the occasion, and in the manner described by the evangelists, as by that which, by this act, was symbolised and indicated, namely, His advent to empire, His coming to get for Himself a kingdom, His appearing as the Saviour and King of His Church, and His gathering to Himself a people from among the nations, has this prediction been fulfilled. He came in poverty and humiliation to lay the foundation of His kingdom in obedience and sacrifice. It was from the field of sorrow and of suffering that He ascended to the throne. The crown came after the Cross; the humiliation preceded the glory. All things have been put under His feet, all power and authority have been given Him in heaven and on earth, in the universe He reigns supreme. But it is because He was "obedient unto death" that He has been thus "highly exalted." His kingdom rests on His propitiatory work; and it is in view of this, though then perhaps but dimly seen, that the prophet here calls upon Zion to behold and hail her King. And now that He hath ascended to the throne of His glory, the "glad tidings of the kingdom" are to be proclaimed to all nations, and men of every tongue and clime are to be invited to behold their King, and submit to His righteous and benignant sway. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *The lowly King Messiah* :—The theocracy, or Church, is called to rejoice because of the coming of her King. The kingly office of the Messiah, which was conferred upon Him for the accomplishment of the work of redemption, is often alluded to as ground for rejoicing. Here is given the character of the King, and the extent of His kingdom. 1. He is "just." The righteousness referred to is not His priestly, but His kingly righteousness, that rigorous justice of His reign in virtue of which no good should be unrewarded, and no evil unpunished. In the unequal allotments of the present, when the good so often suffer, and the bad so often escape, it is surely ground for rejoicing that the King, under whose rule this dispensation is placed, is just, and will render to every man according to his work. 2. He is "endowed with salvation." The word employed is a difficult one. It is usually taken in a secondary sense, as expressing not simply the reception of a salvation, but its possession as a gift that was capable of being bestowed upon others. The meaning then would be, that God was with Him, in spite of all His lowliness, sustaining Him in the mighty work He had undertaken, and that this protection was bestowed upon Him not as an individual, but as a King, a representative of His people, so that He would not only enjoy it Himself,

but possess the power of bestowing it upon others. Hence, while His inflexible justice might make us tremble in our sin, the fact that He was also endowed with a free salvation, and a salvation which He could bestow as a kingly right, would remove these fears, and enable us to rejoice in this coming King. 3. He was to be "lowly." If the usual sense of the Word be given, the Church would be summoned to rejoice because of the humiliation of her King. And, however incongruous such a ground of rejoicing may seem to be to men generally, the heart that is crushed with penitence or grief will comprehend the reason of this summons. Had this august King been as sorrowless as He was sinless, had He been a robed seraph, or a crowned monarch, the poor and suffering could never have approached Him with confidence, for He could not have sympathised with them in their sorrows. But when He comes to us as One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we welcome Him with joy, and understand why we are called to rejoice, because He comes to us as the lowly King. Surely a suffering child of God can understand how blessed a thing it is to have a Saviour King who has known Himself what it is to suffer. 4. He was to be externally in poverty, "riding upon an ass, and upon a foal, the son of the asses." This is a prediction of poverty, for although in earlier times kings rode on asses, after the time of Solomon they were never so used, horses having taken their place. The employment of the horse in war also made the use of the ass an indication of peace as well as of poverty. The exact fulfilment of this prophecy in the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, was merely a specific illustration of the general prediction, not the entire object of the prediction itself. Its range was much broader than this single event, and, indeed, would have been substantially fulfilled had this event never occurred. The specific fulfilment, however, rivets the prophecy more absolutely to Christ. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *How comes the King?*—The Cæsars of the world have come upon strong palfreys, prancing, snorting; from their nostrils there has come fire, and their bits have been wet with foam; how comes the King?—"lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The more King for that! Some men need their own furniture to set them off; some persons would be nothing but for their *entourage*: the things that are round about them seem to be so admirable that surely they must be admirable themselves:—such the loose but most generous reasoning of some men in some cases. "Lowly"—"I am meek and lowly in heart." Why this colt, the foal of an ass? To rebuke the horses of heathenism:—"The Lord will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem": they are signs of pomp, self-sufficiency, conscious dignity, as who should say, we made ourselves, and we are the builders of the great Babylons of the earth. The Lord will not have it so with His Son, with His Church, with His kingdom. Only meekness has an eternal province. It is so always and everywhere, if you would but learn it. It is so at school. The boy who is going to do everything with a wave of his hand will do nothing; the boy who does not care anything about the examination until the night before it comes off and then gathers himself together in tremendous impotence, comes back the next night a sadder but a wiser boy. It is so in business, it is so in the pulpit, it is so along the whole line of human action: pretence means failure. But there must not be mere meekness of manner; the tiger is sometimes asleep. There is a spurious meekness; there are persons that have no voices at all, and when they speak they are supposed to be so gentle and so modest and so unassuming. Not they! It is for want of hoof, not want of will; they would crush you if they could. This meekness is a quality of the soul, this is the very bloom of greatness, this is the finest expression of power. Meekness is not littleness, insignificance, incompetency; meekness is the rest that expresses the highest degree of velocity. "Riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." All the rabbis have allegorised this ass with painful tediousness. They in very deed have tried to read meanings into the words, but they were so obviously incongruous that they never got into the words. Take it as a type of your King's meekness, take it as an assurance that His kingdom is not of this world. This world hates all meekness. Mammon never listened to a prayer; Mammon hates even read prayers; Mammon has a distaste for theological conception; Mammon never sung a hymn or a psalm; Mammon never bowed his knees in tender, holy adoration. The eyes of Mammon are greed, the hands of Mammon are felons, the desire of Mammon is possession, though it may be purchased with blood. This world, therefore, will not have true meekness, gentleness, pitifulness; the world will have pomp and show and magnificence and royalty,—one day its

heart will sicken at the sight of its own idols. These are the lines that have sudden endings. Truth encircles the universe: all lies, however glibly told, suddenly disappear in the pit. Jesus Christ then comes to set up a kingdom that is moral, subjective, spiritual; a kingdom that is clement, redeeming, sympathetic; a kingdom that rests upon unseen but immovable bases. Whatever He touches He elevates. Take the principle, and do not vex the mind or distract the piety with worthless detail: the principle is this, that when Jesus Christ comes into the world He comes as no other king ever came, that He may do a work which no other king ever dreamed. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The coming of the King of Zion*:—I. CONTEMPLATE MESSIAH IN HIS TITLE, AS A KING. There are many senses in which we may contemplate Christ as a King. 1. He has all the ancestral honours, titles, and high-born qualifications of a king. He was descended of a stock of heavenly royalty; He was the first-born of every creature. 2. Christ gave out laws and principles of government as a King. His sermon on the Mount is a beautiful unfolding of the principles of spiritual rule, the righteous awards which would characterise His future administration. Christ then is a King. He defines the terms of our obedience; He lays down the maxims of the spiritual realm; He declares what worship He will accept, and in what way alone His presence can be approached. 3. Christ protects, defends, and counsels His subjects as a King. In the primitive condition of society monarchs were for the most part chosen on account of their possessing, in the estimation of their subjects, some special kingly qualities. He who was the first to go forth with their armies, He who would redeem them from the power of the oppressor, He who was valiant in fight, prompt in action, prudent in counsel, apt to rule, He by one consent would be allowed to be advanced to the throne; and in this sense, Christ ever vindicated His claim to be the King, and “Head over all things to His Church.” And He is King over all His spiritual subjects to-day. For all the purposes of guidance, help, comfort, and protection, He still reigns. 4. And Christ bestows honours, and gifts, and recompenses, as a King. Christ gives as a King—pardons full and free, grace rich and abounding, crowns bright and glorious. II. CONTEMPLATE MESSIAH IN HIS CHARACTER—HE IS JUST. The word is to be taken in its largest and highest sense, as comprehensive both of the unblemished sanctity of His personal character, and the perfect righteousness which would distinguish His spiritual government. In all His dispensations of grace and goodness, Christ is ever just. III. CONTEMPLATE MESSIAH IN HIS POWER—HAVING SALVATION. He has that which is to procure salvation. His salvation saves from a great danger, it frees from a great condemnation; it was bought at a great price; it admits to great and glorious prerogatives. Note also the mild and gentle manner of Christ’s spiritual administration. “He is lowly.” (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The lowly King*:—I do not intend to expound the whole text at any length, but simply to dwell upon the lowliness of Jesus. Yet this much I may say: Whenever God would have His people especially glad it is always in Himself. If it be written: “Rejoice greatly,” then the reason is, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!” Our chief source of rejoicing is the presence of King Jesus in the midst of us. Whether it be His first or His second advent, His very shadow is delight. His footfall is music to our ear. That delight springs much from the fact that He is ours. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. . . Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.” Whatever He may be to others, He is thy King, and to whomsoever He may or may not come, He cometh unto thee. He comes for thy deliverance, thine honour, thy consummated bliss. He keeps thy company; He makes thy house His palace, thy love His solace, thy nature His home. He who is thy King by hereditary right, by His choice of thee, by His redemption of thee, and by thy willing choice of Him, is coming to thee; therefore do thou shout for joy. The verse goes on to show why the Lord our King is such a source of gladness: “He is just, and having salvation.” He blends righteousness and mercy; justice to the ungodly, and favour to His saints. He has worked out the stern problem—how can God be just, and yet save the sinful? He is just in His own personal character, just as having borne the penalty of sin, and just as cleared from the sin which He voluntarily took upon Him. Having endured the terrible ordeal, He is saved, and His people are saved in Him. He is to be saluted with hosannas, which signify, “Save, Lord”; for where He comes He brings victory and consequent salvation with Him. He routs the enemies of His people, breaks for them the serpent’s head, and leads their captivity captive. We admire the justice which marks His reign, and the salvation which

attends His sway ; and in both respects we cry : " Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ! " Moreover, it is written of Him that He is lowly, which cannot be said of many kings and princes of the earth ; nor would they care to have it said of them. Thy King, O daughter of Jerusalem, loves to have His lowliness published by thee with exceeding joy. His outward state betokens the humility and gentleness of His character. He appears to be what He really is : He conceals nothing from His chosen. In the height of His grandeur He is not like the proud monarchs of earth. The patient ass He prefers to the noble charger ; and He is more at home with the common people than with the great. In His grandest pageant, in His capital city, He was still consistent with His meek and lowly character, for He came " riding upon an ass." He rode through Jerusalem in state ; but what lowliness marked the spectacle ! It was an extemporised procession, which owed nothing to Garter-king-at-arms, but everything to the spontaneous love of friends. An ass was brought, and its foal, and His disciples sat Him thereon. Instead of courtiers in their robes, He was surrounded by common peasants and fishermen, and children of the streets of Jerusalem : the humblest of men and the youngest of the race shouted His praises. Boughs of trees and garments of friends strewed the road, instead of choice flowers and costly tapestries ; it was the pomp of spontaneous love, not the stereotyped pageantry which power exacts of fear. With half an eye every one can see that this King is of another sort from common princes, and His dignity of another kind from that which tramples on the poor. According to the narrative, as well as the prophecy, there would seem to have been two beasts in the procession. I conceive that our Lord rode on the foal, for it was essential that He should mount a beast which had never been used before. God is not a sharer with men ; that which is consecrated to His peculiar service must not have been aforetime devoted to lower uses. Jesus rides a colt whereon never man sat. But why was the mother there ? Did not Jesus say of both ass and foal, " Loose them and bring them unto Me " ? This appears to me to be a token of His tenderness ; He would not needlessly sever the mother from her foal. I like to see a farmer's kindness when he allows the foal to follow when the mare is ploughing or labouring ; and I admire the same thoughtfulness in our Lord. He careth for cattle, yea, even for an ass and her foal. He would not even cause a poor beast a needless pang by taking away its young ; and so in that procession the beast of the field took its part joyfully, in token of a better age in which all creatures shall be delivered from bondage, and shall share the blessings of His unsuffering reign. Our Lord herein taught His disciples to cultivate delicacy, not only towards each other, but towards the whole creation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Palm Sunday lessons* :—To-day is this prophecy fulfilled in your ears. For once the Man of Sorrows was honoured on the earth, for once the despised and rejected of men was welcomed as a King, a Deliverer, a Prophet. But what did that procession on the Mount of Olives really mean ? It was a procession of sacrifice. As the Paschal Lamb was brought out solemnly on the first day of the week, so now the true Paschal Lamb was brought out to die. He was welcomed by the Jews as the conqueror of the Romans ; they did not understand that He was the conqueror of sin and death. They greeted Him as King of Jerusalem, they did not know that He was King of heaven and earth. How soon the feelings of the people changed, how short-lived were their praises. Let us learn our lesson from the palms. Many people are willing to receive Jesus as a King and a Deliverer, who reject Him as the Man of Sorrows. If He were to tell you to sit down on His right hand, to be proud of your religion, to condemn others, to believe yourselves righteous, then you would cry, " Hosannah." But if He tells you to learn of Him for He is meek, to judge not, to take the lowest seat, that the servant of the Lord must not strive, that you must forgive your enemies, that blessed are they that mourn,—then you cry, " Away with Him, crucify Him." Learn from this to avoid a form of religion which is only lip-service ; it is very easy to talk about sacred things, but pious talk, remember, is not religion. We must show forth our faith not only with our lips but in our lives. Jesus is leading us, as He led the people on Palm Sunday, towards Jerusalem, the vision of peace, and none shall enter there but those who follow Him. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton.*) *The coming of the King of Zion* :—The prophet speaks not of one event merely, but of the whole of our Lord's gracious conduct to His people. The children of Zion are called to be joyful in their King ; for He is ever coming to them " just and having salvation," and by virtue of the blood of the ever-

lasting covenant bringing the prisoners out of the pit, and leading them all to a city of rest. I. **THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH OUR KING IS PRESENTED TO US.** 1. He is just. It is not punitive justice that is here intended, but righteousness. (1) This character is illustrated by His Divinity. He is just, perfectly and unchangeably—perfectly because He is God; unchangeably, because essentially. It is His nature to be just, and therefore He cannot be otherwise. There is a holiness in the creature; but there is a peculiar holiness in God. (2) This character is illustrated by His incarnation. All that moral perfection which is in God shone forth from Him. His nature was spotless; and even His enemies gave witness to the immaculate purity of His life on which keen-eyed envy itself could fix no charge. The human nature of Christ was spotless, because the Divine nature into which it was impersonated was perfectly holy. No heresy can be more pestilent than the assertion that the holiness of Christ consists in acts and habits, and not in nature. That only which was perfectly uncontaminated could be united in one person with that which is ineffably holy. (3) By His death. As a sacrifice for sin. In this we see the most illustrious proof of His essential holiness, and His love of justice. (4) By His work in the heart of men. His kingdom is in the heart. Whatever rule He has over the outward conduct originates there. His work is to restore man, and exhibit him again as created anew in Christ Jesus. (5) By His conduct towards His Church. “A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.” By this sceptre He tries and governs His visible Church. He is Judge in His Church even now, though the judgment which He administers is not without mercy. 2. He has salvation. (1) He has it meritoriously. To save is an act to which the benevolence of His Godhead disposes Him; and “judgment is His strange work.” But guilty man is not merely an object of benevolence. He is a subject of moral government. What reason of joy there is in this consideration! The salvation which we need, and which all need, is in His hands. He has purchased the right to bestow it. The work is virtually accomplished, and nothing remains for us but to apply to Him, and avail ourselves of that which He has done on our behalf. (2) Salvation is the subject of His official administration. Does He give the Word? It is the promise and the rule of salvation. Does He collect a Church, and denominate it His body? His Spirit fills it, to discover the want of salvation, and reveal the means of obtaining it; to inspire desire, to assist our efforts, to realise within us all that the external Word exhibits to faith and hope. Does He perpetuate the ministry of the Gospel? He is with His servants unto the end of the world, to make them the means of conveying this salvation. Does He appoint His Sabbaths for ordinances? In these the Church is made the deposit and source of salvation to the world. The very sacraments are signs and seals of salvation. II. **THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM.** This is strongly indicated by the circumstances connected with His public and royal entry into Jerusalem. This event was intended to call off His disciples and us from the vain notion of a civil monarchy. They thought He was then assuming it; but even then we see Him rejecting it. There is a tendency in man to look even now, as formerly, for something more than a spiritual kingdom; a kingdom of visible power, and glory, and splendour. He entered this to show that He was a King; but He disappointed their expectation in the very circumstances of this event, in order to show that His kingdom was not of this world. He rode upon an ass, to denote that He was a peaceful sovereign. He returned by night to the Mount of Olives, which He certainly would not have done, had He been about to establish a civil reign. Children celebrated His praises, not the men. The true glory of Christ’s kingdom is, that it erects its dominion in the human mind and heart; spreads its light and power over all the faculties and principles of our nature; ordaining the praise of God out of the mouth; so that everyone who is brought under its influence becomes the instrument of instructing others, and subduing them to the service of the same Saviour. III. **THE EXTENT OF THIS SPIRITUAL DOMINION OF CHRIST.** 1. His dominion is to extend “from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.” 2. The state of mankind, it is true, is deeply affecting. It is a state of wretchedness and danger. They are “prisoners,” cast into a “pit wherein is no water.” Allusion is to the ancient punishment of criminals, who were sometimes thrown into a pit, and left to die of thirst; and sometimes, after enduring the torments of thirst, were brought forth to execution. 3. Then there follows an address to the prisoners. “Turn you

to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Only a few had returned from Babylon. Zechariah addresses those who were left behind. In how much higher sense than the Jews are *we* prisoners of hope. Let such prisoners think of the blood of the covenant of deliverance which has been shed. (*R. Watson.*) *The coming King* :—"Rejoice, then, O Zion," city of God, built not of stones, but of souls of men. "Shout, ye daughters of Jerusalem," once as the stones of the desert, but now a spiritual seed of Abraham. From yon sepulchre thy King cometh, triumphant over death, and sending forth over all the world the message of reconciliation! Redeemed from bondage, we stand within the city of God, the visible Church. But how much has still to be done ere the temple of God be fully built—ere Christ be reflected in His members on earth! How many things have we each to deplore! The distracting effect of worldly business, want of energy, of love, of prayer. Hence little work for Him, and little fruit from that work, and little comfort. Let us dwell on the truth, "Thy King cometh." 1. In view of the fact commemorated to-day. His work of redemption was complete and effectual (2 Cor. v. 14). He took life unto the dominion of death. Even while the disciples mourned, He was carrying on a work of grace (1 Pet. iii. 19). He died that He might rise again for our justification. 2. He cometh to each soul, bringing help. In times of darkness or depression, when trials seem heavy, or our work arduous, He reminds us that though we see Him not, we are not beyond His care. 3. He cometh to establish His kingdom, to bring perfected salvation to those who wait for Him. (*James F. Montgomery, D.D.*) *Joy in the King unrealised* :—I have read in one of George MacDonald's novels of a born-blind lamplighter. He illuminated the city at night; but had no sense of what he was doing. So has it been with the land of Israel. She has presented the portrait to the gallery; she has heard the plaudits of the spectators; and she has refused to join in them. In all history there is nothing so unique. It is the enemies of this land that have crowned her world-king; it is the Gentiles that have come to His light. The lamplighter has been blind to the beauty of the throne she has illumined. Palestine has lit up the scene; she has listened to the crowd shouting their applause; and she has wondered why. She has been like a deaf-mute in a concert-room. She has struck by accident the notes of a harp, and by accident they have burst into music. The audience has cheered the performance to the echo; but the performer knows not her triumph. (*G. Matheson.*) *The Prince of peace* :—This prediction is of the literal kind, and it was literally and most exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The prophet doth not coldly inform Jerusalem that her King should come to her, and that when He did come she ought to rejoice. Wrapped into future times, he seems to have been present at the glorious scene. Standing upon Mount Olivet, he hears the hosannahs of the disciples, and beholds the procession approach towards the gates of Jerusalem. Religion, then, hath its joys; a prophet calleth us to exult and shout. The reason assigned why Jerusalem was called upon to rejoice, was the approach of her King. The prophets had promised her a king who should overcome her enemies, and triumph gloriously. When the King came, Jerusalem despised His appearance, and soon nailed a spiritual monarch to a cross. Righteousness, salvation, and humility distinguish the person and reign of Messiah. Righteousness leads the way. This is the name whereby He shall be called—"The Lord our righteousness." Salvation is the next sign and token whereby to know the King of Zion. He was to execute that part of the regal office which consisteth in rescuing a people from their oppressors. And if tidings of salvation are not tidings of joy, what tidings can be such? What is deliverance from a temporal adversary compared with the salvation of the whole world from the oppression of the spiritual enemy, from sin, and sickness, and sorrow, and pain, and death, and hell? This was the salvation which Jesus undertook to effect; and His miracles declared Him equal to the mighty task. Different to other kings the King Messiah was to be in His appearance and demeanour. He is "lowly." He appeared, in His first advent, in a state of humiliation. The nature of His undertaking required it, and their own law and prophets are clear upon the subject. The types and prophecies are as positive for His humiliation, as they are for His exaltation: nor could any one person accomplish them all, without being equally remarkable for lowliness and meekness, glory and honour. (*Bishop Horne.*) *His dominion shall be from sea even to sea.*—*The final triumph of Christianity* :—I. This triumph is assured by the PROMISES of the Bible. They leave

no room for doubt. II. THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY RENDER IT CERTAIN. Christianity itself is on trial. If it fails to subjugate the world; if it encounters systems of error, false philosophies, hostile forces, effete civilisations, which it is inadequate to transform and vitalise with its Divine life—then it will be demonstrated that it is not of God, and its high claims are false. A partial and temporary success will not suffice. It must conquer every race and clime and generation and form of evil and opposition in all the world, or be itself defeated and driven from the field. III. THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS WHICH IT HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED IS A GUARANTEE OF ITS COMPLETE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH. Christianity is not without its witnesses and signal triumphs in human history. There is nothing comparable with it. It has shown itself, on actual trial of 1800 years, to be “the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.” It has subdued kingdoms and changed the face of the world. Idolatry, superstition, false philosophy, cannot stand before it. It saves “the chief of sinners.” It elevates the most degraded people. Nothing in the heart of man, or in society, can withstand its power. It is moving steadily and rapidly on to final conquests. “Christianity thus stands committed to the achievement of universal dominion. Its Founder puts it forth into history as the universal religion, foreordained to universal prevalence.” (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Universal bloom*.—As it has been positively demonstrated that the Arctic region was once a blooming garden and a fruitful field, those regions may change climate and again be a blooming garden and a fruitful field. Professor Heer, of Zurich, says the remains of flowers have been found in the Arctic, showing it was like Mexico for climate; and it is found that the Arctic was the mother region from which all the flowers descended. Professor Wallace says the remains of all styles of animal life are found in the Arctic, including those animals that can live only in warm climates. Now, that Arctic region which has been demonstrated by flora, and fauna, and geological argument to have been as full of vegetation and life as our Florida, may be turned back to its original bloom and glory, or it will be shut up as a museum of crystals for curiosity seekers to visit. But Arctic and Antarctic in some shape will belong to the Redeemer's realm.

Ver. 11. *By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.*—*The delivered prisoners*.—Enlarge on the Gospel promise in immediate connection with the text. It calls on the daughter of Zion to rejoice in the coming of the Saviour. It describes His character; the nature of His kingdom; the means by which it shall be spread; and the extent of it. The deliverance of the Jews from captivity was a step towards the coming of Messiah, and the earnest of it. Just as, through the remembrance of His covenant with Israel by blood, God delivered the Jewish Church, so through the “blood of the everlasting covenant” does He deliver His people under the Gospel. I. THE PRISONERS AND THEIR PRISON-HOUSE. “Thy prisoners.” This most aptly describes the state of those who are convinced by the Spirit of God of their lost and undone condition, and who are looking only for wrath. The prison-house of such is described as “the pit wherein there is no water”; i.e. no comfort, no peace. No way of escape is apparent, and if the prisoner remain in it, he dies. But, though the pit is deep and horrible, yet the prisoner's voice can be heard, when he calls for deliverance; and his voice is never unheard. Therefore let all prisoners cry mightily unto Him that is able to save. II. THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE. Justice must be satisfied ere the mouth of the pit can be opened. This is implied in the expression—“the blood of the covenant.” Jesus covenanting to shed His blood for their ransom—the Father covenanting to accept this ransom, and to set the prisoners free on account of it. Enlarge on this covenant as a covenant of promise, the greatness, the freeness, the sureness. How is this belief, this trust in the promise, brought about? Faith by hearing, hearing by the Word—the Spirit of God applying. (*John D. Lawe, M.A.*) *The blood of the covenant*.—1. The deeper any of the people of God be in trouble, they lie nearer His heart and help: and He would have them look on the comforts of the kingdom of Christ and the covenant, as especially intended for them, therefore doth He apply the general comforts of Christ's kingdom to the distressed Jews. 2. As the afflictions of the Lord's people may be very bitter, and so ordered as they may be trials indeed; so there will be special notice taken of them when their rods become so insupportable that there is no subsisting under them; for

He eyes them, when they are prisoners "in a pit, wherein is no water," as sometime they may be. 3. God entering in a covenant with His people, condescends to take in all their outward necessities, and engages to have a care of them in these as well as in things spiritual; and so all their mercies come by covenant; for it is by "the covenant that the prisoners are sent forth." 4. The mercies of the Church are not only rich and refreshful in themselves, and in their original, that they come through a covenant of love, but in their purchase, that they are bought, and the covenant concerning them made sure by the blood of the Son of God. "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners." 5. The Lord minds His covenant, and through and for Christ makes the promises of it forthcoming for His people's good, when they have broken it on their part; for, though for their perfidiousness they were scattered, yet the covenant stands to bring them back. (*George Hutcheson.*) *What Christ has done for, and what He is to His people:*—Though this passage may refer to many temporal blessings bestowed upon God's ancient Church; yet its spiritual significance is immediately connected with the kingdom of Messiah. I. THE RUINED STATE OF THE CHURCH. "Prisoners in a pit wherein is no water." 1. The degradation of this state. 2. The pollution of this state. 3. The misery of this state. 4. The hopelessness of our state. II. THE MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING OUR SALVATION. 1. God is the Author of redemption. 2. Redemption was effected by the blood of the covenant. 3. By the covenant blood the circumstances of the Church are altered. III. THE PRESENT STATE OF GOD'S REDEEMED PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THEIR NAMES. "Prisoners of hope." 1. Until delivered they are actually prisoners—to sin, Satan, the law; and they are delivered also from the bondage of a corrupt and stubborn will. Under the Gospel dispensation every vessel of mercy is delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ, and is brought into a lively hope of eternal glory by faith of the operation of the Spirit. 2. Then this hope is in Christ. 3. This hope is according to the Word. 4. It is a sure hope of eternal life. 5. It is a present security to the soul. IV. CHRIST IS A STRONGHOLD TO ALL HIS PEOPLE. 1. From error and unbelief. 2. From sin and Satan. 3. To God they turn generally. 4. To God in Christ especially. "I will render unto thee double." (1) Pardon and righteousness. (2) Great peace of mind. (3) Full assurance of understanding. (4) Joy here, and certainty of glory hereafter. (5) Salvation of soul and body, from sin, death, and hell. (*T. B. Baker.*)

Ver. 12. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.—*Imprisoned by hope:*—In ver. 8 is the assurance that the Divine blessing specially rests on Israel returned to Jerusalem. On this assurance is based an earnest plea, addressed to the Jews who were still remaining in Babylon, unwilling to break up their associations, and share with their countrymen in restoring the ancient nation. Zechariah pleads with them to return to the Lord's land. "Jehovah has begun to bless us, come back and share with us." The prophet fixes on one of their excuses, which was a serious self-delusion. He noticed that the hope of returning "some day," was keeping them from making a present decision, and responding at once to the claims of duty. Family ties, increasing wealth, business relations, were making their return to Jerusalem only a hope—a hope with which they were deceiving themselves. Not one of these men had refused to return. They intended to return, and quite hoped to return. But they procrastinated. They believed in the "unknown morrow," in what might happen some day. Procrastination includes hope, and in that lies the subtle slavery of it. But it is a hope that imprisons: it keeps a man easy-minded while he is neglecting his duty. This is the infinite sadness of it. I. AS REGARDS THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF OUR SOULS, WE ALL HAVE HOPE. Only in very exceptional cases, and those usually of disease, is hope quite lost. 1. None of us are without some knowledge of our spiritual state and condition. 2. None of us are without occasional impressions of the solemnity of our spiritual condition. 3. Even in calmest moments none of us are without an anxious desire to secure the settlement of our eternal interests. 4. None of us have settled it, that we mean to be among the lost. None of us expect to perish everlastingly. All have hope. II. AS REGARDS PERSONAL SALVATION, MANY OF US ARE IMPRISONED BY OUR HOPE. The figure of the text is taken from the peril of a country when its enemy is either passing close by it, or marching through it. Conquering Alexander was pushing his way from Phœnicia to Egypt, and Judæa lay right on his route. The people in the villages might imprison themselves by the hope that Alexander would not come their

way. And this hope would keep them from seeking the shelter of the stronghold. All wise people, in such a time of peril, would flee from danger to the security of the walled city. We are saved by hope, but it must be well-grounded hope. When the ancient Israelite had accidentally slain a man, it was imprisoning and imperilling for him to hope that the Avenger of Blood had not yet heard of it, and was not yet upon his track. There was not one moment to lose. At once, delayed by no hopes, or possibilities, or excuses, he must be away, flying to the city of refuge that was nearest at hand. Men do die in their sins. We hope that we shall not be among them. But unless that hope rests on some good and sure foundations, we are imprisoning ourselves in our hopes. Look at some of these imprisoning hopes, and see if any of them can reveal ourselves to ourselves, and be a gracious means of arousing us out of false security. 1. An idea very frequently cherished is this—the next world will provide a milder estimate of our sin than is formed in this world. It is strange how we let a notion of that kind cling to us. “Things may be better in the next life. Nobody knows.” It must be an imprisoning hope, for a man’s life, motives, and conduct must surely look better under the earth-shadows than when they are pushed out into the full sunlight of God. In the light of God, Job said, “I abhor myself.” 2. Another idea is, that opportunities for repentance, for turning away from sin, and for seeking the Saviour, will one day be sure to come to us, though we may miss them now. We think God’s time of mercy for us has not yet come, and there is nothing for us to do just now but wait for it, as the lame man in the “Bethesda porch” waited for the moving of the water. Only we never think of ourselves as helpless. We are quite sure that when the moving of the water does come, we shall be perfectly able to step down at once and secure our healing. But what a self-delusion that is! If we do not secure the opportunities of salvation that come to us now, on what ground do we hope that we shall seize some opportunity that may come by and by? Does the power of decision grow with the weakening years? Surely it is an imprisoning hope that keeps us from responding to the offers of Divine grace now, for “now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.”

III. AS REGARDS PERSONAL SALVATION, THERE IS REALLY NO HOPE UNTIL WE HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE. This is a fact of actual and repeated experience. There is no hope for us until we have come, in the sincerity of personal conviction and humiliation, to say, “Myself I cannot save, myself I cannot help.” The very first thing, and the all-essential thing is sweeping away those refuges of lies, our false, our imprisoning, hopes. In various ways God breaks down our self-confidences. There is no hope in God until hope in self is abandoned. IV. WHEN FALSE IMPRISONING HOPES ARE GONE, WE MAY FLEE AT ONCE TO THE STRONGHOLD. Then the soul is fairly roused and set upon seeking safety at once. Then the intensest interest is felt in the message of Gospel salvation. Then, we may run at once into the safe hiding-place of God’s salvation, and there find a hope that will not make us ashamed. Be not then hindered by doubts, or imprisoned by hopes; there is a duty to be done now. “Flee to the mountain, lest ye be consumed.” (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Good news for prisoners of hope*:—There is a change in the phraseology of the remaining chapters of this book. Not now the Word of the Lord, but the burden of the Word of the Lord. By this term we are prepared for tidings of sorrow and disaster, which are about to fall on the nations addressed. These burdens lay heavily on the soul of the prophet, who was probably already advanced in years when he announced them. When Zechariah wrote this prophecy, the early troubles of the returned remnant in the reconstruction of temple, city, and state were at an end; but they were hemmed in and pressed by Tyre on the north, and by Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron on the south. It was for their encouragement, therefore, that he foretold an approaching invasion, before which their strong and hostile neighbours would be swept away. Though Tyre had built herself a stronghold on an apparently impregnable island, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets; and though her counsellors were famous for their wisdom—the Lord would dispossess her, smiting her power in the sea, and devouring her palaces with fire. And the devastation which would befall Damascus and Hadrach (a part of Syria), would extend southwards till the worst fears of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron would be realised in their utter destruction. Philistia would be as a young lion deprived of its prey, whilst the chosen city would be defended by unseen angel forces. “I will encamp about Mine house as a garrison, that none pass through or return; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now have I seen with

Mine eyes." All these predictions were literally fulfilled within a few years by the invasion of the third of the great world-conquerors, Alexander the Great. Syria, New Tyre, and the old seaboard, including the cities of Philistia, fell under his arms; but both in going and returning, he spared Jerusalem, being much impressed by a dream, in which he was warned not to approach the city, and by a solemn procession of priests and Levites, headed by Jaddua, the high priest. In Eastern lands, liable to long spells of drought, it is customary to hew cisterns out of the solid rock for the storage of water, that provision may be made against the failure of the rains. These abound in Palestine. "They hewed out for themselves cisterns." It seemed to the prophet as though Israel might be compared to a terrified peasantry, sheltering in some dark, dry, mountain cistern, far up from the valleys, dreading every day lest their hiding-place might be discovered, and themselves dragged forth to dye with their blood the green sward. I. **THUS, IN EVERY AGE GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED.** You may have been caught in the snare of this world's evil. You have no sympathy with it, yet somehow you have become involved in the snares and toils of malign combinations. You have no desire for them—they chafe and try you—but you cannot get off. It seems as though some evil spirit has lassoed you, not indeed in your soul, but in your home and circumstances. Or perhaps you have been led captive by the devil at his will. There is no doubt about your sonship; in your better moments, God's Spirit witnesses clearly with yours that you have been born again; and yet, during long and sad periods of experience, you seem the bound slave of the great enemy of souls; swept before strong gusts of passion. Or, perhaps, you have fallen into deep despondency, partly as the result of ill-health, and partly because you have looked off the face of Christ to the winds and waves. The clear-shining of His love is obscured, and at times it is difficult to believe in anything but the pressure of your own dark thoughts. II. **ALL SUCH ARE PRISONERS, BUT THEY ARE PRISONERS OF HOPE.** There is a sure and certain hope of their deliverance. The clouds might more easily succeed in imprisoning the sun than any of these dark conditions permanently hold one of God's children. They belong to the light and day; and, though they see it not, Hope, as God's angel, is standing near, only waiting His signal to open the prison door. The prisoner, on whom the sentence of capital punishment has been passed, and who has no strong, wise friends to interfere on his behalf, may well abandon hope as he passes within the massive walls of the fortress. But where justice and truth are on his side, when he has been the victim of craft and guile, if there be friends to espouse his cause, though he be incarcerated, bound with chains on the Devil's Island, and though the weary years pass over him, yet he is a prisoner of hope, and shall come forth again into the light of day. All God's children are prisoners of hope. III. **THEIR HOPE RESTS ON THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.** "Because of the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit." When God entered into covenant-relationship with Abraham, the sacred compact was ratified by the mingled blood of an heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three years old, a ram of three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And, in after years, when beneath the beetling cliffs of Sinai, Moses acted as mediator between God and the children of Israel, he sent young men, because the order of priesthood was not established, which offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord (Gen. xv. 9; Exod. xxiv. 7, 8). Similarly, when the new covenant—the provisions of which are enumerated in Heb. viii.—was ratified, it was in the blood of Jesus. As He took the cup, He said: "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many unto the remission of sins." "And for this cause He is the Mediator of a new covenant." The shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God indicates that God has entered into a covenant relationship with Him, and all whom He represents, who are, by faith, members of His mystical body, the Church. On His side, He promises to be a God to us, and to take us to be His people; on our side, Christ promises, on our behalf, that we shall be a people for His own possession, zealous of good works. This covenant embraces all who have believed, shall believe, and do believe in Jesus. It embraces thee, if thou dost at this moment simply believe in Him as thine, and art willing to be evermore His. IV. **BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT, GOD WILL SEND FORTH EACH OF HIS IMPRISONED ONES OUT OF THE PIT.** That blood binds Him to interpose on their behalf. That they might have strong consolation, He has confirmed His Word by an oath. Suppose two men were bound in the closest, tenderest friendship, not needing

to exchange blood from each other's veins, as the manner of some is, because heart had already exchanged with heart; and suppose one of these, travelling in Calabria or Anatolia, was captured by brigands and carried into some mountain fastness, threatened with death unless ransomed by an immense sum of money: can you imagine his friend at home, in the enjoyment of opulence and liberty, settling down in circumstances of ease, and allowing his brother to suffer his miserable fate, with no effort for his deliverance? It is impossible to imagine such a thing! With tireless perseverance he would leave no stone unturned, and the captive might rely on every possible effort being made for his deliverance. So it is with God. Whatever be the sad combination of disaster which has overtaken us, He is bound by the Holy Covenant, sealed by the blood of Jesus, to spare no effort till our soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler, until the snare is broken, and we are escaped. So, child of God, if you have made Jesus your King, He is sure to succour you. Behold thy King cometh, O prisoner of hope! Is not this the reason why some of us are not delivered? We should be glad enough to accept deliverance, but are not prepared to pay the price. We have not observed the Divine order, and crowned Jesus King of our hearts and lives. We are wishful that He should be our Saviour, but not altogether prepared to accept Him as King. He is first King of Righteousness, before He is Priest after the order of Melchizedek: and it is only when we confess with our mouths Jesus as Lord, that we shall be saved. But do not fear Him. He is lowly, and rides upon a colt, the foal of an ass. No prancing steed, no banner flaunting in the breeze, no long train of warriors. O prisoners of hope, lift up your heads! your salvation is come out of Zion. Turn you to the stronghold! Take up your abode in the stronghold of God's care and love, in the fortress of His righteousness, in the keep of His covenant. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The sinner's refuge*:—God's children have a place of refuge, and the reason why others have not is, they flee from it instead of fleeing to it. I. CONSIDER THE RELIEF PROVIDED. "A stronghold." Not any stronghold we may fancy, or prepare for ourselves, though the imagination of man is very fruitful in inventions of this kind. When conscience is alarmed, anything is sought to that will afford a little present ease. The physician of souls is neglected, and physicians of no value are applied to. Such has been and still is the conduct of sinful men. Some fly to the absolute and uncovenanted mercy of God; some to their Church privileges, and others to their good works and religious performances. What refuge does Scripture provide? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." The perfections of God, His wisdom, power, and goodness, are all engaged for the protection of His people. The covenant of grace, with its glorious provisions and extensive promises, is as a stronghold: here the righteous find safety in a time of danger, and comfort in a time of trouble. The Lord Jesus Christ especially is the refuge of poor sinners, and to Him the preceding verse evidently refers. He is both the foundation on which the believer builds, and the fortress in which he hides. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN OUR SEEKING THIS RELIEF? 1. It supposes that by nature we are turned another way, having not only an indifference, but a dislike to the true way of salvation. We choose to lie under the sentence of condemnation and death, rather than come to Christ for justification and life. Either we do not seek after salvation, or we do not seek it in God's way. Men by nature are without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world. 2. It implies a principle of grace implanted in us, by which the mind is renewed and directed to the Saviour. This removes the darkness of the understanding, the perverseness of the will, and the carnality of the affections; so that we are led to form different sentiments, and pursue a different path from what we trod before. A wounded conscience wants ease and rest. 3. It implies the total renunciation of all other refuges as insufficient and vain. The things in which we formerly trusted, and in which we gloried, are now darkened, withered, and consumed. 4. There is now a joining ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Being turned to the Saviour, there is a cleaving unto Him with full purpose of heart. The soul that has fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, will keep his hold, and never wish to turn back any more. Where there is a real closing with Christ, there will also be a cleaving unto Him. III. THE CHARACTERS ADDRESSED. "Prisoners of hope." 1. They are considered as prisoners. Satan's prisoners. Enslaved by their own corruptions and lusts. 2. They are prisoners of hope. All men are so in some sense, while life continues, and the sentence is not executed

upon them. Vessels of wrath, till they are filled with wrath, may be made vessels of mercy. Let not the young presume, nor the aged despair. Some are more especially prisoners of hope. (1) Those who enjoy the means of grace, and to whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and power. (2) There is hope of such as have frequent convictions of sin, some desires after God, and whose consciences retain a degree of tenderness, so that they neither neglect private duties nor are wholly unaffected by the preaching of the Word. (3) Those also are prisoners of hope whose chains have been broken, but who, through unwatchfulness, have been led captive by the enemy. Suffer the word of exhortation. O ye distressed sinners and afflicted, deserted saints, suppress your rising fears and your despondent thoughts. An open and effectual door is set before you. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Hope in the prison.—I. A COMMAND. "Turn you." When God calls a sinner to turn, he must turn. Being born again refers to the first turn, but there are the after-turns in the experience of the called Christian, and when grace begins a work in the soul, grace never stops. II. THE THING COMMANDED. "Turn you to the stronghold." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." III. THE UNCTION OF THE GOSPEL. "Ye prisoners of hope." (*J. J. West, M.A.*)

Prisoners of hope.—There are three classes of prisoners in the moral universe without hope, and there are three classes of prisoners with hope. 1. The angels which kept not their first estate. 2. Men and women who have lived amid Gospel privileges. 3. The men and women in this city who are just as certain to be damned as they live and walk on the face of the earth to-day. There are prisoners with hope. 1. The men and women of earth who have taken up their cross to follow Christ. Prisoners of hope, now hemmed in by the environments of earth, but soon to be God's freemen in heaven. 2. The man who says, "God knows my heart, I wish I were a better man." There is hope at the Cross for the weakest man in the world. Then do not be a prisoner without hope, be a prisoner with hope. (*Sam. P. Jones.*)

Prisoners of hope.—This passage unquestionably has to do with our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. If you begin to read at the ninth verse you will see that we have, from that place on to our text, much prophetic information concerning our Lord and His kingdom. We read, first, something about His own manner of triumph,—His way of conducting Himself in His kingdom: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The King of the kingdom of grace is not high and lofty, haughty or proud, but condescends to men of low estate. We have not to set before you a Pharaoh or a Nebuchadnezzar; Jesus of Nazareth is a King of quite another kind. The next verse goes on to describe the weapons by which He wins His victories; or rather, it tells us what they are not. Not by carnal weapons will Christ ever force His way amongst the sons of men, for He says, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off." Mohammed may conquer by the sword, but Christ conquers by the sword which cometh out of His mouth, that is, the Word of the Lord. His empire is one of love, not of force and oppression. The same verse reveals to us more concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom: "He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." There have been universal monarchies in the past, but there shall never be another till Christ shall come again. Four times has God foiled those who have attempted to assume the sovereignty of the world; but in due time there shall come One who shall reign over all mankind. I. A DIVINE DELIVERANCE. This must be a matter of personal experience; and therefore I should like that every one whom I am now addressing should say to himself or herself, "Do I know anything about this Divine deliverance in my own heart and life? If I do not, I have grave cause to fear as to my condition in the sight of God; but if I do, let me be full of praise to God for this great mercy, that I have a share in this Divine deliverance: 'As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.'" Do all of you know anything about the pit wherein is no water? 1. Regarding it as a state of spiritual distress, do you understand what it means to be in such a comfortless condition? It was a common custom, in the East, to put prisoners into deep pits which had been dug in the earth. The sides were usually steep and perpendicular, and the prisoner who was dropped down into such a pit must remain there without

any hope of escape. According to our text, there was no water there, and apparently no food of any kind. The object of the captors was to leave the prisoner there to be forgotten as a dead man out of mind. Have you ever, in your experience, realised anything like that? There was a time, with some of us, when we suddenly woke up to find that all our fancied goodness had vanished, that all our hopes had perished, and that we ourselves were in the comfortless condition of men in a pit, without even a single drop of water to mitigate our burning thirst. You need to know it, for this is the condition into which God usually brings His children before He reveals Himself to them. 2. The condition of being shut up in a pit wherein is no water is not only comfortless, but it is also hopeless. How can such a prisoner escape? He looks up out of the pit, and sees far above him a little circle of light; but he knows that it is impossible for him to climb up there. Perhaps he attempts it; but, if so, he falls back and injures himself. He lies fallen as a helpless, hopeless prisoner. 3. A man, in such a pit as that, is not only comfortless and hopeless, but he is also in a fatal condition. Without water, at the bottom of a deep pit, he must die. Many of God's children have known this experience to the fullest possible extent; and all of them have been, in some measure, brought into the pit wherein is no water. But concerning those who have believed in Jesus, our text is true, and God can say, "I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Are you out of the pit? Then it is certain that you came out of it not by your own energy and strength, but because the Lord delivered you. Divine power, and nothing but Divine power, can deliver a poor law-condemned conscience from the bondage under which it groans. There is this further comfort, that if He has set us free we are free indeed. It is only God who can deliver a bondaged conscience; but when it is delivered by Him, it need not be afraid of being dragged back to prison any more. But how has He done this great work? This is one of the principal clauses of our text: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." The people of God are set free from their bondage by the blood of the covenant. I trust that you will never be weary of listening to the doctrine of substitution. If you ever are, it will be all the more necessary that you keep on hearing it until you cease to be weary of it. That doctrine is the very core and essence of the Gospel. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "With His stripes we are healed." Nothing can give the soul repose when it is about to meet its God, except the knowledge that Christ was made a curse for us that we might be blessed in Him. No prisoners are set free except by the blood of Jesus; and, as the blood of the covenant is Godward, the means of our coming out of the pit wherein is no water, so it is the knowledge of Christ as suffering in our stead that sets the captive free. I hope I am not addressing any who will remain for a long time in the pit wherein is no water. I did so myself, but I blame myself now for having done so. II. A DIVINE INVITATION GIVEN. Do you catch the thought that is intended to be conveyed by these words? You have been taken out of the pit, and there, close beside you, is the castle of refuge; so, the moment you are drawn up out of the pit, run to the castle for shelter. The parallel to this experience is to be found in the 40th Psalm, where David says that the Lord had brought him up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings; and now that you are delivered from your prison pit, you are to go and dwell in the fortress, the high tower, which the Lord has so graciously prepared for you. The promises of God in Christ Jesus are the stronghold to which all believing men ought to turn in every time of trouble, and Jesus Christ Himself is still more their Stronghold in every hour of need. Sheltered in Him, you are indeed surrounded with protecting walls and bulwarks, for who is he that can successfully assail the man who is shielded and guarded by the great atoning sacrifice of Christ? Yet you will often feel as if you were still in danger. When you do so feel, turn to the Stronghold directly. Do you mourn your slackness in prayer, and does the devil tell you that you cannot be a Christian, or you would not feel as you do? Then, run to Christ directly. Has there been, during this day, some slip in language, or has there even been some sin in overt act? Then, run to Christ directly; turn you to the Stronghold. So, again, I say to you, never try to combat sin and Satan by yourselves, but always flee away to Christ. Inside that Stronghold, the most powerful guns of the enemy will not be able to injure you. They who have gone the furthest in the Divine life yet do well to walk in Christ just as they received Him at the

first. III. THE DIVINE PROMISE. "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." 1. First, if you, who have been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, continually turn to Christ, you shall have twice as much joy as ever you had sorrow. The grief that we had before we found Christ was a very mountain of sorrow, but how has it been with you since you came to Jesus? Have you not, after all, had twice as much joy as you have had sorrow? Oh, the unspeakable delight of the soul that has found peace in Jesus after having been long in bondage to sin and Satan! I think I have told you before that I heard Dr. Alexander Fletcher once say, when he was preaching, that on one occasion, passing down the Old Bailey, he saw two boys, or young men, jumping and leaping and standing on their heads, and going through all sorts of antics on the pavement. He said to them, "Whatever are you at?" But they only clapped their hands, and danced more joyously than before; so he said, "Boys, what has happened to you that you are so glad?" Then one of them replied, "If you had been locked up for three months inside that prison, you would jump for joy when you came out." "A very natural expression," said the good old man, and bade them jump away as long as they liked. Ay, and when a soul has once been delivered from the pit wherein is no water it has a foretaste of the joy of heaven. The possession of Christ is, indeed, not only double bliss for all its sin, but much more than double. 2. More than that, God gives His servants the double of all that they expect. When we come to our Lord, it is as it was when the queen of Sheba came to Solomon. She said that the half had not been told her; and if you raise your expectations to the highest point that you can reach, you who come to Christ will find them far exceeded in the blessed realisation. He is indeed a precious Christ to all who believe in Him; but He is a hundred times more precious than you can ever imagine. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The condition of sinners :—"Prisoners of hope." I. ALL SINNERS ARE PRISONERS. A prisoner implies—1. Criminality. 2. Deprivation: society, light, &c. 3. Bondage. A sinner is a slave. His soul himself is enslaved, death cannot free him. Some of the prisoners have—II. HOPE. Some, not all. None in hell. But some on earth. 1. Provision has been made for their deliverance. 2. The vilest of men have obtained deliverance. 3. Deliverance is freely offered to all. (*Homilist.*)

The place of hope in the Gospel :—Fear and hope have two things in common. They are both prospective. They regard the future as possible. We neither hope nor fear that which cannot conceivably affect us. With these two points of resemblance, Hope and Fear are in all else opposite and contradictory to each other. Fear is the apprehension of a future possible evil. Hope is the anticipation of a future possible good. Human life is largely indebted to hope: almost all that redeems it from gloom and misery is, if you look into it, hope more than happiness. Hope, not fruition, is the happiness, while we are in the body, of man that must die. This hope has degrees. One man is full of it. He puts his hand to nothing without intending, expecting, resolving to succeed. And the hope which cheers also strengthens. Expectation is success—unless the calculation has been utterly fanciful, and the sum wrongly added. Certainly the absence of hope is a bar to success. Depression is always weakness. A man is not entirely responsible for it; health, temperament, nature, may alone be to blame. More often there is blame; a man has not braced himself by early discipline: he has let the fibre of character become loose and feeble; he has admitted into the memory, into the conscience, into the life, something of that which is utter weakness—sin. Great things are never done, even small successes are never achieved, where there is no hope. Not to hope is not to have. The Gospel will have a place for hope. We are to ask what it is. How does Christ use this powerful principle? He makes it everything. St. Paul even says, "We are saved by hope." Of Christ it is said, "For the joy which was set before Him, He endured the Cross." The anticipation of a blessed future, which is the definition of hope, supported our Lord in working out our redemption. You will find that everything ever done bravely and effectively in the strength of Christ by His people, has been done in the power of hope. Fear may teach watchfulness. Fear may keep a man to his duty. Fear may constrain a man to combat a sin, or shake off a bad companion, or to resolve to make his life less purposeless, and more decided; but fear, if it stood alone, could make no man a hero, nor a martyr, nor a saint. That is left for hope. We see in education the stimulus of hope. How largely do we use it in every school system that is worth the name! But there is a use of hope which is fallacious and mischievous. Hope is not irrational

because it is sanguine. There is no encouragement in man's life, or in God's Word, for that kind of hope which either dreams of reaping without sowing, or looks for sudden counteractions of influences wantonly indulged. There are men whose whole life is spent in reckoning upon results to which they have contributed nothing but hindrance. There are men who may call themselves waiters upon providence, but whom God would rather describe as gamblers in chances. It is so in reference to the things of this life; it is so in reference to a more serious thing—the condition of the soul, and the destinies of eternity. Gospel hope has for its object Gospel promise. See some of those future good things which God has promised, and therefore the Christian hopes for. One of these is growth, progress, at last perfection, in holiness. To a Christian person the prospect of becoming holy is the most blessed, most glorious revelation. If it be a revelation, certainly it is a hope. Holiness is sometimes preached as a duty, not preached as a promise. That is not God's method. Scripture sets holiness before us rather as a gift than as a toil. I have called this one of the objects of a Christian hope, but it is the sum of all. I knit into one the hope of holiness and the hope of heaven. I know indeed that many talk of heaven who have no thought for the way to it. Some hope to meet there lost friends; some dream pleasantly of the trouble of conflict ended, and the repose of the everlasting unbroken. But all this is vague and unsatisfactory: there is nothing of it in the Bible. . . . Then love too well Him who is your hope to count anything too difficult to do, or too precious to sacrifice for Him! Saved by hope, hope to the end. Where He went before, follow after! (C. J. Vaughan, D.D.)

Saved by our hope.—The years of the history of the Church which have as yet resisted most successfully the efforts of scientific research are the earliest years. The first century is the most obscure. With or without a history satisfying to modern canons, the Church accomplished in that time a spiritual work which, for present moral effects, for power to attract and subjugate souls of every nation and degree of culture, for inspiring new motives of action to a languid and despairing world, has far surpassed any other change known to us in the history of man. If the question is asked, as it often is, on what does our faith in God and Christ depend, we ought perhaps to reply, on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, and that His resurrection restored Him as a living leader to His disciples, so that His presence welded them together as one community, zealous of good works, abhorring sin, sure of eternal life. "Never," says Ewald, "in the whole world has a whole community, through a course of many years, lived so exclusively with all its thoughts in heaven, as that primitive community of Christianity without a visible Christ did actually live." With this belief we must stand or fall. Christian exclusiveness rests upon a belief in the central doctrine of the resurrection. The firm and sturdy belief that Christ is risen, and that we are risen, will not be replaced by Leibnitz's immortality of unlimited progress, or by the impersonal immortality of Spinoza, which to the individual soul is hardly more than a promise of nothingness. "The impossibility of a future life is not yet proved. With modern science immortality remains still a problem; and if the problem has not yet received a positive solution, neither has it received a negative one, as is sometimes maintained." (Archbishop Thomson.)

Prisoners of hope.—The prophet exhorts both those who had returned from Babylon and those who continued in Babylon to direct their eyes to the Messiah, to shelter themselves in Him as their stronghold. I. THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED. "Prisoners of hope." Such is the condition of man in general. Still, even these are prisoners of hope. They have not yet crossed the portal on which justice hath graven, "There is no hope." Still more emphatically are they "prisoners of hope" who feel their bondage and pant for liberty. II. THE DIRECTION HERE GIVEN. "Turn ye to the stronghold." The soul is invited to trust in Christ as the only refuge and hope of the guilty. III. THE PROMISE WITH WHICH THE TEXT CLOSES. "I will render double unto thee." This expression is used in Scripture to describe a blessedness exceeding all that we can ask or think. Not according to our former sufferings, but double; not according to the punishment we have deserved for our sins, but double; not even the like blessings as were enjoyed by saints of old, but double. (Stephen Bridge, M.A.)

Prisoners of hope.—I. THE IMAGE UNDER WHICH WE ARE ADDRESSED. "Prisoners of hope." Man, in more senses than one, is a prisoner. This earthly body is, in one sense, his prison. He is also a prisoner of sin. We are captives of Satan. But we are prisoners of hope. With the prospect of release and encouragement. Such

was the case with Israel's captives. In this life we are all prisoners of hope. And those who by Divine grace have been brought back to God are in a still more distinct and peculiar manner the prisoners of hope. II. THE ADMONITION GIVEN IN THE TEXT. The language is that of earnest solicitation. Imminent peril is threatened. The flying captives who have escaped their prison are in danger of being seized and retaken by the enemy; and here is an impregnable fortress opened, into which they are invited to turn. We have no hesitation in applying this language to Christ. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *Refuge in God*:—God is not content with merely promising some refuge for stricken souls, but fascinates our faith with the wealth of imagery by which He declares it. In this verse He calls, "Turn you to the stronghold." Fortified places were provided generally on the top of some steep mountain, or approached only by a narrow defile where one could withstand a multitude of assailants, and into which the people ran from the villages and fields when the land was invaded. In other passages God is represented as a "hiding-place," where evil cannot even find and attack the soul (Psa. xxxii. 7); a pavilion, where safety is supplemented with comfort and delight (Psa. xxvii. 5); the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, the caves and overhanging cliffs (Isa. xxxii. 2), beneath which travellers and cattle escape the intense heat. How He assures us that our refuge is not through human expedients, but Divine interposition in the "Rock that is higher than I"! Indeed, our refuge is something better than even a Divine expediency; it is in God Himself (Psa. lxii. 7, 8: "My refuge is in God." Psa. lvii. 1: "In the shadow of Thy wings"). Emphasise the personality of the Divine comfort.

I. THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS REFUGE. From the guilt of sin through the Cross—from the power of sinfulness in us through the Holy Spirit; from fears of all sorts—His promises so many and so varied between us and anticipated evil, like the many stones of the fortress facing outward in every direction; from depression, the cup He gives us "running over"—the spiritual overplus as opposed to the depressive occasion in the flesh or in the circumstances; from the ennui of secular pleasures and business, His revelation lifting our minds to the contemplation of the vast and glorious truths of both His earthly and heavenly kingdom; from unrest—He will keep in perfect peace the mind that is stayed on Him; from the weariness of all selfish, imparting the spirit of love and unselfish devotion, &c.

II. HOW SHALL WE FIND THIS REFUGE? It is not far away; need not go to Rome for it (Popish pilgrims), nor to Jerusalem (Crusaders' expectation of finding relief at the Holy Sepulchre): "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart," &c. 1. It is not a mysterious refuge, or one hard to understand. There is no Esotericism of Christian experience, no favoured few, no especial soul-light in theological refinements; Grotius prayed for the faith of his serving man. 2. It is not difficult to attain. "Knock," "Ask," "All things are ready." The great heart of the Eternal is close about us; no whispering gallery so quickly catches sounds as God's quick intent to bless catches the soul's desire. (*Homiletic Review.*) *Message of grace to sinners*:—The Gospel of Christ is a true friend to the penitent sinner. It is a refuge for the destitute, a shelter for the oppressed, and a defence in all "times of trouble." It is a "stronghold," and all that flee into it are safe. The words of the text apply—1. To the unawakened sinner. You are a prisoner, though unconscious of your captivity. You are the prisoner of Satan, and in bondage to sin. But God, who is a God of mercy, hath provided a great deliverer to interpose in your behalf. He hath opened the doors of the prison-house. At His command the chains of bondage fall off. 2. To the awakened sinner. When we perceive a concern for the soul in any one we thank God for His mercies, and pray that the work may be abiding and prosper. 3. To the weak believer. Unbelief hides from your view and from your enjoyment the truths and promises of the glorious Gospel, and keeps your soul still the prisoner of doubt, lest you should not hold out to the end of the journey, and reach in safety the kingdom of heaven. You need the exercise of a more lively faith in the free and finished salvation of the Cross, and a more simple reliance on the redeeming love and power of Christ. Hear, then, the voice of your Lord and Saviour, "Turn to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Look more simply to Jesus. He is a complete and almighty Saviour. (*C. Davy.*) *The Messiah in the character of a Redeemer*:—I. THE PERSONS WHOM HE COMES TO REDEEM. The description is of a mixed nature: it represents a state in the main bad, yet not so wholly bad as to be past recovery. Though this "pit" doth not yield any water, yet water may be brought to it. The description points at those

who feel their misery, and earnestly look and long for deliverance. By "prisoners of hope" we understand all sinners who are within reach of Divine mercy, and more especially those who are suing for mercy, under the felt burden of sin and misery. And even they who have obtained mercy may come under this description. The present condition of believers upon earth is neither a state of perfect liberty nor of uninterrupted peace. These are the blessed ingredients which constitute the happiness of the Zion above, but whilst they sojourn in this strange land they are liable to various and painful distresses. There are other prisons besides the pit of an unconverted state; prisons where those who are dear to God may suffer a temporary confinement. There they are "prisoners of hope." II. THE ADVICE OR COMMAND ADDRESSED TO THEM. By the "stronghold" is meant "the blood of the covenant," or rather the new covenant itself, ratified and sealed by the blood of Christ. It is an impregnable defence to all who flee to it for refuge. How are we to turn to this stronghold? 1. We must turn our back upon everything else, and abandon all other means of deliverance, as refuges of lies, which will miserably disappoint those who expect relief from them. 2. That we turn our eyes to this stronghold, and narrowly examine the security it affords. 3. That we actually flee to it, and improve it for all the purposes for which it was intended. III. A GRACIOUS AND ENCOURAGING PROMISE. 1. The promise itself is most gracious. "I will render double unto you." 2. The comfort of this promise is greatly heightened by the manner of publishing it. "Even to-day do I declare." (*R. Walker.*) *The prisoner of hope*.—The multitudes in this fallen world need some other place of refuge than that which they have already discovered. If they had already found peace and security, there could be no necessity for directing them to "turn" to any new stronghold or place of defence. I. THE FIGURE UNDER WHICH THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE GREAT MASS OF MANKIND. 1. "Prisoners." Even the real servant of God finds much to remind him that he has not yet reached the region of perfect liberty. As to the man of the world, he is altogether a prisoner. 2. They are "prisoners of hope." All who have fallen from God are to be considered as "prisoners of hope." To whom shall we deny the privileges of hope? While there is life there is hope. II. THE COUNSEL GIVEN IN THE TEXT. 1. A stronghold is here pointed out to you. By stronghold is meant every refuge which the mercy of God has provided for His guilty creatures. But especially the love, the merits, and the righteousness of the Saviour of sinners, the Son of God, the Redeemer of a lost world. 2. We are directed to turn to the stronghold. (1) We must be persuaded of the inefficiency of every other. (2) We must be persuaded of its sufficiency for our safety. (3) It is essential that we actually take possession of it. Inferences—1. What a confirmation do topics such as this lend to the authenticity of that faith into which we are baptized. 2. If the provision made in the Gospel for the wants and distresses of human nature be one mark of its Divine origin, let us take care to apply it to the use for which it is so emphatically designed. (*J. W. Cunningham.*) *Counsel to prisoners*.—The text primarily alludes to the Jews in captivity. I. THE PRISONERS OF HOPE. We have in our country at the least three kinds of prisoners. 1. Those upon whom sentence is passed, and they are therefore consigned to further imprisonment, punishment, banishment, or death. 2. Those who are guilty of felony or misdemeanour, but who have not yet appeared before the judge to have their trial; and—3. Debtors who, in consequence of adversity or prodigality, have been brought into distress and prison. There are also three kinds of prisoners in a moral or spiritual sense. 1. Those who have died impenitent, and have received sentence of eternal death. These are not prisoners of hope, their state is eternally fixed. They must be banished for ever from God. Thanks be to God! this is not our state. 2. All who are living in sin are prisoners. Compare a man shut up in prison until the assizes when he must appear before the judge, and a sinner shut up in the prison of sin until death introduces him into the presence of the Judge of all the earth. The sinner is the bond-slave of Satan. A prisoner is liable at any moment to be brought to justice; and so is a wicked man. He is yet a prisoner of hope. 3. There are debtors who often, in consequence of carelessness or prodigality, have brought themselves into sorrow and confinement. This is the case with backsliders. Their case is pitiable, but not desperate. They are prisoners of hope. II. THE STRONGHOLD TO WHICH THESE PRISONERS ARE EXHORTED TO TURN. 1. A stronghold signifies literally a place of safety or defence; figuratively, it is put for the Church of God, and sometimes for the Lord Himself. 2. He is a place of safety and defence to His people. They are

shielded from the curse attached to a breach of the holy and righteous law of God. 3. This stronghold is accessible by all kinds of sinners. As soon as ever they come to themselves, and are sensible of their situation, they may find shelter in the love of the Saviour. III. ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION. "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." 1. Confess and forsake all your sins. 2. It is the will of God that you should thus turn from prison to liberty, from sin to holiness. 3. To return from your prison will be your highest interest, both in this world and in that which is to come. 4. If you refuse to turn to the stronghold you will be destroyed, and that without remedy. 5. Turn now! Delays are dangerous! (*B. Bailey.*) *The double blessing*:—In these words are to be noticed—I. THE PERSONS. "Prisoners of hope." Though all men are prisoners by nature, yet all men are not "prisoners of hope." Every natural man is a prisoner to sin and Satan, and shut up in unbelief; sin has dominion over him, he lies in the arms of the wicked one. The persons spoken to in the words of the text are the same persons who are mentioned in the verse which precedes the text. The people addressed are a people who were sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water, by which a state of nature doubtless is intended; which is a filthy, dark, wretched, and uncomfortable state, wherein no refreshment can be had. These are called in the text "prisoners of hope," which they are, not only because they possess hope as a grace of the Spirit in their hearts, but also because it causes its professors to hope for the enjoyment of those things which are promised to the people of God in the Word of God, and which they are not yet put in the possession of. Though these people are sent forth out of the pit of nature, yet they may be called "prisoners," because their consciences are not yet acquitted of guilt. They are prisoners, but prisoners of hope. II. THE EXHORTATION. "Turn ye to the stronghold." Christ undoubtedly is intended. It is by turning to Christ, in a way of believing, that guilty consciences can be liberated, and joy and peace experienced. Believing in Christ is also called coming to Him, looking to Him, turning to Him. Those who do this find themselves screened from the curse of the law; the charge of sin; the punishment of it; from Satan's rage; and from every other enemy. III. THE DECLARATION. "I will render double unto thee." Either by this the abundance of grace and mercy in Christ is intended; or by the term "double" is meant the pardon of their sins, and acceptance of their persons; or it is a promise of God's removing guilt from their consciences, and of His restoring peace, which also is a double blessing. The whole of this passage is a display of God's love and care, which He exercises towards all those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, in virtue of which it is that God sends them forth out of the pit of nature, and then directs them as prisoners of hope to turn to the stronghold (Christ), and promises to render unto them the double blessings above-mentioned. (*S. Barnard.*) *The prisoners of hope*:—Turning to the Jews who still remained in Babylon, Zechariah invites them to quit the land of their captivity and hasten to Jerusalem, "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." They were in captivity, but that not an interminable captivity; they were prisoners of hope; and were now invited to a place of refuge and security. This is the primary meaning of the passage before us, but the language is suitable in the universal Church of God. The invitation of the Gospel is here addressed to "prisoners." "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin." Many who would justly spurn at the thought of being the slaves of any man are yet in bondage to a master of whose service they have more reason to be ashamed. All men are, by nature, servants of sin and children of wrath, exposed by their past transgressions of the law of God, and by the contrariety of their hearts to it, to His just displeasure. . . . I speak to those whose conscience tells them that they have never yet earnestly sought the deliverance that is provided for them. You are indeed prisoners, but you are prisoners of hope. To you the door of mercy is still open. There is an offer of deliverance, an invitation to a refuge, a place of safety. Are there some of you sensible of the danger of your state before God, convinced of sin, and tremblingly alive to its fearful consequences? Turn, then, to the stronghold. Turn to the covenant made by God with believers in Christ Jesus, the sure promise that He will pardon, justify, and deliver from condemnation, sanctify, and keep unto eternal life, those who cast themselves upon His mercy through Jesus Christ as their only hope. Are some of you desirous of turning to the stronghold, and yet know not how to set about your return? See the promise in Isa. xlii. 16. You who have fled to the hope set before you in the Gospel may have strong

consolation. (*M. M. Preston, M.A.*) *The ground of Christian confidence* :—The words of this text may be considered as justly applicable to the great Messiah, as highly expressive of the happiness which those shall enjoy who have recourse to Him for salvation. I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THE EXHORTATION IS ADDRESSED. They are “prisoners.” Enter into the feelings of the ordinary criminal prisoner. Consider the tumults of soul which he experiences from the review of his iniquitous deeds. When reviewing the wretched state of a prisoner of this description the reflection irresistibly strikes us,—how happy this man might have been had his conduct been uniformly influenced by the laws of righteousness. All men, by nature, are prisoners. They have all become obnoxious to those fearful judgments which this law hath denounced against its transgressors. The situation of the prisoner is a faint emblem of the wretchedness of the natural man. The prisoner was confined in a dark dungeon ; so do clouds and darkness encompass the soul. The prisoner is loaded with fetters. Every man, in his natural state, is shackled by the galling fetters of sin. The prisoner must expect to end his guilty career by a disgraceful death. But these prisoners are called “prisoners of hope.” Dangerous is the state of sinful man, but not desperate. The stroke of death may yet be averted, and they may become heirs of eternal life. Loaded as men may be with iniquities, Omnipotence can easily release them from the oppressive burden. By the term “prisoners of hope” may also be meant those who have felt a deep sense of their misery and danger, who earnestly look for deliverance from the power and guilt of sin. Men of this description are in a most hopeful way. Those also may be included in the term who have already tasted that the Lord is merciful and gracious, but are subject to depression of mind. In the best of men there remains some portion of natural corruption. II. THE IMPORT OF THE EXHORTATION. By the stronghold is here meant the blood of the atonement, or the “blood of the covenant.” Through this blood those spiritual consolations are imparted to men which are so necessary to their happiness. This stronghold is a most impregnable defence to all who flee to it for refuge. The covenant of grace is adequate to all the wants and necessities of sinful men. It is there is to be found unlimited pardon of sin ; through it the Divine acceptance has been assured ; through it grace is communicated to purify the soul from every stain of corruption ; through it that wisdom is conferred which is profitable to direct in all things, and that power which shall enable man to surmount every difficulty. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in the Mediator of this covenant, and He becometh to all who believe, “wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and complete redemption.” What is implied by turning to this stronghold, the perfect righteousness and complete atonement of the Redeemer ? It means that we renounce every mean or false security. Many are the grounds of false dependence on which unthinking, ignorant men rely. Let all who have hitherto relied on these grounds of false dependence henceforth renounce them for ever ; and let them betake themselves to the finished work of Jesus, who is the tried precious corner-stone, the sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion. (*M. Galt, M.A.*) *Christ a stronghold* :—I. IN WHAT SENSE, OR ON WHAT ACCOUNT, ARE MANKIND REPRESENTED AS PRISONERS ? The prison is of a spiritual description. It is not so much a place as a state of confinement. All men, by nature, are under the curse of God, and the power of sin and Satan. The law, the justice, the truth, the power of God ; these are the walls and bolts and bars that confine you. The evil dispositions and passions of men answer all the purposes of chains and bolts, to disable their souls from rising towards heaven, or moving a step in the way of holiness. II. WHY ARE SOME CALLED PRISONERS OF HOPE, AND WHO ARE THEY THAT MAY BE SO CALLED ? It implies that there are some without hope. The devil and his angels are such. Such also are all those among men who have died without repentance and pardon ; and they are a multitude, we fear, greater than any man can number. Who are prisoners of hope ? 1. All who are alive upon the earth. 2. Those who possess the means of grace are more particularly to be considered as prisoners of hope. 3. Those who feel religious impressions. III. WHAT IS THIS STRONGHOLD ? It is Christ. 1. He secures us from the wrath of God. 2. From the assaults of sin and Satan. 3. From worldly confusion and calamities. IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TURNING TO THIS STRONGHOLD ? 1. You must be thoroughly convinced of Christ’s ability to defend you. 2. You must forsake all other refuges. 3. In order to obtain safety in Christ there must be an actual acceptance of Him, and a steady reliance upon Him for protection.

V. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT CHRIST IS SUCH A STRONGHOLD? 1. Consider His Divine perfections. 2. His Divine appointment. Have you turned to this stronghold? Some have. Some are still secure in Satan's confinement. Some feel the fetters begin to gall them, and they are sighing for liberty. Be often looking back to your former imprisonment. Adore the grace that provided such a stronghold. And beware of dishonouring this stronghold. This is done when men think it a confinement, and are uneasy under its restraints. (*S. Lavington.*) A stronghold :—I HOW THE SAVIOUR MAY BE CALLED A STRONGHOLD. A stronghold implies a place of safety or security, and can only allude to Christ. The Psalmist called Him his castle, his fortress, his tower of defence, the rock of his might—doubtless impressed with the security afforded to the weak who can cleave unto Him. Few terms can be more forcible than the one contained in our text, but we must feel our weakness to appreciate the force of the term. We must feel the necessity of our having a stronghold to turn unto.

II. TO WHOM THE TERM "PRISONERS OF HOPE" MAY REFER. This evidently applies to the whole world. When Adam sinned he became a prisoner—a slave to sin and evil passions. This slavery he entailed upon all his children. It is the evil nature of man that holds him bound—it withers the germ of life; it destroys all the energies and Divine flowings of the soul; it throws a chain upon the creature that holds him down, so that he cannot get free. We are prisoners in the flesh. The heart of stone rests within. But although a prisoner, still in hope. Prisoners by sin hope in Christ, because Christ gave Himself a ransom for sinners. The penitent sinner has hope because he is awakened by a consciousness of his sin, and by the apprehension of his danger.

III. THE PROMISE CONTAINED IN THE TEXT. The exhortation contains a promise of infinite magnitude: "I will render double unto thee." You shall receive amends for the trouble you have endured, for the miseries of this world are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. (*G. Thompson, M.A.*) Inspiration of hope :—In one of the great battles of history the General of the French was approached by an excited officer, who cried, "The battle is lost!" "Yes," was the cool reply; "but there is time to win another." And so it proved, for the retreating troops rallied, and pressed forward in a still fiercer attack because of their temporary repulse, and at night all victory rested on the French banners. No defeat is final, unless you choose to make it so. There is always time to win a victory. Suppose your temper gets the better of you instead of your conquering it. Suppose you yield to the temptation you meant to rout so gloriously. Is that a reason for giving up and throwing down your arms? Not a bit of it. The end has not come yet. There is still time to win another battle. Make your next onset all the fiercer because of that temporary defeat.

The hope of gain in dying :—There is a bird that mariners call the "frigate bird," of strange habits and of stranger power. Men see him in all climes; but never yet has human eye seen him near the earth. With wings of mighty stretch, high borne, he sails along. Men of the far north see him at midnight moving on amid auroral fires, sailing along with set wings amid those awful flames, taking the colour of the waves of light which swell and heave around him. Men in the tropics see him at hottest noon, his plumage all incarnadined by the fierce rays that smite innocuous upon him. Amid their ardent fever he bears along, majestic, tireless. Never was he known to stoop from his lofty line of flight, never to swerve. To many he is a myth; to all a mystery. Where is his perch? Where does he rest? Where was he brooded? None know. They only know that above the cloud, above the reach of tempest, above the tumult of transverse currents, this bird of heaven, so let us call him, on self-supporting wings that disdain to beat the air on which they rest, moves grandly on. So shall my hope be. At either pole of life, above the clouds of sorrow, superior to the tempests that beat upon me, on lofty and tireless wing, scorning the earth, it shall move along. Never shall it stoop, never swerve from its sublime line of flight. Men shall see it in the morning of my life; they shall see it in its hot noonday; and when the shadows fall, my sun having set, the last they shall see of me shall be this hope of gain in dying, as it sails out on steady wing, and disappears amid the everlasting light. (*W. H. Murray.*) Prisoners of hope :—This title is not a fanciful one. To the Jew it had a triple significance. 1. He was under the yoke of a foreign despot, and longed to regain his freedom. 2. He was under the yoke of an unfulfilled promise of a coming Messiah, and yearned for the "day-star to arise." 3. He was under the yoke of the unrealised prophecies concerning the

glory of the Messiah's kingdom, and the eternal felicity of His followers. Rightly apprehended, the words of the text are the true designation of every real Christian. In two senses out of the three, however, they are not applicable to us. We are not under an alien yoke. The incarnation is not a hope, but a historic fact. In the third sense only are saints to-day "prisoners of hope." I. WE ARE PRISONERS TO AN UNREDEEMED BODY. In St. Paul's sense, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). Observe, then—1. There is a sense in which the body is already redeemed. Christ by His contact with human flesh has sanctified it, and separated it from the service of sin; so that now we are exhorted to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." 2. There is another sense in which our bodies are not redeemed. (1) They are not yet free from manifold infirmities,—nervousness, drowsiness, debility, defects in the organs of sensation. (2) They are not yet redeemed from sensuous appetites. How soon the sensuous becomes sensual! 3. Hope anticipates the possession of an immortal body—(1) From which every element of weakness and infirmity is excluded. (2) In which carnal appetites shall have no place. (3) Which shall be no more subject to death. II. WE ARE PRISONERS TO A LIMITED AND SUPERFICIAL KNOWLEDGE. "Now I know in part,"—there is the bondage. "Then shall I know even as I am known,"—there is the freedom. 1. Our knowledge touches not the essence, but only the phenomena of things. What they really are Omniscience only knows. Names are but disguises by which we hide our ignorance. The more we learn, the less we seem to know. "There are two sorts of ignorance. We philosophise to escape ignorance, and the consummation of our philosophy is ignorance. We start from the one, we repose in the other." 2. Our knowledge reaches men, not as they are, only as they appear. All men are better or worse than they seem to be. The invisible part is the true man. 3. Even this knowledge is limited by the brevity of life and the conditions of its existence. The most profound thinker and the most extensive traveller must lay aside their work at the summons of death. 4. Since human knowledge is so limited, how irrational for human beings to impugn the Divine economy. As wise for the mole to criticise and condemn the landscape under which he burrows. Man's work is to trust and wait. 5. Hope anticipates the solution of the dark enigma of human life. "Then I shall know even as I am known." Things will appear as they really are. 6. Even this knowledge is progressive. The finite can never comprehend the infinite. Progress is heaven's law as well as earth's. III. WE ARE PRISONERS TO A CIRCUMSCRIBED CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. The great family of our Father is sadly dismembered. Whilst one in spirit and faith, our fellowship is ruptured by—1. Doctrinal divergence. The Jews of bigoted ritualism still have no dealings with the Samaritans of a broader faith. 2. Suspicion, the offspring of imperfect knowledge, is another cause of circumscribed fellowship. 3. Social status is a barrier to universal Christian fellowship. 4. Distance and death contribute to the limited measure of fellowship enjoyed by Christians. 5. Hope anticipates the universal and perfect fellowship of saints. (1) This will include all ages; (2) and all climes; (3) and all classes and creeds. IV. WE ARE PRISONERS TO AN IMPERFECT VISION OF CHRIST. "Now we see through a glass darkly." There is the bondage. "Then face to face." There is the substance of our hope. Yet note—1. Christ is really apprehended by faith even here. This faith is a spiritual sense, akin to the eye of the body. It invests the invisible Saviour with a real personality. 2. This vision is at best a dim one. A reflected view, as when one beholds a face in a mirror. 3. Human nature in its present state is not capable of a more open vision. (*Homiletic Magazine.*)

Vers. 13-17. **The Lord of hosts shall defend them.—God works amongst the nations in the interests of His people:**—The double recompense which the Lord will make to His people will consist in the fact that He not only liberates them out of captivity and bondage, and makes them into an independent nation, but that He helps them to victory over the power of the world, so that they will tread it down, i.e. completely subdue it. The first thought is not explained more fully because it is contained *implicite* in the promise of return to a strong place, the double only is more distinctly defined, namely, the victory over Javan. The expression, "I stretch," &c., implies that the Lord will subdue the enemies by Judah and Ephraim, and therefore Israel will carry on this conflict in the power of its God.—Keil. I. THAT GOD WORKS AMONGST THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.

God is here represented as raising up Zion against Greece. "And raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece." The literal reference, it may be, is to the help which He would render the Maccabees, as the heroic leaders of the Jews, to overcome the successors of the Grecian Alexander, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the other Grecian oppressors of Judah. He works with the Jew and the Greek, or Gentile—the two great divisions of mankind. He is in their conflicts and their battles. 1. He works universally amongst men. He works with the "sons" of Zion and the "sons" of Greece. He operates with all, with the remote and the distant, with the little and the great, with the good and the bad; He is in all human history. All good He originates, all evil He overrules. 2. He works by human agency amongst men. "When I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim." God carries out His purposes with man by the agency of man; wicked kings are His tools, obscure saints are His ministers of state. He works manifestly amongst men. "And the Lord shall be seen over them"; or, as Keil renders it, "Jehovah shall appear above them." 4. He works terribly amongst men. "And His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south." "Like lightning will His arrow go forth, and the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpets, and will pass along in storms of the south."—Keil. He is in the crashings of conflagrating cities, in the booming thunders of contending armies, in the wild whirlwinds of battling kingdoms; with Him there is "terrible majesty" as He proceeds on His march in human history. II. God works amongst the nations of the earth IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. He works for their defence. "The Lord of hosts shall defend them," or shelter them. 2. He works for their victory. "They shall devour and subdue with sling-stones," &c. "Jehovah of hosts shall protect them, and they shall devour and tread down the sling-stones, they shall drink, they shall be noisy, as those who drink wine; they shall be full as the bowl, as the corners of the altar."—Henderson. The idea is their complete triumph over their enemies. Hengstenberg observes that there is not the least indication that a spiritual conflict is intended. Quite true, but a spiritual conflict it may illustrate, and its victory too. 3. He works for their salvation. "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people." 4. He works for their glory. "They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land." Or, as Hengstenberg renders it, "For crowned jewels shall they be rising up upon His land." There is true glory awaiting the good. There is a crown of glory laid up in heaven, &c. 5. He works for their perfection. "For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." We accept the rendering of Keil here, which is not only faithful to the original, but in harmony with the context. The prophet is speaking of the high privileges of God's people, and not of the excellences of the Supreme. It is an exclamation of admiration of the high privileges of the godly. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 16. **They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land.**—*The Lord's people*:—Here we see—I. THE DIGNITY OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE. They are "stones, precious stones," set in the "crown" of the King of kings. God not only spares, but pardons and justifies them. In His righteousness they are exalted; they are not only saved, but ennobled. With kings are they upon the throne. II. HERE IS ALSO THEIR EXHIBITION. These stones of a crown are "lifted up." They are not to be concealed. Our Saviour compares them to a city set, not in a valley, but on a hill which cannot be hid; and to a candle, placed, not under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Christians need not be concealed—everything in their religion will bear examination, and challenges the eyes of all, whether infidels or philosophers or politicians or moralists. They ought not to be concealed—everything in their religion is adapted to do good; but for this purpose it must be known. They cannot be concealed,—their principles must operate; the sun cannot shine without showing itself. III. HERE IS ALSO THEIR UTILITY,—these stones of a crown are to be lifted up "as an ensign upon His land." An oriflamme suspended over the royal tent, and designed to attract and aggregate followers to the cause in which he is engaged. Their calling, to hold forth the Word of Life. They are placed and displaced; to reprove, to convince, to excite and encourage others, to seek and serve God. They are witnesses for Him; trophies of the power

and greatness and riches of His grace. They proclaim what He is able and willing to do. (*William Jay.*)

Ver. 17. **For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!**—*God's goodness and beauty* :—There is no subject of contemplation more delightful to a serious mind than the goodness of the Lord. The prophet had been, in the preceding verses, describing the appearance of Christ as King of Zion, as just, and having salvation. He had been speaking of the blood of the covenant, by which the prisoners of Divine justice are delivered, and invited to turn to the stronghold. He had described the salvation which God should work out for His people by the Messiah, when they should be as the precious stones of a crown, lifted up on high, and God would save and favour them as His jewels and peculiar treasure. The prophet's heart was so affected with the prospect of this mercy that he breaks out into the joyful acclamation, "How great is His goodness!" Learn that the Divine goodness in our redemption and salvation claims our admiration and our praise. Here too we see the "beauty" of the Lord. How amicably His perfections shine in the dispensation of the Gospel; so that all who attend to it with serious minds will see and adore them. Here we observe mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace greeting each other. Here, at the Holy Sacrament, we see the King of Zion, the image of the invisible God, in all His beauty, and He appears fairer than the children of men, and altogether amiable and lovely. Here also we see the goodness of the Lord; with what peculiar lustre this perfection of the Divine nature shines in our redemption by Jesus Christ. That goodness appears great if we consider how universally it extends: even to all mankind. Jesus is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. If we consider the *objects* of it; mean and miserable mortals, whose goodness cannot extend to Him. This goodness is to terminate in perfect and everlasting glory and felicity. The fountain of all our comforts and hopes is Divine goodness. The streams are plenteous, and various. They enrich, delight, and satisfy the soul, and they flow for ever. (*Job Orton.*) *The glory of Christ* :—This is manifested throughout all the Holy Scriptures. This is attested both by the Apostles and by our Lord Himself (Acts x. 43; Luke xxiv. 27; John v. 39). In the New Testament He shines like the sun in an unclouded atmosphere. In the Old, though generally veiled, He often bursts forth as from behind a cloud with astonishing beauty and splendour. Nor could the prophet himself forbear exclaiming with wonder and admiration, "How great is His goodness!" &c. **I. THE GOODNESS OF OUR LORD.** In the context He is set forth as the God of providence and of grace. And in order to behold His goodness we must view Him in both respects. 1. As the God of providence. As all things were created, so are they upheld and governed by Him. To Him we owe the preservation of our corporeal and intellectual powers. We are continually fed by His bounty, and protected by His arm. The meanest creature in the universe has abundant reason to adore Him—His own people in particular may discern unnumbered instances of His goodness in His dispensations towards them. "His most afflictive as well as His more pleasing dispensations afford them much occasion for gratitude and thanksgiving (Psa. cxix. 75). 2. As a God of grace. Jesus is the one fountain of spiritual blessings to His Church (Eph. i. 22). Neither prophets nor apostles had any grace but from Him (John i. 16). To Him must we ascribe every good disposition that is in our hearts (Phil. ii. 13; Heb. xii. 2). What reason, then, have His faithful followers to bless His name! With what gratitude should they acknowledge His continued kindness! Though they have often turned back from Him, He has not cast them off. Yea, rather, He has "healed their backslidings and loved them freely." Surely every blessing they receive and every victory they gain should fill them with admiring thoughts of His goodness (2 Cor. ii. 14). If we have just conceptions of His goodness we shall be more able to behold—**II. HIS BEAUTY.** The world beholds "no beauty nor comeliness in" the face of Jesus. But the saints of old "saw His glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father." This we also may see if we survey Him—1. In this Divine character. "We cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection." Little do we know of the greatness of His majesty, or the thunder of His power (Job xxvi. 14). We cannot comprehend His unsearchable wisdom, His unspotted holiness, His inviolable truth and faithfulness. His glory is more than the feeble language of mortality can express. 2. In His human character. Here we look at Him, as the Jews at Moses when his face was veiled. And can

contemplate Him more easily because He shines with a less radiant lustre. But principally must we view Him during the course of His ministry. What marvellous compassion did He manifest to the souls and bodies of men! Not one applied to Him for bodily or spiritual health without obtaining his request. And when many were hardened in their sins He wept over them (Luke xix. 41). His zeal for God was ardent and unremitted. His meekness, patience, fortitude were altogether invincible. Whatever was amiable and excellent in man abounded in Him (Psa. xlv. 2). Nor, though continually tried in the hottest furnace, was there found in Him the smallest imperfection or alloy (John xiv. 30). 3. In His mediatorial character. With what readiness did He become a surety for sinful man (Psa. xl. 7, 8). What astonishing condescension did He manifest in uniting Himself to our nature! How cheerfully did He go forth to meet the sufferings that were appointed for Him. His obedience unto death was the fruit of His love and the price of our redemption. How beautiful is He now in the eyes of those who behold His glory! And how will He "be admired and glorified by all" in the last day! Satan must have blinded us, indeed, if we be yet insensible to His charms (2 Cor. iv. 4). If we be true believers, He cannot but be precious to our souls (1 Pet. ii. 7). (*J. Benson.*)

How great is His beauty.—*The secret of beauty.*—The last words of Charles Kingsley were, "How beautiful is God!" Zechariah was thinking of the glory about to be given to Israel, about the prosperity soon to abound in the land, and he knows that it is all the good gift of God, so he cries, "How great is His goodness! How great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Wise men who have thought about the nature of God have always said that there must be three perfect things in God. There must be perfect truth, perfect goodness, and perfect beauty. By remembering this you may always tell the difference between true and false ideas about God. Every man and every child who worships a God about whom he has hard, cruel thoughts, although a Christian in name, gives only heathen worship to the Most High. All through the Bible God has been teaching men that He is beautiful. The Jews were taught to make their worship beautiful. At last Christ came. He did not seem to bring beauty down to man at once. The word "beauty" is never mentioned in the New Testament. But this was because Christ wanted men to look deeper for beauty than on the face and form. The beauty which Christ brought was beauty of the soul, of the heart, of the life, spiritual beauty which will never fade away with age, will never wither or decay. Here in our flowers to-day can we not try to see the beauty of God? They teach that His beauty is perfect in little things as well as in great. The tiniest flower is as perfect as the large. And the beauty is not for mere show, but for comfort and use. How often a flower teaches people about God! I have read of a poor sinful woman pressing a white flower to her heart in an agony of tears, because it came to her like the voice of God, telling of His wish for her to be pure and bright. We would like to reveal God to those around us. If so, let us be God's flowers. Aim at three things in order that we may accomplish this our high task. 1. Let us have the beauty of worship. 2. Beauty of worship must lead to beauty of life. 3. All this will grow into beauty of character. This is the beauty that lasts for ever. To get this will take time. All the best things take time. (*H. H. Gowen.*)

Beauty.—One by one the various traits of Divine excellence came before the mind of the prophet, and at last he, as it were, generalised them; and the whole vision struck him as one of extreme beauty. The wisdom of God, His justice, His purity, His truth, His love,—all of these, in quality, in quantity, and in harmony, form a symmetric whole, which deserves, if anything deserves it, the epithet "beautiful," and meets the highest conception, and overreaches the highest aspiration which the human heart has for the element of beauty. Is beauty, then, a reality in the higher spiritual life? Is there in the inward, invisible, and truly spiritual life that which answers to our idea of sensuous beauty? Or is it figurative? I hold that beauty is first spiritual, and afterwards natural and material. I hold that it was Divine; that it inhered in the nature of God, and the nature of spiritual existence. Examine the relation of beauty to moral qualities. As God has created the world, beauty is not a kind of seasoning scattered upon the weightier realities. Men think that the beauty of this natural world is a kind of decoration. Perfection and beauty are identical. Maturity, whether it be of fruit, or flower, or what not, works by stages towards beauty in the material globe. So that

beauty is not an accident. Still less is it the trimming which God gave to the perfected work. It is the Divine idea of a mode of creation. As the human mind is cultivated, it becomes more and more sensitive to this quality. The less culture men have, the further they are from the admiration of beauty; that is to say, the less comprehensive is their admiration. When the human mind develops and grows toward its perfection, it grows toward the sense of beauty. But moral qualities come under this law, just as much as physical qualities do. Fulness, fineness, and harmony—there is the formula. In nature it is called quantity, symmetry: and the equivalent of this in moral elements is fulness, fineness, harmony. Whatever elements the mind produces when it acts so as to give fulness, fineness, and harmonious proportions to the product, are beautiful. That is to say, they produce the sense of beauty in those that look upon them, and tend universally to do it. Right things are commanded in the Bible, but it is not enough that we should be just, conscientious, true, amiable, or benevolent. There is to be fulness in each of these elements, and there is to be harmony among all of them. And here is the formula fulfilled which goes to make social and moral affections beautiful. It would seem enough to say to men, "Be kind, be generous, be benevolent"; but no, Let love be without dissimulation. God loves a cheerful giver. Give without grudging one to another. These are the elements that go to make beneficence; that free it from wrinkles; that give it largeness and generosity. The growth toward ripeness in moral experience is analogous to development in physical nature,—that is toward beautifulness. Just in proportion as any one of our better feelings becomes predominant over the others, men feel that character is growing lovely, attractive, admirable. And these are only step-stone words that bring you to the last one, "beautiful." There is nothing so beautiful in this world as beauty of character. Applications—1. All the world recognises beauty in the lower grade of qualities. It is the higher moral experience that men lack a knowledge of. Devotion is more beautiful than passion. The love of God in the soul is far more beautiful than any love of man can be. The qualities of religion to which we are called are supreme, not alone in importance, but in art even. They are essentially and intrinsically more admirable, more noble, more beautiful than all the lower experiences. 2. How great is the variety of spiritual things in the Christian life! and how few things are gained! How many persons are there that are beautiful in temper? How many whose good-nature is anything more than the mere product of good health? How little is the Church beautiful in its grace! 3. The unbeautifulness of Christian life is sadly shown in the popular impression with regard to religion. Men mostly feel that religion is something that may be obligatory, but that there is nothing attractive about it. The true idea is, that a man who goes into a Christian experience, goes into a larger liberty, and goes into a larger joy. 4. Christians should at least be as sensible to spiritual beauty as to physical. All men should love beauty in common things. 5. God is bringing all good men toward that realm, and that indescribable experience which is hinted at in the words of Scripture. The work which is going on in us, we do not ourselves at all appreciate. (*Henry Ward Beecher.*)

CHAPTER X

VER. 1. Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.—*The latter rain* :—The rainfall in Palestine is normally periodical; occasional showers and even storms of rain may occur at any season, but as a rule it is at the time of the autumnal and that of the vernal equinox that the rain for the year falls. These two periodic seasons of rain the Hebrews spoke of as the early and the latter rain; and on the occurrence of them the fruitfulness of the field and the return of the harvest depended. In other passages both the former and the latter rain are referred to as indispensable to this. At an early period God promised to Israel that He would "give the rain of their land in due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that they might gather in their corn, and their wine (tirosh), and their oil" (Deut. xi. 14); and by the prophets the sending of rain, the former and the latter in their season, is represented as the

manifestation of special regard for His people by Jehovah (comp. Hos. vi. 3; Joel ii. 23; Isa. xxx. 23; Jer. v. 24). The latter rain only is mentioned here, probably because this was the more important for the fructification of the grain; and possibly also, because, being this, it might be regarded as including or representing temporal blessing generally. This the prophet here exhorts the people to ask of the Lord "at the time of the latter rain," i.e., at the season when it was due; though God had promised it to His people, it was fitting and needful that they should pray to Him for it at the time when it was required. This "direction to ask" does not "simply express the readiness of God to grant their request"; it does this, for when God enjoins on men the asking for blessing, He implicitly engages to give the blessing asked for; but besides this, and even more than this, there is intimated here that the obtaining of promised blessing is conditioned by its being specially asked of God in the season of need. God's promises are given not to supersede prayer, but rather to encourage and stimulate to prayer. (W. L. Alexander, D.D.)

The latter rain :—The "latter rain" was that which fell in the spring, and which was instrumental in bringing the corn into the ear and filling it; so that if this rain failed, the husbandman would be disappointed of his harvest, notwithstanding all his previous industry, skill, and anxiety. He was indeed dependent also on the "former" rain, that which fell at the seeding time; but there would be a yet more bitter disappointment, for there would be the utter loss of much labour, the fruitless expenditure of much effort and hope, if the "latter rain" were withheld. And, consequently, there was even greater reason for his asking rain in "the time of the latter rain" than in that of "the former." If the "former rain" were withheld, he might make some other use of his capital and enterprise; but if "the latter," his disaster scarce admitted of repair. Take it metaphorically, and the "latter rain" is the grace needed for ripening the believer and fitting him for heaven. God may give "the latter rain," if the husbandman, conscious of his dependence on God for the harvest, continue meekly to supplicate the necessary showers; He may withhold the rain, if the husbandman, calculating on the ordinary course of His dealings, grow remiss in petitioning, and give up his fields to the presumed certainties of the season. There is no point in the life of a Christian at which he can do without the supply of God's grace; none at which he can expect the supply, if he be not cultivating the spirit and habit of prayer. (H. Melvill, B.D.)

Prayer and promise :—We have here expressed the connection between prayer and promise on the one hand, and prayer and the processes of nature on the other. The blessing of rain, which, to an agricultural people, was inclusive of all other temporal blessings, and symbolical of all spiritual ones, was promised; but this promise was dependent on its supplication in prayer. Just so the great blessing of the descent of the Spirit on an individual or a Church, though a free gift, must be obtained by prayer. It is this fact that makes the spirit of prayer in the Church at once an index of her piety, and of the spiritual blessings she may expect from God. When the Church pours out a fulness of prayer, God will pour out a fulness of His Spirit. The inspired writers see no difficulty in the connection between prayer and the processes of nature, such as the mole-eyed philosophy of modern times discovers. The inspired writers think that the God who has created the elements may direct them according to His will. We must not suppose that because God has begun to bless us, we may relax our prayers and efforts. The former rain may be given, but we must also ask for the latter rain. We may have the former rain of conversion, but if we would have the latter rain of ripened sanctification, we must continue to ask of God. So, also, in the revival of religion. The former rain may occur, and souls be converted, but if we would have the ripening seed in active Christians, we must ask of God, and He will give growth, greenness, and maturity. (T. V. Moore, D.D.)

God in relation to the good and the bad :—I. GOD ATTENDS TO THE PRAYERS OF GOOD MEN. The abundance of corn promised in the last clause of the preceding chapter depends upon rain.

1. God gives rain. A pseudo-science would ascribe "rain" and "clouds" and "showers" to what they call the laws of nature. The Bible directly connects them with the working of God. "He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works" (Psa. civ. 13-15, lxx. 9-11).
2. The God who gives rain attends to human prayer. But it is not absurd, because—

- (1) Man is greater than material nature.
- (2) Prayer is a settled law of the Divine government. To cry to the Almighty in distress is an instinct of the soul. Prayer, instead of interfering with the laws of nature, is a law of nature.

II. HE

ABOMINATES THE CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS IMPOSTORS. "For the idols [the household gods] have spoken vanity," &c. "Thus, under such misleading guides, such selfish and unprincipled shepherds, the flock was driven about and 'troubled.' They had 'no shepherd,' no truly faithful shepherd, who took a concern in the well-being of the flock."—Wardlaw. Now, against such impostors, Jehovah says, "Mine anger was kindled." "That the shepherds and the goats," says Hengstenberg, "are the heathen rulers who obtained dominion over Judah when the native government was suppressed, is evident from the contrast so emphatically pointed out in the fourth verse, where particular prominence is given to the fact that the new rulers whom God was about to appoint would be taken from the midst of the nation itself." Are there no religious impostors now, no false teachers, no blind leading the blind, no shepherds fleeing the flocks? **III. HE WORKS IN ALL FOR HIS PEOPLE.** From Him comes stability. All stability in moral character, in social order, in political prosperity, is from God. What a sublime view of the Almighty have we here! (*Homilist.*) *Asking of the Lord*:—1. Mark the importance of cultivating the spirit of dependence and prayer. We are, as creatures and as sinners, dependent for everything we need, whether for the body or the soul,—for this life or the life to come. It is fitting that we should feel this dependence, and that we should give it expression. Prayer is the expression of it; but prayer is something more. It is "asking of the Lord." It is a precious privilege; it is a sacredly incumbent duty. It is one of the Divinely ordered means for obtaining any desired good. God's Word ascribes to it an efficacy on His own counsels and doings; its being His inducement to act in one way rather than in another. 2. But we must never be satisfied with praying. We must never separate prayer from action. The two must go together. It will not do for the husbandman to be ever on his knees, pleading that his fields may be productive. All the labour and all the skill of husbandry must be put forth by him. He must work and pray: he must pray and work. It is a mockery of God if he does otherwise. To work without praying is ungodliness and presumption; to pray without working is enthusiasm and hypocrisy. And so it is in the spiritual department. It is not enough that we pray God to "work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." We have no right to expect that He will hear us, or bestow upon us any portion of His gracious influences, unless, by the diligent use of the means of spiritual improvement, we are fulfilling the injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In vain do Christians seek the conversion of Israel, unless they are putting forth efforts for removing the veil of ignorance and prejudice by the communication of the light of instruction. And in vain do they look for "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" filling the earth, if all they do is praying that it may. They must send it to earth's utmost bounds. (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) **So the Lord shall make bright clouds.**—*Bright clouds*:—The water that a little while ago lay in yonder sluggish pool, is now raised up into the sky by the sun's attraction—all its impurities left behind, and itself transformed into a cloud, which glows like emerald or sapphire in the sunlight. Can you imagine two things more utterly unlike than the stagnant pool and the radiant cloud? Yet it is precisely the same substance. It is the same water in yonder cloud, white and fleecy as an angel's wing, that before made up the turbid pool. And what saith the Scripture? "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This body taken out of the stagnant pool of our fallen humanity—taken out of the corruption of death and the grave, and now filled and completely permeated by the Holy Spirit, so that it is transfigured like Christ Himself. (*J. A. Gordon, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. The idols have spoken vanity.—*The world's oracles*:—There are not many who think for themselves; and even those who are reckoned to do so, depend for the materials of thinking upon what they hear, or see, or touch. In the things of God this must be so, much more than in others. God's place is to speak, and ours to listen. He expects us to listen, for He has a right to speak. But it is irksome to be always in the attitude of listeners; at least, of listeners to God. We prefer guessing, or speculating, or reasoning. If we find that we must have recourse to some authority beyond ourselves, we betake ourselves to any pretender to wisdom,—and above all, to any one who professes to be the representative of the invisible God, and to speak in His name. Hence

the Gentiles resorted to their "oracles," and the apostate Jews to their "witchcrafts," and to the household gods or teraphim. These are the "idols" referred to by Zechariah. They whom you consult as the depositories of Divine wisdom, who pretend to guide you, and to utter truth, have spoken vanity; they have cheated you with lies. Such was Israel's history. They trusted in faithless oracles. They became the dupes of those to whom they had come for guidance in the day of perplexity. Their teraphim spoke vanity. This has been man's history too, as well as Israel's. He has chosen another counsellor, instead of God; it may be the Church, or reason, or public opinion. The world's teraphim have not been few; nor has their authority been either weak or transient. There is "public opinion," that mysterious oracle, whose shrine is nowhere, but the echo of whose voice is everywhere. There is the standard of established custom—schools of literature, and philosophy, or theology. There is what is called the "spirit of the times." There is the idol of personal friendships, or of admired authors, or of revered teachers. Mark on what points these teraphim mislead us. They misrepresent the real end and aim of life, assuring us that the glory of the God who made us cannot be that end, inasmuch as that is something quite transcendental, something altogether beyond our reach, or our reason, or our sympathies. Why are men thus misled and befooled? They have no confidence in God Himself; nor have they learned to say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." They seek not the Holy Spirit, nor submit themselves to Him as their teacher. Men do not like the teaching that they get from God and His Word; it does not suit their tastes. Hence they choose the prophets of smooth things, the teraphim that utter lies and vanity. But how do these teraphim speak their vanities? They do not need to do so by uttering gross error. They mingle the true and the false together; so that the true is neutralised by the false, and the false is adorned and recommended by the true. And why do these oracles speak thus? They are fond of speaking, and they like to be listened to. It is a great thing to be consulted as an oracle, and to be quoted as an authority. They have no high and sure standard of their own, and hence they can only speak according to their own foolishness. It is as the angel of light that Satan is now the world's oracle, or rather, the inspirer of its oracles. He has changed his voice as well as his garb and aspect. He has hidden his grossness, and modified his language to suit the change. There are those who cleverly substitute philosophy for faith, reason for revelation, man's wisdom for God's; who prove to us that, though the Bible may contain the thoughts of God, it does not speak His words; who artfully would reason us into the belief that sin is not guilt, but only a disease; a mere moral epidemic; who maintain, with the philosophic Buddhist, that incarnation, not death, is the basis of Divine reconciliation; that the tendencies of creaturehood are all upward, not downward. As an angel of light, all his snares and sophistries partake, more or less, of light. He instructs his oracles to appeal to man's natural humanity; to our intuitions of virtue and uprightness. The illumination coming from the Sun of Righteousness is one thing, and that proceeding from Satan, as an angel of light, is quite another. Shun the idols that speak vanity. Listen to no voice, however pleasant, save that which is entirely in harmony with God's. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. Out of Him came forth the corner: out of Him the nail: out of Him the battle-bow: out of Him every oppressor together.—*The duty and dignity of magistrates*.—Laws are in Scripture called the foundations of the commonwealth. Magistrates are the pillars. When the Lord returns to a people in mercy, He doth give them righteous laws and gracious rulers. In this chapter you have the Lord returning unto His own people in mercy. There is a double visitation of God: one of His enemies in wrath; the other of His people in mercy. Though the appearances of God in this visitation were glorious, yet He makes themselves to be the instruments of it. God doth it, but He doth it by themselves. The text sets forth a glorious promise that God makes unto His people when they are delivered. 1. "Out of Him shall come forth the corner." The word employed in the Hebrew is commonly a metaphor used for magistrates and governors. There are three things wherein the analogy doth lie. (1) The corner-stone laid in the foundation. It upholds the building. The main weight of the building lies in the corner-stone. (2) The corner-stone joins and couples the wall. It is a uniting stone. (3) The corner-stone adorneth the building. More labour is spent in polishing the corner-stone than in the ordinary stones

of a building. 2. "Out of Him shall come forth the nail." This also is a metaphor used for governors. There is a double proposition in this metaphor. (1) The beams of the building are fastened and united by nails one to another. So that the corner-stone unites the foundation, and the nails unite the roof. (2) Upon the nails all the vessels hang: all the necessary utensils of the house. Upon the magistrate, as a nail, all the building of the commonwealth shall hang, even from the highest to the lowest. 3. "Out of Him shall come forth the battle-bow." The bow was an instrument of war much in use in ancient times, and therefore is here put for all the weapons of war, all their ammunition for, and all their discipline of war. When the Lord returns unto them in mercy, for their deliverance, they should have strength of their own against all the neighbour nations. They should be successful in war, because the Lord is with them. 4. "Out of Him every oppressor, or exactor, which I put both together." The word means tax-gatherer. Some make it signify, to exact a man's work. An exactor of labour and of tribute are both fitly to be understood here; for God doth not only deliver His people from the power of the enemy, but doth also put the enemies into their power; so that they shall rule over the nations. This shall be the glorious condition of the Church. You have then, in these words, the state of the people set forth after their deliverance. 1. In reference to their political state. They shall never want a governor, a faithful magistrate. 2. In their polemical state. They shall have all sorts of warlike provisions in themselves, and shall be very successful in war. Doctrine—When the Lord returns to His people in mercy, He will give them governors that shall be for the supporting, uniting, and adorning of the commonwealth. I. To support the commonwealth. 1. Magistrates are called the foundations of the earth. 2. The breath of your nostrils. 3. The shoulders upon which all the weight is borne. 4. The arms of the people. But how may magistrates support the commonwealth? (1) He must take care that he uphold religion. Peace without godliness is but a vain, mock peace. Every magistrate ought to rule with God. (2) He must so rule that God may not break in in judgment upon the people. (3) He must so rule as not to destroy the foundation of his authority. (4) He must uphold the laws. (5) Magistrates must uphold their own authority. (6) They must uphold the people's liberties. (7) They must defend and preserve the property of the people. II. To unite the commonwealth. How can rulers aid in uniting a people? 1. Religion is the great bond of union; let it be your great care that there be a unity in religion. 2. Let magistrates take heed to agree among themselves. 3. Labour for union amongst the ministers. 4. Take away all oppression and partiality in judgment. (*W. Strong.*)

Ver. 5. **Because the Lord is with them.**—*Jehovah with His people*.—There is nothing which so emphatically marks and so undoubtedly describes the people of the living God as His own presence with them. 1. The Lord is with His Church relatively. It is only a third part, and perhaps a small third. We might divide our own land into one-third of open enemies, one-third of false professors, and one-third of real Christians. The third part only are really spiritual characters, having the blessing of vital godliness. These shall remain; they shall be "left." God is with them relatively, that is, He is with them in covenant union eternally. 2. The Lord is with His Church experimentally. God has always been with His Church, as a body, and with the individual members. 3. The Lord is with His Church perpetually. It is His promise, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Consider how this fact that Jehovah is with His people, explains some mysteries. "*Because the Lord is with them.*" 1. Then they shall fight victoriously and successfully. This explains why their enemies cannot destroy them. 2. For this same reason the truth of God must triumph. Note the distinct character of the Church and their destiny, as set forth in this text. Life Divine is a pledge of life eternal. If God be with you, your religion is a thing of life. God's yea and amen are stamped upon His people. (*Joseph Irons.*) *Victory, unification, and blessedness for the good*.—I. VICTORY. This victory was—1. Complete. The enemies were trodden down as "mire on the streets." 2. Divine. "Because the Lord is with them." 3. Re-invigorating. "I will strengthen the house of Judah." They would be strengthened by their victory, not only in wealth and security, but in courage. 4. Extensive. "And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad;

their heart shall rejoice in the Lord." "The prophet had," says Hengstenberg, "occupied himself first of all with Judah, the centre of the people of God." In verse 6 he proceeds to speak of Judah and Ephraim together. In this verse, and those which follow, he fixes his attention peculiarly upon Ephraim, which looked in the prophet's day like a withered branch that had been severed from the vine. He first promises that descendants of the citizens of the former kingdom of the ten tribes will also take part in the glorious conflict, and then announces the return of the ten tribes from their exile, which was to be the condition of their participating in the battle. Now, all these facts connected with this victory apply to that victory the grandest of all,—the victory of all true souls over error and wrong. II. UNIFICATION. "I will hiss for them, and gather them," &c. Observe—1. The ease with which the re-gathering will be effected. "I will hiss [or whistle] for them." The word is understood as referring to a particular whistle used by the shepherd for calling his scattered flock together, or by those who have the care of bees, to bring them into the hive. "As sheep flock together at the well-known call of the shepherd, as bees follow in swarms the shrill note of the bee-master, so should the Lord, by His own means, gather His scattered people from their dispersions, how widely soever distant, and bring them to Himself and to their heritage." With what ease God does His work; a mere look, a breath, a word! 2. The regions to which the re-gathering will extend. "And I will sow them among the people,"—or, as it should be rendered, "though I have scattered them among the nations,"—"and they shall remember Me in far countries [distant regions]; they shall live with their children, and turn again." They had been scattered, not only through Egypt and Assyria. It does not say that all Jews shall return, but a great multitude is implied. 3. The scene at which the re-gathering will take place. "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt," &c. 4. The national catastrophes which the re-gathering will involve. "And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up." There is evidently an allusion here to their first deliverance from Egypt; and it means that something similar to that event will occur in the course of their re-gathering (see Exod. xxiv. 4-14). "And the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away." The idea probably is, that as "the haughty boastings of Sennacherib, and the sceptred power of Pharaoh proved alike feeble and unavailing against the might of Jehovah in former days, so should all the combined opposition of the most inveterate enemies prove in days to come. Before Him,—when He had a purpose to fulfil, or promise to His people to accomplish,—all pride should be abased, all power baffled, all counsel turned to foolishness." Now there is a unification, of which this is but a faint emblem—the unification of the good of all ages. "They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Isaac and with Jacob." What a blessed union is this! III. BLESSEDNESS. Here is the highest strength. "And I will strengthen them in the Lord." 1. Whether this refers to their national strength, their security in their own country, or moral strength,—strength of faith in Him,—or all, one thing is clear, that to be strengthened in the Lord is the highest strength we can get. The greatest blessing of life is strength: physical strength, to do with ease and to endure with patience. Intellectual strength, strength to master with ease all the great problems of life, and to reach a theory of being in which the understanding can repose free from all disturbing doubt. These strengths are blessings; but moral strength,—strength to resist the wrong, to pursue the right, to serve Almighty God with acceptance, and to bless the race with beneficent influences,—this indeed is the perfection of our blessedness. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," says Paul. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." 2. Here is the highest exercise. "They shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord." (1) All living men must walk the road that is "up and down." Human life is made up of "ups" and "downs"; the road is not smooth and level, but rugged and hilly, sometimes up and sometimes down: up to-day and down to-morrow. (2) This road can only be walked happily by walking it in the "name" of the Lord. A practical recognition of His presence and of His claims to our supreme reverence and worship. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. I will bring them again to place them.—*Unfulfilled promises to*

Judah and Joseph.—There can be no question that the gradual development of the great principles of the Reformation has led to a corresponding discovery of the duty and obligation of Christians towards God's ancient people. But our interest in the Jewish question should be based upon sound scriptural principles. If we confine our view exclusively to the hopes which unfulfilled prophecy presents, we shall be in danger of indulging speculations inconsistent with the history of the past, and irreconcilable with present duty. If we confine attention to the present aspect of the Jewish people, to the exclusion of the consideration of prophecy, we descend to the arena of political expediency. The destinies of the world are inseparably bound up with the Jewish people. In making any effort for the evangelisation of the Jew, there are three points demanding attention.

I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM WE ARE DIRECTING OUR EFFORTS. In the text we have an address to the two grand divisions of the nation,—Judah, and Joseph or Israel; and a blessing common to both is secured by virtue of the covenant relation in which God stands to them mutually. "I am the Lord their God." If we can find traces of Judah, and none of Joseph, probably the latter are in reserve, and sooner or later will come into the enjoyment of the promised mercy. It is objected, that the words of the text were fulfilled upon the restoration of the Jews after the captivity in Babylon. But the prophecy of Zechariah was delivered to the remnant which had returned. If Zechariah foretells fuller blessings than any which had been enjoyed up to the period of the restoration from Babylon, when were they enjoyed? If the two divisions or families of Israel returned after the Babylonish captivity, the distinction between Judah and Ephraim was at an end; and the conditions of the national covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so far as the land, the city, and the possession of the inheritance was concerned, must have been accomplished. But the facts of the case do not correspond with any of the leading provisions of the covenant.

1. Instead of an increase, there was a decrease of population.
2. The extent of territory inhabited by Jews after the captivity was even more limited than that which had been apportioned to the tribes by Joshua, and much less than that which was promised to Abraham.
3. Their civil polity did not correspond to the promise (Ezek. xxxvii. 22-24; Hos. i. 11).
4. If the return from Babylon was a restoration, and only one restoration is spoken of by the prophets, then how can we explain the full declaration in our text, "They shall be as though I had not cast them off"? Where are the myriads of Israelites who in their hiding-place have been in existence, and have been multiplying, for all we know, since the days of Shalmaneser until now? The little remnant sojourning in these western portions of the world can only be regarded as emigrants from a vast and populous nation, whose locality is as yet unknown and unvisited by us.

II. THE GROUNDS FOR SUPPOSING THAT ANY SUCCESS WILL ATTEND OUR EFFORTS. We may assume that the nation of Israel has not lost its place in the Divine purpose. However secretly and obscurely to us, the Jews occupy as important and influential a position in reference to other nations of the world as in the days of old. The fortunes of Israel have ever been bound up with the destinies of nations; and we have no reason to suppose that this universal rule of the Divine administration has been or will be departed from. The Jews have been and are the index to prophecy. We authenticate chronology and balance historical accuracy by reference to this wonderful people. If, under the Old Testament dispensation, the kingdoms of the Gentiles performed their appointed course around the visible centre of Israel, we must also believe that under the New Testament, which is a supplement of the Old, the empires of the world are now revolving round the same centre, although obscured and unseen.

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF PARTICIPATING IN THESE EFFORTS. 1. It is a privilege to have the grace of faith and prayer continually exercised. Effort for the good of Israel is a work of faith from first to last. No temporal or international advantage can enter into the consideration of it; no worldly or selfish motive can be charged upon those who engage in it. The friend of Israel walks by faith, not by sight. What encouragement is now presented in the results of work for the Jews! But mercy to Israel is mercy to the world. God has declared His will concerning "the precious sons of Zion." It is a privilege to know that the truth of God's Word is tested by His faithfulness to Israel. What is promised to individuals is promised to the nation. If the promises (such as Isa. xxiv., xxv., xxvi.; Hos. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 54; Matt. xxiii. 39, &c.) belong not to the nation, they belong not unto us. It would be a strange inconsistency for us as Gentiles to

employ these passages as a ground of our hope of a resurrection, and withhold them from the Jewish nation, who read them literally as a promise to their fathers (Acts xxiii. 6, xxiv. 21, xxvi. 6, 7). Do we look for the return of Christ? Then let us reconcile the contemporaneous existence of the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus, the light of the Gentiles, is the glory of His people Israel. Gentile fulness and Israel's glory will flow in together. Like the sudden burst of two fountains they will join their living streams, and fill to overflowing the long-prepared channels, and flood the universe with blessing, and the "knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." (W. R. Fremantle, M.A.)

Ver. 8. **I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them.**—*Gathering the redeemed*:—I. THE PERSONS. "The redeemed." Redeemed in consequence of God's everlasting love towards them; for had they not been loved of the Father, they would never have been given to Christ, in order to be redeemed by Him. Redeemed from the law's curse; and from all iniquity; from the wrath to come. II. THE PROMISE. "I will gather them." This implies that the redeemed are by nature in a scattered state, or in a state of alienation from God. How universal is the departure. "We have turned every one to his own way," which is a sinful way, a God-dishonouring, and a soul-distressing way. The gathering work is accomplished in regeneration, at which time they are gathered to Christ for life and salvation: they are gathered or folded together in Church-fellowship; and shall by and by be gathered as wheat into the garner. III. THE MEAN TO BE MADE USE OF. "I will hiss for them"; i.e., I will call for them; make the peculiar sound which they will heed, as a shepherd does to call his sheep around him. Shepherds used a whistle. The Redeemer called for His people, by the prophets of old; by John the Baptist; He called them Himself when He was here upon earth. He called them by His apostles; He calls them now by His ministers. (S. Barnard.) *The interposition of mercy*:—This passage refers to God's ancient people, who, for their crimes, had been scattered, but whom He here promises shall be gathered and blessed. I. THE INTERPOSITION OF MERCY REALISED. "I have redeemed them." By this I understand the redemption by the Son of God. The mediation of Jesus Christ is the meritorious cause of all good to sinful man. All the peace and happiness we possess is due to this mediation. It is the medium of all spiritual good to men individually. II. THE INTERPOSITION OF MERCY DESIGNED. "I will hiss for them, and gather them." 1. The end proposed. They are to be gathered. This leads us to reflect on their past condition. 2. The place of their assembling. They shall come to the Cross of the Saviour, to receive from Him all the blessings they need. They shall come to the bosom of the Church. 3. The result of their gathering will be their blessedness and the Divine honour. 4. The instrumentality God will employ. "I will hiss for them." The allusion is to the shepherd's pipe or whistle. It has pleased the Lord, in all ages of time, to gather men by means of human agency. III. THE CHURCH'S FUTURE PROSPERITY. The convulsions of nations, the revolutions of empires shall but contribute to the establishment of His kingdom. His signature is inscribed on every part of the earth; all is His, and He shall soon take possession. (W. Lucy.)

Ver. 9. **And I will sow them among the people.**—*God's sowings*:—At the end of the seventy years' captivity the people of God's ancient choice were distributed through Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya and Rome, Crete and Arabia. Everywhere, throughout the great Roman Empire, they fell into the ground to die. So far as their natural life was concerned, they seemed on the point of being obliterated among the nations of the world; but you might as well talk of the obliteration of the seed which the husbandman casts into the autumn furrows. They built their synagogues, thrived in the quarters assigned to them in the great cities, and disseminated new conceptions of God, high ethical standards, a fresh religious speech, destined to be of incalculable service to the early preachers of Christ's Evangel. It was thus with the first believers. By the rough hand of the persecutor, the rich wheat of Pentecost, which had lain too long in the bin of the mother Church, was scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria. "They therefore that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." "They therefore that were scattered abroad, upon the tribulation

that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch." These spring sowings yielded a marvellous return. How many illustrations have existed, throughout the entire history of the Church, of the effect of God's sowings! "My Father is the Husbandman," said our Lord. With both hands He has prosecuted His work of sowing. There was a grand quality in the corn of the Waldensian Valleys, in the Paulicians, the Hussites, the Lollards, which was sown by the Master in the dungeons of the Inquisition, in mockings and scourings, in bonds and imprisonment, in the fires of martyrdom, and in the current of swiftly-flowing rivers. But what harvests it all yielded! There was, for instance, the harvest of the Reformation in Germany, of the Huguenots in France, and of the Puritans in England. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 12. And I will strengthen them in the Lord. — *Further and continuing grace*:—This prophecy is closed with a promise concerning their way and carriage for whom the Lord doth all this, that they shall be encouraged and strengthened to be a holy people, and to persevere in faith and obedience, which is to be understood of the elect and truly godly among them, who yet at that time will be very many. 1. When the Lord hath done greatest things for His people, it is yet a new gift to give them the use thereof, to encourage and strengthen them thereby, for it is a new promise. "I will strengthen them." 2. As God can easily encourage the most feeble and faint-hearted, so their sure grip of it is to have it laid up in God for them, and by faith and dependence draw it forth as there is need. 3. Encouragement in God is only well improved when it is made use of to strengthen unto holiness and perseverance, which is the only sweet fruit of all mercies, rendering them comfortable to the receiver, when he is led nearer God by them. "They shall walk" in their duty. 4. Holiness is then rightly set about, when we are constantly in it, when we adhere close to the rule, when by faith we drag furniture out of God, and aim at His glory, and give Him the glory of all our performances. 5. The Lord needs not be hindered to show Himself gracious, by the unworthiness and unholiness of His people, but when He is about to do them good, He can be surety to Himself, that the fruit thereof shall be forthcoming to His glory, and can make them He doth much for, to be such a people as His dealing toward them obliges them to be, therefore, after all the former promises, the Lord Himself undertakes to make them holy. 6. The sweet comfort and refreshment of the promises will only be felt by those who dwell much on the study of God the Promise-Maker, and consider how all-sufficient He is, and how worthy to be credited for the performance of what He promiseth. Therefore doth He subscribe His name to all this prophecy. "Saith Jehovah." (*George Hutcheson.*) *Strong in God*:—Speaking of "England's Forgotten Worthies" of the sixteenth century, Mr. Froude says, "Wherever we find them, they are still the same; whether in the courts of Japan or China, fighting Spaniards in the Pacific, or prisoners among the Algerines, founding colonies that were by and by to grow into enormous Transatlantic republics, or exploring in crazy pinnacles the fierce latitude of the Polar seas, they are the same indomitable, God-fearing men, whose life was one great liturgy. 'The ice was strong, but God was stronger,' says one of Frobenius's men after grinding a night and a day among the icebergs; not waiting for God to come down and split the ice for them, but toiling through the long hours, himself and the rest fending off the vessel with poles and planks, with death glaring at them out of the rocks. Icebergs were strong, Spaniards were strong, and storms, and corsairs, and rocks, and reefs, which no chart had then noted—they were all strong, but God was stronger, and that was all which they cared to know." *Walking in God's name*:—The Rev. John McNeil says, "I owe more than I can tell to my father. He had a habit of which he never spoke to us, nor we to him. He was a quarryman, and I used to hear him going downstairs in the dark mornings, and, standing on the threshold before passing out, he would say aloud, 'I go to-day in God's name.' Then, strong in that strength, would trudge off to the quarry, his blasting and risks of the work. I can never forget the impression this made upon me, and thankfully say to-day, 'My father's God is mine.'" (*Christian World Pulpit.*)

CHAPTER XI

VERS. 1, 2. *That the fire may devour thy cedars, &c.—The fallen cedar.*—In this chapter there is an announcement of the judgment that was to come on the Jewish State and nation because of their ungodliness, and especially their contemptuous rejection of Him whom God sent to be their shepherd. The prophecy here is not in any way connected with that in the preceding chapters, except as it may be regarded as continuing the account of God's dealings with Israel, and their behaviour towards Him consequent on the events predicted in these chapters. Hitherto the prophet has been a bearer of good tidings to Zion, tidings of deliverance from oppressors, and restoration to former privilege and felicity. But there was a dark side to the picture as well as a bright one. All trouble and conflict had not ceased with their restoration to their own land: nor was their tendency to rebellion and apostasy from Jehovah, their Shepherd and King, finally subdued. Treating Him with contempt, His favour should be withdrawn from them, and the bonds that united them should be broken. The iron hand of foreign oppression should again be laid heavily upon them, and the ruin of their State and desolation of their land should mark the greatness of their sin by the severity of the penalty it had entailed. The prophecy begins with a picture of ruin and desolation overspreading the land, and then the process is detailed by which this was brought about and the cause of it indicated. The description of the judgment commences dramatically. Lebanon is summoned to open her doors, that the fire may enter to consume her cedars; the cypress is admonished to howl or wail because the cedar is fallen, because the noble and glorious trees are destroyed; the oaks of Bashan are called upon to join in the wail, for the inaccessible forest is laid low. The cypress is here called to lament for the fall of the cedar of Lebanon, the glory of the forest, not as deploring that calamity so much as anticipating for itself a like fate. That this description is to be taken literally cannot be supposed; the language is too forcible, and the picture too vivid to be understood merely of the destruction by fire of a few trees, even though these were the finest of their kind. On the other hand, there seems no sufficient reason for regarding this description as symbolical and wholly figurative. The more simple and tenable view is that which Calvin suggested, namely, that by the places here mentioned is intended the whole land of Judæa, the desolation of which is predicted by the prophet. The catastrophe thus depicted was brought about by the misconduct of the people, and especially their shepherds and rulers, towards the Great Shepherd of Israel, whom God sent forth to feed and tend the flock. This is described in what follows, where the prophet is represented as acting as the representative of another, and as such is addressed. It cannot be supposed that the person addressed is the Angel of Jehovah, or the Messiah, for the person addressed in verse 4 is evidently the same as the person addressed in verse 15, and what is there said does not in any way apply to the Angel of Jehovah, or the Messiah. Nor can it be supposed that the prophet is here addressed in his own person, for as it was no part of the prophetic office to act as a shepherd of Israel, it could not be to the prophet as such that the command here given was addressed. The only supposition that can tenably be made is that what is here narrated passed as a vision before the inner sense of the prophet, in which he saw himself as the representative of another, first of the good shepherd who is sent to feed the flock, and then of the evil shepherd by whom the flock was neglected, and who should be destroyed for his iniquity. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *The cedars, fir-trees, and oaks of society.*—This chapter, it has been said, divides itself into three sections. 1. The threat of judgment (vers. 1–3). 2. The description of the Good Shepherd (vers. 4–14). 3. The sketch of the foolish shepherd (vers. 15–17). Lebanon, here, may be regarded as a symbol of the kingdom of Judah, its cedars as denoting the chief men of the kingdom. I. A VARIETY OF DISTINCTION. The “cedar” here, the “fir-tree,” or cypress, and the “oaks,” are employed to set forth some of the distinctions that prevailed amongst the Hebrew people. Now, whilst all men have a common origin, a common nature, and common moral obligations and responsibilities, yet in every generation there prevails a large variety of striking distinctions. There are not only the cedars and fir-trees, but even briars and thistles. There is almost as great a distinction between the highest type of man and the lowest, as there is between the lowest and the highest type of brute. There are intellectual giants and intellectual

dwarfs, moral monarchs and spiritual serfs. This variety of distinction in the human family serves at least two important purposes. 1. To check pride in the highest and despondency in the lowest. The cedar has no cause for boasting over the fir-tree, or over the humblest plant: it owes its existence to the same God, and is sustained by the same common elements. And what have the greatest men—the Shakespeares, the Schillers, the Miltons, the Goethes—to be proud of? What have they that they have not received? And why should the weakest man despond? He is what God made him, and his responsibilities are limited by his capacities. This variety serves—2. To strengthen the ties of human brotherhood. Were all men of equal capacity, it is manifest that there would be no scope for that mutual ministry of interdependence which tends to unite society together. The strong rejoices in bearing the infirmities of the weak, and the weak rejoices in gratitude and hope on account of the succour received. II. A COMMON CALAMITY.

"Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen." An expression which implies that the same fate awaits the fir-tree. There is one event that awaits men of every type and class and grade, the tallest cedar and the most stunted shrub, that is death. 1. This common calamity levels all distinctions. "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever." 2. This common calamity should de-materialise all souls. Since we are only here on this earth for a few short years at most, why should we live to the flesh, and thus materialise our souls? III. A NATURAL ALARM. "Howl, fir-tree." The howl, not of rage, not of sympathy, but of alarm. When the higher falls, the lower may well take the alarm. If the cedar gives way, let the cypress look out. This principle may apply to—1. Communities. Amongst the kingdoms of the earth there are the "cedar" and the "fir-tree." The same may be said of markets. There are the cedars of the commercial world; great houses regulating almost the merchandise of the world. 2. Individuals. When men who are physically strong fall, let weaker men beware. When men who are moral cedars—majestic in character, and mighty in beneficent influences—fall, let the less useful take the alarm, and still more the useless. (*Homilist*.) **Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen.**—*The cedar and the fir* :—The prophecy, of which these words are a part, had its fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans. The text would become applicable at a time of great national calamity. By the cedar-tree the chief men of a country are represented, those who occupy the more prominent positions, and are conspicuous by station and influence. When the cedar-tree falls, when the princes of a land are brought down by disaster and death, men of inferior rank, who, in comparison with these princes, are but as the fir-tree compared with the cedar, may well tremble and fear, as knowing that their own day of trial must be rapidly approaching. These words, then, are universally applicable whenever calamity falls on those better or more exalted than ourselves, and such calamity may serve as a warning, teaching us to expect our own share of trouble. "Howl, fir-tree"—tremble, and be afraid, ye sinful and careless ones, who, though planted in the garden of the Lord, bring not forth the fruits of righteousness. "The cedar is fallen,"—shall, then, the fir-tree escape? "If judgment first begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of Christ?" Take the text as setting forth the sufferings of the righteous as an evidence or token of the far greater which, in due time, must be the portion of the wicked. If the wicked were to ponder God's dealings with the righteous, if the fir-tree would observe what was done to the cedar, it could hardly be that future and everlasting punishment would be denied by any, or by any be practically disregarded. Let our blessed Saviour Himself be the first cedar-tree on which we gaze. "Smitten of God and afflicted." "A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." His sufferings only then assume their most striking character when they are seen as demonstrations of the evil of sin. The atonement alone shows me what sin is in God's sight. The Captain of our salvation was "made perfect through sufferings," but the same discipline has been employed, from the first, in regard of all those whom God has conducted to glory. Under all dispensations affliction is an instrument of purification. The nearer we approach the times of the Gospel, the intenser becomes the discipline of suffering; as though God has designed to prepare men for an increase in tribulation, with an increase of privilege. The fact is undisputed, that, through much tribulation, men enter the kingdom of heaven. No fact should be more startling to those who are living without God, and perhaps secretly hoping for impunity at the last. They cannot

deny that the cedar has been bent and blighted by the hurricane, whilst, comparatively, sunshine and calm have been around the fir. And from this they are bound to conclude the great fact of a judgment to come. Suppose it to be for purposes of discipline that God employs suffering—what does this prove but that human nature is thoroughly corrupt, requiring to be purged so as by fire, ere it can be fitted for happiness? And if there must be this fiery purification, what is the inference which ungodly men should draw, if not that they will be given up hereafter to the unquenchable flame, given up to it when that flame can neither annihilate their being, nor eradicate their corruption? It is probable enough that the wicked may be disposed to congratulate themselves on their superior prosperity, and to look with pity, if not with contempt, on the righteous, as the God whom they serve seems to reward them with nothing but trouble. But this can only be through want of consideration. It may certainly be inferred from these words, when applied in the modes indicated, that the present afflictions of the righteous shall be vastly exceeded by the future of the wicked. The “cedar is fallen,” and the fir-tree is called upon to “howl,” as though it were about to be rent and shivered, as by the tempest and the thunder. The sufferings of the righteous might save the wicked from future torments, and that which prepares a good man for heaven might snatch a bad one from hell. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Fallen greatness:—This word “cedar” applies to Jerusalem, to the temple, to Lebanon. It is a general and symbolic term. It applies to all great characters, to all noble institutions, all sublime purposes. There was an abundance of cedar-wood in the temple, so the temple was often called The Cedar, and what the temple was Jerusalem was. One element sometimes gives its character to everything into which it enters. The eternal doctrine of the text is that when the strong go down the weak should lay that significant circumstance to heart. How can the fir-tree stand when the cedar is blown down? How can the weak defend the city when the mighty men have failed? What can the poor do after the kings of wealth? And if God can smite the mighty, can He not overwhelm the weak and the little? if He can rend the stars, and hurl the constellations out of their places, what about our clay walls and huts of dust?—surely He could sweep them away as with the tempestuous wind. And yet the weak have a place of their own. Trees have been blown down whilst daisies have been left undisturbed. There is a strength of littleness, there is a majesty of weakness, there is a charter of immunity granted to things that are very frail. The whirlwind does not destroy the flower that bends before its fury, but it often destroys the mighty tree that dares it to wrestle. How much we depend upon the cedar in all life, in all society, in all institutions! What is done by one man may be comparatively insignificant and may never be heard of, and that self-same thing done by another quality of man fills the world with amazement. How is that? Simply because of the quality. There are people who burrow in the earth, and what they do no man cares for, no man inquires; there are persons who have lived themselves down to the vanishing point of influence, that it is of no consequence whatsoever what they think or do. Other men can hardly breathe without the fact being noted and commented upon; the pulse cannot be unsteady without the whole journalism of the empire being filled with the tidings. The difference is the difference between the cedar and the fir-tree. What is impossible in nature is possible in humanity: the fir-tree can become the cedar, and the cedar can become the fir-tree, and these continual changes constitute the very tragedy of human experience. Let it be known that some person has committed a theft in the city, and the theft will be reported in very small type, it is really of no consequence to cruel society what that person has done; but let a man of another sort do that very self-same thing, and there is no type large enough in which to announce the fact. It is not always so with the good deeds—“the good is oft interred with men’s bones.” There is no printer that cares to report charity, nobleness, meekness, forgiveness, great exercises of patience and forbearance. The printer was not made to intermeddle with that sacred fame. Such reputation is registered in heaven, is watched and guarded by the angels, and carries with itself its own guarantee of immortality. Yet this doctrine might easily be abused. A man might be fool enough to say that it is of no consequence what he does. But it is in reality of consequence, according to the circle within which he moves. Every man can make his home unhappy, every man can lay a burden upon the back of his child which the child is unable to sustain. That is the consummation of cruelty. If the man could but put a dagger into himself, and cause his own life continual agony, he might

be doing an act of justice, he might be trying to compensate for the wrongs he has done to others: but when it is felt that everything that man does tells upon the child to the third and fourth generation, so that the child cannot get rid of the blood which the great-grandfather shed, then every man becomes of importance in his own sphere and in relation to the line of life which he touches. We apply this text personally and nationally, founding upon it our lamentations over fallen greatness. The great statesman dies, and the Church at once becomes filled with the eloquence of this text—"Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen,"—the lesson being, that the great man has gone, the great strength has vanished, and now weakness is exposed to a thousand attacks; weakness feels its defencelessness. Nor ought such eulogy be limited. Sentiment has to play a very serious part and a very useful part in the education of life. When men cease to revere greatness they cease to cultivate it. There is a philistinism that is near akin to impiety and profanity. All men are not alike, all men are not of one value; some men have the genius of insight and foresight, and some have it not; and when men who can see the coming time, and interpret the time that now is into its largest significances, are taken away from us, then those of us who occupy positions of commonplace may well feel that some tremendous bankruptcy has supervened in history, and the world is made poor for ever. Yet this is not the spirit of the Gospel, which is always a spirit of good cheer and stimulus and hopefulness. We are not dependent now upon men, except in a secondary sense; we are dependent upon God alone:—The battle is not yours, but God's; they that be for us are more than all that can be against us; our cedar is the Cross, and the Cross has never failed. Rome boasted that it had obliterated the Christian name, but Rome boasted too soon. Ten persecutions followed one another in rapid and devastating succession; yet there were Christians still praying in secret, temples unknown and unnamed were frequented by ardent and passionate worshippers. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The death of great men*:—Mr. Jay was generally chaste and dignified in his composition, but occasionally used a quaintness of expression which in our day would be called "sensational." The selection of his texts was sometimes ingenious—e.g., on two occasions, after the death of Robert Hall and Rowland Hill, his text was, "Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen." He always took advantage of public events, and thus brought nature and providence to his aid in instructing the people. *The cedar useful after it is fallen*:—The cedar is the most useful when dead. It is the most productive when its place knows it no more. There is no timber like it. Firm in grain, and capable of the finest polish, the tooth of no insect will touch it, and time himself can hardly destroy it. Diffusing a perpetual fragrance through the chamber which it ceils, the worm will not corrode the book which it protects, nor the moth corrupt the garment which it guards—all but immortal itself, it transfuses its amaranthine qualities into the objects around it. Every Christian is useful in his life, but the goodly cedars are the most useful afterwards. Luther is dead, but the Reformation lives.

Ver. 3. *For their glory is spoiled.—Bad men in high office*:—I. THE MEN HERE REFERRED to called "shepherds," which is a designation of men in power, men who politically and ecclesiastically presided over the people, the leaders. The "shepherds" have sometimes reached their positions irrespective of the will of the people. The "shepherds" referred to here had an ambitious character. Likened to "young lions." 1. That a man in high office who has a bad character is of all men the most contemptible. A bad character in a pauper makes him contemptible; but a bad character in a king makes him ten times the more contemptible. 2. That it is the duty of all peoples to promote those alone to high office who have a high moral character. II. Bad men in high office GREATLY DISTRESSED. "There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds," &c. "The glory of these shepherds being spoiled," says Wardlaw, "signifies the bringing down of all their honour and power and the wealth and luxury which, by the abuse of their power, they had acquired, all becoming a prey to the sacking and pillaging besiegers. The pride of Jordan lay in its evergreens and brushwood with which its banks were enriched and adorned; and these being the covert and habitation of the young lions, the two parts of the figure are appropriate. As the lions howl and roar in dismay and fury when dislodged from their refuges and dwelling-places, whether by the swelling flood sweeping over their lairs, or from the cutting down or the burning of their habitations, so should the priests and rulers of Jerusalem be alarmed and struck with desperation and

rage, when they found their city, within whose walls they had counted themselves secure from the very possibility of hostile entrance, laid open to the outrage of an exasperated enemy, and all its resources given up to plunder and destruction—country as well as city thrown into confusion and desolation !” Such rulers may well be distressed—1. Because all the keen-sighted and honest men over whom they preside despise them. 2. Because the Righteous Governor of the world has denounced them. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 4, 5. *Feed the flock of the slaughter.*—*Oppressed people and their oppressors*:—I. A DUTY ENJOINED TOWARDS OPPRESSED PEOPLES. “Feed the flock (sheep) of the slaughter.” These shepherds, these rulers of the Hebrew people, “slaughtered” the people. Their rights, energies, liberties and independency are “slaughtered,” their means of subsistence and advancement are “slaughtered.” People “slaughtered” in these respects abound in every state and place in Europe. “Feed” them—1. With the knowledge of their rights as men. 2. With the knowledge of the true methods to obtain these rights. Not by violence and spoliation but by moral means, by skilful industry, by temperate habits, by economic management, by moral suasion. 3. With the knowledge of worthy motives by which to obtain these rights. II. Here is a SKETCH OF THE AUTHORS OF OPPRESSION. 1. They are cruel. “Whose possessors slay them.” 2. They are impious. In all their cruelties they “hold themselves not guilty.” The greatest despots of the world have ever been ready to justify themselves to their own consciences. 3. They are avaricious. “And they that sell them, say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich.” A miserable greed was their inspiration. (*Homilist.*) *A good shepherd*:—I would give my life for these poor people of the Soudan. How can I help feeling for them? All the time I was there, every night I used to pray that God would lay upon me the burden of their sins, and crush me with it instead of these poor sheep. I really wished it and longed for it. (*General Gordon.*)

Vers. 6, 7. *I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land.*—*A terrible doom, and an invaluable privilege*:—I. A TERRIBLE DOOM. “For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land.” What is the doom? The abandonment of God. 1. This abandonment came after great kindness. For long centuries He had manifested the greatest kindness to the Hebrew people. From their rescue from Egypt down to this hour He had been merciful to them. “My Spirit will not always strive with man.” 2. This abandonment involved inexpressible ruin. They were given up to the heathen cruelty of one another and to the violence of foreigners. If God abandon us, what are we? This will be the doom of the finally impenitent. “Depart from Me.” II. AN INVALUABLE PRIVILEGE. “I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock.” “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” “When He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion towards them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.” “I am the Good Shepherd,” said Christ. Conclusion—Thank God, we are not abandoned yet. God is with us as a shepherd. He is seeking the lost and feeding those who are in His fold. (*Homilist.*) *Abandoned*:—The saddest spectacle earth can show is a shipwrecked life—the terrible loss of all the possibilities humanity involves. If a man quenches the light God gives him, and by self-indulgence and unfaithfulness so debauches his spirit that at last he is deserted by every angel of purity and goodness, and becomes unvisited by even the desire for any spiritual attainment, then there is a lost soul in the most awful sense, whether here or in the world to come. (*Dr. Macleod.*) *And I took unto Me two staves.*—*Two shepherds’ staves*:—In the next place is represented Christ’s undertaking of this charge, and His going diligently about it, signified by two shepherds’ staves; the first whereof, called Beauty, holds forth the sweet and beautiful order of His Covenant, and the doctrine thereof, whereby the Church is directed in faith, worship, and obedience of God. The second, called Bands, signifies that policy in Church and State whereby they are kept one, and without schisms among themselves. 1. Christ the Mediator became an obedient servant, and is willing, and takes pleasure to be employed for His Church’s good; and will have a tender consideration of their case. 2. Christ in His care over the visible Church, hath an especial eye to His elect, and the regenerate in it, how abject-like soever they seem in the eyes of men, or in their outward condition. 3. Christ is a faith-

ful shepherd, singular and incomparable in His care and diligence about His people: for, saith He, "I took unto Me two staves," whereas other shepherds use but one. 4. The Covenant and doctrine revealed by Christ unto His Church, as it sets forth the beauty and excellency of God, so it is beautiful and sweetly ordered in itself, so as faith and obedience sweetly work to others' hands, and make the followers thereof to be beautiful and excellent above all people; for "the one staff I called Beauty." 5. As unity and concord in a Church is a fruit of Christ's feeding His flock, so policy and order, whereby unity is preserved, is a rich blessing. "The other I called Bands." 6. Christ's performances are answerable to His undertakings: what He saith He doth; and His practice will never give His promise the lie: for unto His promise, "I will feed," is subjoined, "And I fed the flock." (*George Hutcheson.*) *The staves of Beauty and Bands broken*:—I. UNITY FROM UNION WITH GOD IS NATIONAL BEAUTY. It is the union of the members of the body with the head which gives to the entire frame its dignity and beauty. A headless trunk has no beauty, but when body and limbs are fitly framed together, that symmetry is attained which God intended. The beauty of a tree consists in the union of branches by union with the trunk. The unity of the Hebrew nation was destroyed by their wilful severance of themselves from their Divine Head. Lack of union with God brought discord into the nation and destroyed their national beauty (Psa. cxxxiii.). II. MEN MUST HAVE A SOUL-SHEPHERD, AND WHEN GOD IS REJECTED THEY MUST HAVE A BAD ONE. If a road is known to one person only, any other man who offers to guide the traveller must be his enemy. If a man is deeply wounded, he must have help from some one outside himself, and the quack who undertakes to heal him, and is ignorant of the proper way to treat him, will be likely to be his murderer. There is but one Being who is acquainted with the soul's needs; if He is rejected, any other must harm the soul. God claims to be the only Saviour. "There is none beside Me" (Isa. xlv. 21). Christ warned Israel against false shepherds, yet, as a nation, they chose them and rejected Him, and as He only could really lead and feed them, their choice necessarily issued in their ruin. III. SIN DISINHERITS MEN AND NATIONS OF THEIR GOD-GIVEN PORTION. (*Outlines by London Minister.*) *Beauty and Bands the two staves of the Divine Shepherd*:—As long as sin will be in the world the oppressor and the oppressed are sure to be here; for it is in the nature of sin to make men hard, cruel, and oppressive. The exaltation of a man above his fellow-men in wealth, honour, authority, and power is no reason whatever why he should despise and oppress them, but, on the contrary, it should be a reason for him to deal kindly towards them. The wealth of the rich man should be an inducement to him to remember the poor, and the strength of the strong should be an inducement to him to help the weak. For a consolation to the oppressed in their sufferings and a warning to the oppressor, the Bible teaches in a clear manner that God will surely visit the one in mercy and the other in judgment; the same hand that bestows favours graciously and tenderly upon the oppressed holds the sword of vengeance above the oppressor. In this chapter God said that He was going to visit the rulers of His people in judgment because they were oppressing them. "Thus said the Lord my God: Feed the flock of slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not." How abominable this must have been in the sight of God! After accumulating wealth through cruelty and oppression they sanctimoniously praised God for prospering them. But while these unjust and oppressive rulers were thus justifying themselves, destruction overtook them. "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord," &c. But when God visits the oppressor in judgment He does not forget the oppressed in their poverty, sufferings, and misery, for He said, "So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock." So in the text we have a striking and beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus as the Great Shepherd of souls. It has been truly observed by an able commentator, that no image of Christ has so deeply impressed itself upon the mind of the Church as that of a shepherd, as is shown by Christian literature and art, and our hymns and prayers. The Eastern shepherd would never be seen without his staff or crook. But reference is made here to two staves, and David says of the Lord as his Shepherd, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." In our text there are names given to the two staves; one is called "Beauty," and the other "Bands," which are to be taken emblematically to show that the Lord Jesus

Christ the Divine Shepherd will lead, protect, beautify, and unite His people as one great and glorious flock. **I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FEEDING HIS PEOPLE.** "Lo, I fed the flock of the slaughter, verily the poor of the flock." When their own shepherds pity them not, the Divine Shepherd makes them to lie down in peace and security in the green pastures of spiritual blessings, and leads them beside the still waters of heavenly influences. He lives for the sake of His sheep, and so they find in Him their true Shepherd. Naturally the objects of our greatest care and anxiety will have the largest place in our affections, and it is not easy for us to conceive the tender affection and close attachment that would gradually grow between the Eastern shepherd and his sheep. **II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST PROTECTING AND GUIDING HIS PEOPLE.** With the staves the shepherd rules, protects, and guides his sheep. He uses the crook to prevent them from going astray, and to pull them back from dangerous places. God's people, like sheep, are very prone to go astray. He very often draws them by His crook from temptations and dangers which they are not in the least aware of. Think of a promising young man, who has been brought up in a religious family, enticed by bad companions into the forbidden paths of sinful pleasures; but before he falls over the precipice of destruction, the Good Shepherd, through sickness, or the death of a companion or a near relation, mercifully draws him back by His crook. The apostle Peter wandered far astray, but Christ followed him faithfully, and gently brought him back. The Divine Shepherd dealt in a similar manner with Thomas, who had wandered far into the wilderness of doubt and unbelief. And we do not know from how many dangers and temptations we have been rescued by the Divine Shepherd with His crook. **III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BEAUTIFYING HIS PEOPLE.** He will bring out to its highest perfection the beautiful individuality of each one of His followers. This is taught by the symbolic name of one of the two staves, which is called "Beauty." God, under the old dispensation, through various means and ministrations, aimed at ennobling and beautifying His people; and notwithstanding all their faults, they looked beautiful compared to the idolatrous nations by which they were surrounded. In the Book of the prophet Jeremiah they are called a "beautiful flock." Their God, who is called the Shepherd of Israel, had made them beautiful by saving, protecting, and guiding them, and richly bestowing His blessings upon them. So does the Lord Jesus Christ in a similar way sanctify and beautify His people; from His love, gentleness, care, faithfulness, and self-sacrificing Spirit there goes forth a mighty influence silently to purify their nature and ennoble and beautify their character. He washes them in His own blood, and beautifies and adorns them with His own heavenly Spirit. This is the beauty of holiness, "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." They are changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory by the influence of His Spirit dwelling in them. We can say that the Great Shepherd is perfectly impartial in the bestowal of His sanctifying and beautifying influences upon all God's erring children, whom He strives to gather together into one beautiful flock. The sun is perfectly impartial in the distribution of its heat and light, which bring out the beauty of the flowers and the trees. One flower cannot say to another, "The sun has taken more trouble to beautify and adorn you than me," for it shines equally the same for all. So Christ the Sun of Righteousness distributes its purifying and beautifying influences equally impartially to all. **IV. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST UNITING HIS PEOPLE.** In the union of the human and the Divine in the person of the Good Shepherd all men are virtually united in Him, and He will not rest satisfied until all are actually made one in Him. This blessed truth is implied by the name of the other staff, which is called "Bands," which teaches that the Divine Shepherd not only sanctifies and beautifies His people individually, but also unites them socially into one great and glorious company. As the shepherd carefully gathers his sheep together into the fold, so does Christ gather all men together. Moses, Socrates, Plato, Gautama, Zoroaster, John, Peter, Paul, Mohammed, Luther, Wesley, and others are all His under-shepherds, and ultimately He will bring all their flocks together. He has died for all, seeks all, and will save all. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." The shepherd feels restless and uneasy if one sheep is wanting in the fold. So Christ the Good Shepherd will not feel satisfied until the last erring sheep has been safely brought into the heavenly fold, and He will not leave the wilderness as long as there is one wandering sheep to be brought home. (*Z. Mather.*)

Ver. 8. *My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me.—A mutual dislike between God and man:—*I. This mutual moral antagonism is MANIFESTLY ABNORMAL. It is not conceivable that the all-wise and all-loving Maker of the universe would create beings whom He would loathe and who would abhor Him. Such an idea is opposed at once to our intuitions and our conclusions. In the pristine state of humanity, God loved man, and man loved God. II. This mutual moral antagonism IMPLIES WRONG ON MAN'S PART. For Infinite Purity and Righteousness to *loathe* the corrupt and the wrong is not only right, but a necessity of the Divine character. He abhorreth sin; it is the "abominable thing" which He hates. This is His glory. But for man to abhor Him, this is the great sin, the fountal sin, the source of all other sins. III. This mutual moral antagonism EXPLAINS THE SIN AND WRETCHEDNESS OF THE WORLD. Why does the world abound with falsehoods, dishonesties and oppressions, unchastities, cruelties, and impieties? Because human souls are not in supreme sympathy with the supremely good, because they are at enmity with God, because God loathes sin. IV. This mutual moral antagonism ARGUES THE NECESSITY FOR A RECONCILIATION. The great want of the world is the reconciliation of man to the character and the friendship of God. Such a reconciliation requires no change on God's part. His loathing is the loathing of love, love loathing the wrong and the miserable. The change must be on man's part. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. (*Homilist.*) *Divine rejection:—*A time comes in the history of incorrigible nations and incorrigible individuals when they are rejected of heaven. I. THE CAUSE OF THIS LAMENTABLE EVENT. "My soul loatheth them." II. THE RESULT. The results here are threefold. 1. The cessation of Divine mercy. "I will not feed you." 2. Abandonment to self-ruin. "That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off." "The wages of sin is death." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." 3. Deliverance to mutual tormentors. "And let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." All these results were realised in a material sense in the rejection of the Jewish people. Josephus tells us that in the destruction of Jerusalem, pestilence, famine, and intestine discord ran riot amongst the God-rejected people. These material evils are but faint emblems of the spiritual evils that must be realised by every God-rejected soul. III. THE SIGN. "And I took My staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break My covenant which I had made with all the people." The Divine Shepherd is represented as having two staves, or crooks; ordinary shepherds have only one. Expositors in their interpretation of these staves differ here as in most places elsewhere in this book. Some say they indicate the double care that the Divine Shepherd takes of His people; some, the different methods of treatment pursued by the Almighty Shepherd towards His people; some, that they refer to the house of Judah and to the house of Israel, indicating that neither was to be left out in the mission of the work of the Good Shepherd; and some, that the one called "Beauty"—which means grace—represents the merciful dispensation under which the Hebrew people had been placed; and the other staff called "Bands," the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. One thing seems clear, that the cutting of the staff called "Beauty" asunder was a symbol of their rejection from all future grace and mercy. It may be stated as a general truth, that all heaven-rejected souls have signs of their miserable condition. What are the general signs? 1. Practical ignorance of God. 2. Utter subjection to the senses. 3. Complete devotion to selfish aims. 4. Insensibility of conscience. (*Homilist.*) *Abhorring the name of God:—*"For the last ten years I (Gambetta) have made a pledge with myself to entirely avoid introducing the name of God into any speech of mine. You can hardly believe how difficult it has been, but I have succeeded, *thank God!*" (*Dieu merci!*) Thus the name so sternly tabooed rose unconsciously to his lips at the very moment when he was congratulating himself on having overcome the habit of using it. (*E. D. Pressensé.*)

Vers. 10-14. *So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.—The goodly price of Jesus:—*Satan's dealings with the human family may be truthfully described as one gigantic system of bribery and corruption. He has bribes of all sorts, and of different kinds and characters, and he knows how to apply them. He takes care to suit his bribe to the person who is being bribed. With some of us wealth is no particular object. But even while we spurn that bribe we are open to others. Before one man Satan puts the possibility of revelling

in pleasure, before another a dream of ambition, before another literary distinction, before another domestic happiness. This system of bribery and corruption was fully shown when Satan entered the lists against the Saviour of the world. When the Son of God, made man, stood before the tempter in the wilderness, it was after this fashion that he dared to proceed. On that occasion Satan presented to the view of our blessed Master the very highest bribe that was ever offered. Of all the assaults which he made on our blessed Lord, this seems to have been the least successful. On other occasions he was very subtle; he approached our Lord very cautiously, but he made no headway; on each occasion he was met with wisdom and firmness. Satan is very frugal with his bribes. What is all his bribery and corruption for? How comes it to pass that Satan thus exerts his malignant skill in endeavouring to gain an influence over us? Satan's prime object is, to carry out his rebellious purposes in the very face of the everlasting purposes of Jehovah. We, Christians, believe that in the end God will manifest His own wisdom by triumphing completely over Satan's malignant skill, but that for the time being appearances are otherwise. There is no class of persons in human history for whom we feel a greater contempt than for traitors. We all despise a traitor. Who is there that can have any respect for a man like Judas Iscariot? And yet the sin that Judas committed is the sin that is being committed by the slaves of Satan still. We have not, indeed, the power of doing what Judas did. But as it is possible for us to "crucify" our Lord afresh, so it is possible to betray Him afresh into the hands of His enemies. How can this be done? This nature of ours, what is it? It is a citadel of the living God; it should be an abode of the Eternal Spirit. Every one of you belongs to God. If we refuse to recognise His right it is simply because we are already in our own hearts traitors against His love. The Lord is aware of his enticements. So He says to us: "If it seem good unto you, give Me My price." If you are going to barter My rights for that which Satan offers you; if you are going to play the part of a base and perfidious traitor, make up your mind what your bargain is to be; look your own act in the face. If men and women were to sit down and ask themselves the question: "What price have I accepted for Jesus; for how great a consideration have I agreed with Satan to make over my soul to his influences, and to live the life that he would have me lead?" they would soon repent of their bribe. Little do you think that when you are selling the rights of Jesus you are actually selling your own interests. The man that sells Jesus sells his own soul, and there is no man that makes so bad a bargain as the man who accepts the devil's bribes for the betrayal of Jesus. Look at this miserable man Judas. Can you fancy how he crept down that dark street? He felt already as if he were standing on the very verge of hell. The bargain was struck. And what a bargain it was! It did not seem much to get for Jesus—thirty pieces of silver. Then the end for Judas. It is the way the devil's bribe will always end. He makes you fair promises; he takes you by the hand; he pleads with you; he lays all tempting things before you; but behind them all he has got the hangman's rope ready, and the scaffold is prepared, and the awful moment of doom is drawing nearer and nearer. By and by come the agonies of remorse, the terrors of despair, and the awful horrors of a lost eternity. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *A model spiritual teacher*:—Why these words should have been referred to by Matthew, and applied to Christ and Judas, I cannot explain. They may fairly be employed to illustrate a model spiritual teacher in relation to secular acknowledgments of His teachings. I. HE LEAVES THE SECULAR ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO THE FREE CHOICE OF THOSE TO WHOM HIS SERVICES HAVE BEEN RENDERED. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give Me My price; and if not, forbear." He does not exact anything, nor does he even suggest any amount. II. HIS SPIRITUAL SERVICES ARE SOMETIMES SHAMEFULLY UNDER-VALUED. "So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver." Thirty shekels. An amount in our money of about £3, 2s. 6d. This was the price they put on His services, just the price paid to a bond-servant (Exod. xxxi.). 1. Do not determine the real worth of a spiritual teacher by the amount of his stipend. 2. Deplore the inappreciativeness of the world of the highest services. III. HIS INDEPENDENT SOUL REPUDIATES INADEQUATE SECULAR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. "And the Lord said unto me. Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." He felt the insult of being offered such a miserable sum. "Cast it unto the potter," a proverbial expression, meaning, throw it to the temple

potter. "The most suitable person to whom to cast the despicable sum, plying the trade, as he did, in the polluted valley of Hinnom, because it furnished him with the most suitable clay." A true teacher would starve rather than accept such a miserable acknowledgment for his services. Your money perish with you! (*Homilist.*) *Mean treatment of an old prophet by his people*:—Here is an old Jewish prophet honourably putting himself in the hands of his congregation, who is dismissing himself with thirty pieces of silver. I. AN OLD PROPHET'S MANLY OFFER TO HIS CONGREGATION. If you think good, give me my price. If you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me. If you be willing to continue me longer in your service, I will continue; or turn me off without wages—I am content. His spirit is (1) pathetic, (2) submissive, (3) magnanimous. II. THE CHURCH'S MISERABLE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS OFFER. "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." They accepted the offer—1. Immediately. They took no time for consideration. The money was ready for dismissal. 2. Despicably. Thirty shekels. 3. Dishonourably. Dismissing an old pastor with such a paltry sum. Parting with the man of God with a sham testimonial. An old prophet, after a long service of usefulness, cast upon the world with thirty pieces of silver. 4. Studiously mean. "They weighed thirty pieces of silver." They shamefully put the lowest possible value on his ministry. See the extreme want of appreciation of good pastoral service. Zechariah's ministry was Divine. What wretchedness of dealing with the prophetic shepherd of Israel. Salary is no test of a good ministry. Some of the best are badly paid. The geniuses are frequently unworthily recognised by their congregations. Jonathan Edwards was too poor to get paper to pen down his superhuman thoughts in the ministry. III. The prophet's MANLY DISDAIN OF HIS PEOPLE'S MEANNESS. "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter," &c. The act was—1. Divine. "And the Lord said unto me." 2. Manfully done. 3. A proof of their meanness. IV. An old prophet ROBBED OF HIS JUST CLAIM. 1. Scriptural claim. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth the corn." 2. Social. For the "workman is worthy of his hire." 3. Equitable. Every class of people have power to claim their due, why not the ministry? 4. Divine. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? And who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit," &c. It is nothing but right for the ministry to get and have their due, for the credit of the Church and the good of their successors. Honesty is virtue everywhere. Conclusion—God frequently punishes publicly mean churches by presenting them with shepherds of extreme barbarity and cruelty. Meanness will be punished. (*J. Morlais Jones.*) *The price of our redemption*.—The exact agreement of this prophecy with the event it predicts would be sufficient to render this chapter more than ordinarily interesting. But it has a still greater claim on our regard, since it contains the passage which I have chosen as the subject of this discourse, than which no prophecy is more clear, no prediction more close and circumstantial. To whichever prophet or to what particular book the passage before us may be attributed, its circumstantial and prophetic description of an extraordinary event connected with man's redemption cannot be denied. How trifling was the sum for which Judas sold his immortal soul. What could be his motive we at this distant hour can scarcely conceive. It has been said to have been avarice. But the sum of two or three pounds is surely too small a temptation even for the most covetous of mankind to betray and deliver to certain death his kindest friend and benefactor. The Gospel expressly tells us the crime originated at the instigation of Satan. Man's salvation was bought with a price. What that price was, let the service of the Church at this season describe. Not even for a moment can a sincere disciple of Christ forget the words of the Apostle: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (*John Nance, D.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. *Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.*—*The instruments of a foolish shepherd*:—The command addressed to the prophet was, "to take unto him yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd." "Yet" means "again," "once more," "Beauty" and "bands" were also instruments of a foolish shepherd. He was to take other instruments so as to manifest more visibly and strikingly what a foolish shepherd is. By "foolish" understand ungodly, unregenerate, destitute of heavenly imparted wisdom, and therefore

in God's account a fool. The "foolish shepherd" is therefore a natural man lifted up by education, pride, covetousness, or presumption into a pulpit, and devoid of spiritual illumination and heavenly wisdom. He has certain instruments which the prophet was to take as emblems of his character. What they were the Holy Ghost has not here informed us, but as we may gather them from other parts of Scripture I shall take the liberty to put them into his hand. 1. A mask. The thing it represents, namely, deceit and imposture, is as old as the times of Jannes and Jambres. To wear a mask is to play a false part, to assume a fictitious character, to be a stage-player; for in ancient times the actors never appeared but in masks, the features of which imitated the persons they represented. Thus the foolish shepherd makes the people his stage, his holy countenance being his mask, and his false zeal loud speech, and impassioned rant his wardrobe; and thus by craft and cunning he entangles the simple in his net. 2. A sceptre. The badge of authority and power. 3. A pair of sharp shears; for we read that "they clothe themselves with the wool," and of course must have something to get the wool off with. To receive what is voluntarily given is a different thing from clipping off as much wool as possible, or cutting so close as to fetch blood, and take off a bit of the skin. 4. A long whip that shall reach every corner of the pen, to flog all that stir up the enmity of his carnal mind, by what he calls a discontented mind. 5. A bow, and a quiver full of arrows; to reach those at a distance who are beyond the lash of the whip. Come now to his character, which the Holy Ghost has here drawn, and as we learn much from contraries, it will afford us an opportunity of seeing from the contrast what the wise shepherd is. (1) The first thing said of this foolish shepherd is, that "he shall not visit those that be cut off," meaning such as, by a work of the law in their consciences, are cut off from all creature righteousness, all false refuges, all deceitful homes and rotten props; from finding any good in self, or resting on the testimony of man. The margin gives another rendering, "those that be hidden." Hidden from general view and observation. These "cut off," "hidden" ones the foolish shepherd "does not visit." (2) "Neither shall seek the young one." The new born babes, that desire the sincere milk of the Word. The foolish shepherd neglects these. (3) "He does not heal that which was broken." This may suggest those who have lost their first love, and backslidden from God. (4) "He feedeth not that that standeth still." Some of the Lord's quickened family are reduced to such straits in soul experience as to be able to move neither forward nor backward. They are like sheep *cast*, and cannot get upon their legs. Such are the four negative marks of the foolish shepherd; the things that he does not do. There are two positive marks, things that he does do. "He shall eat the flesh of the fat." He shall not take that which comes, that which is offered him, but he must go through the flock, and select the fattest for his own eating. "And shall tear their claws in pieces." Sheep are said to have claws. And these they will sometimes exercise upon the shepherd. When, then, the foolish shepherd feels the scratch of their claws, he puts forth all his strength, and tears them in pieces. (*J. C. Philpot.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VER. 1. The burden of the Word of the Lord for Israel.—*The burden and glory of God's Word to Israel.*—God presents Himself here as creating and speaking. It is to Israel that His Word is primarily addressed, for it is Israel that recognises His Word, and by Israel His Word is carried to the world, which thus becomes also Israel. Remember the meaning of the name, and its origin. Prince of God was the name which Jacob got from that long wrestling in the dark—Israel, prince of God, because he had power with God. The name denotes the fact and the power of communion. Israel is composed of those who seek God and cling to Him, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. **I. THE CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS AND EARTH AND THE SPIRIT OF MAN HAS AN ISRAEL.** The idea of Israel is fellowship with God and power with God, gained in and by that fellowship. Is such an idea reasonable? We think it a poor conception of God which represents

Him as so mighty and rich that He does not care for fellowship with souls. Do you think to convince me that God is wanting in sympathies and affections by showing that He is Almighty? The argument is all in the opposite direction. Should I have more ground to believe in His heart if He were less than all-powerful and all-wise? There is in man a longing after relation to the Infinite. All his history proves this. Something in him cries out after God, and the heavens and the earth have tended to intensify this cry. Man is haunted by a something issuing from heaven and earth that will not let him rest. It would have been sad if man had craved an infinite friend, had yearned after nearness to a perfect and eternal living One, and felt no hope, countenance, or stimulus in the world around him. But man stands in no such barren and dead world. A living world is round him, material, but full of spiritual suggestion, inviting him to seek God, and waking him up again when he grows dull and hard. Will it be said that this does not make probable the idea of an Israel—men that have power with God, it gives support to the idea of communion with God, but not to that of prayer, an asking that influences the Divine will? The answer is obvious. Communion with God, in the case of a being like man, an imperfect, sin-laden being, must take largely the form of prayer. Such a being, coming near to God, cannot but ask from Him. And this asking, so inevitable, cannot be a futile thing. If asking be a necessity with the spirit that has communion with God, there must be room and need for it on the side of God. What is true on the human side is true on the Divine side. The whole doctrine of prayer is found in the spirit of man, in the longings and necessities, and there can be nothing in real contradiction to these. They who seek God have a peculiar affinity with Him. God as a moral being has moral affinities. It is not a lowering or limiting of God to believe that He has an Israel. II. GOD HAS A WORD FOR HIS ISRAEL. Neither the heavens nor the earth nor the spirit of man take the place of a word. They are each a revelation. But they are fuller of questions than of answers. The heart of man needs a word. It is only in words that there is definiteness. One of the distinguishing peculiarities of man is that he employs words. By these he reaches the fulness of his being. He makes his thought clear to himself, and gives it an outward existence by words. He makes all shadowy and vague things firm and abiding by words. And shall not God meet him on this highest platform? A Word of God is a necessity to the human soul. God has a word to Israel which makes fellowship close and confiding. The word gives man the necessary clue to the interpretation of the universe and himself. It is God's Word to Israel as the ideal man. Israel is the ideal and complete man, and it is in proportion as any man approaches the ideal that he fully comprehends and embraces the message of God's Word to Israel. III. GOD'S WORD TO ISRAEL IS A BURDEN. This expression is often used by the prophets. No doubt it expresses, in the first instance, the weight of obligation and responsibility in the declaring of God's message, but this rests on the fact that the Word of God is a weighty matter for all men. 1. God's Word is a burden by reason of the weight of its ideas. Thoughts that may be put into words are of all degrees of weight—some light as a feather, some heavy as a world. Thoughts weigh upon the mind, even though they are felt to be precious. The ideas in God's Word are the weightiest of all—God, soul, sin, salvation, renewal, eternity. Men are never right till they try to lift these thoughts and weigh them. They are no judges of the weight of things till they try these. 2. God's Word is a burden of momentousness and obligation. There are many weighty thoughts that have little or no practical moment. But the thoughts in God's Word are of pressing and supreme importance. They are light, food, shelter, life. To reject them is ruin. Everything must depend on how we stand to these words. 3. God's Word is a burden which is easier to bear in whole than in part. The half or quarter, or some little fraction of God's Word is worse to bear, harder and heavier than the whole. A single truth taken out of the whole may be quite oppressive and intolerable. It may crush all joy and courage out of life. The truth about sin needs the truth about grace and redemption in order to be borne. The truth about duty needs the Divine promises. Relief is to be found not by throwing off any truth, but by taking up more. The hardest truths become pleasant in proper company. Every truth has relations to all the rest, and is not properly itself without them. Let the effort be to take the whole truth, and to take it as a whole. Then it will no more oppress than the vast load of atmosphere which every man carries. 4. The Word of God is a burden which removes every other load. Thought, conviction, and feeling bring their

inevitable burden. And if a man rejects burdens he is but making up a heavier burden. If a man will not have the burden of God's Word, then the whole riddle of the universe becomes his burden. But if I take up God's Word, and actually carry it as God's Word, I have no further care. There is provision for driving away every fear and every care in that Word. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) Which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth.—*The universe*.—I. That the universe INCLUDES THE EXISTENCE OF MATTER AND OF MIND. The phrase "heavens" and "earth" is used here and elsewhere to represent the whole creation. 1. It includes matter. Of the essence of matter we know nothing; but by the word we mean all that comes within the cognisance of our senses, all that can be felt, heard, seen, tasted. How extensive is this material domain! 2. It includes mind. Indeed, mind is here specified. "And formeth the spirit of man within man." Man has a spirit. Of this he has stronger evidence than he has of the existence of matter. He is conscious of the phenomena of mind, but not conscious of the phenomena of matter. II. THAT THE UNIVERSE ORIGINATED WITH ONE PERSONAL BEING. It had an origin. It is not eternal. The idea of its eternity involves contradictions. It had an origin; its origin is not fortuitous, it is not the production of chance. Its origin is not that of a plurality of creators; it has one, and one only, "the Lord." III. THIS ONE PERSONAL CREATOR HAS PURPOSES CONCERNING THE HUMAN RACE. The "burden" may mean the sentence of the Word of the Lord concerning Israel. 1. No events in human history are accidental. 2. The grand purpose of our life should be the fulfilment of God's will. IV. HIS PURPOSE TOWARDS MANKIND HE IS FULLY ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH. His creative achievements are here mentioned as a pledge of the purposes hereafter announced. Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed. Has He purposed that all mankind shall be converted to His Son? It shall be done. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 2, 3. All that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces.—*Sin self-punishment*.—There is in this passage a principle by which the governor of the world punishes malicious men. That principle is this,—the reaction of their efforts to injure others to injury of themselves. Jerusalem would become confusion and destruction to the men who sought its ruin. 1. Jerusalem would become a "cup of trembling," or "intoxication." 2. Jerusalem would become to them a "burdensome stone." The idea is, that in their endeavours to injure Jerusalem they would crush themselves. I. It is WELL ATTESTED. It is attested by every man's consciousness. Every man who attempts to injure another feels sooner or later that he has injured himself. There is a recoil and a regret. In truth, the malign passion itself is its own punishment. In every malign emotion there is misery. 2. It is attested by universal history. The conduct of Joseph's brethren, and of Haman, may be cited as illustrations; but the conduct of the Jews towards the Messiah is an example for all times, most mighty and impressive. II. It is MANIFESTLY JUST. What man thus punished can complain of the righteousness of his sufferings? He must feel, and feel deeply, that he has deserved all, and even more than he endures. III. It is ESSENTIALLY BENEFICENT. It serves—1. To guard men from the injuries of others. 2. To restrain the angry passions of men. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 4-9. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment.—*A good time for good people*.—I. It is a time when their ENEMIES SHALL BE VANQUISHED. "In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment," &c. II. It is a time when their POWER SHALL BE AUGMENTED. The power here promised is—1. The power of unity. "The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God." III. It is a time when they shall be SETTLED IN THEIR HOME. "And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." Here they are "strangers and pilgrims," and have "no abiding city." IV. It is a time when they shall be BLESSED WITH EQUAL PRIVILEGES. 1. They were to have equal honour. "The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." 2. They were to have equal protection. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. Now, there is a good time coming, when all good people shall have distinguished honour and complete protection.

They shall settle down in the heavenly Jerusalem, and what a city is that! (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 8. *In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*—*The security of the Church in the midst of dangers*:—There is not a greater miracle of preservation and security than that which is exhibited in the salvation of the Church in her present condition as surrounded by spiritual enemies. I. **THE PROMISE.** “In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” 1. The defended. Jerusalem denotes the whole Church of Christ. It signifies the Christian. 2. The time of their defence. “In that day.” This may relate to the dispensation of the Gospel of Christ, when the Lord Jesus should accomplish His work for the defence and salvation of our souls. It may refer to the time of our conversion. 3. The person defending. “The Lord.” The defence is not put into the hands of an angel, or archangel; it is in the hands of the Lord. II. **THE PLEDGE GIVEN.** “He that is feeble among them, at that day, shall be as David.” The word “feeble” means that he cannot save himself from sin, Satan, or the world. “As David.” Look at the character of brave, strong, successful, beloved, elevated, hated, yet saved David. III. **THE SIMILE DRAWN.** “As God.” Like unto God in spotlessness, in spiritual resemblance, in general disposition, in immovableness. IV. **THE EXAMPLE GIVEN.** “As the angel of the Lord.” This can only mean Christ. We are beloved as Christ by the Father. Perfect as Christ—in Christ—before God. Powerful as Christ, since it is in the power of Christ we overcome. (*T. Bagnall-Baker, M.A.*)

Vers. 9-11. *And I will pour upon the house of David.*—*The future outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Jerusalem*:—The text informs us that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews crucified, and whom for hundreds of years they have blasphemed, will yet upon these Jews pour His Holy Spirit, lead them to repentance, forgive their sin, and restore them to His favour. I. **ASCERTAIN THE MEANING OF THIS PROPHECY.** The Jews themselves allow that the passage refers to the Messiah; and in the Gospel by St. John the words “they shall look on me, whom they have pierced,” are applied to Jesus Christ. The work He promises to accomplish is beyond the power of any created being. God is the only dispenser of His Holy Spirit. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that it is the very and eternal God who shall put His Spirit upon Israel. Joel tells us it is the Lord who will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The effect of the outpouring of the Spirit of grace and supplications is here described as true repentance, and sorrow for sin; He, therefore, who can bestow it must be the true and eternal God. Then how can He be pierced and wounded by the house of David? To be pierced He must have a body. Thus the prophet clearly announces the mystery of the incarnation. Consider the persons upon whom He will pour out the spirit of grace and supplications. They are Jews; and characterised as the authors of the violent death of Christ. The place mentioned is the literal Jerusalem. Another question concerns the *time* of which the prophet speaks. The day of Pentecost cannot be regarded as fulfilling this prediction. No other time can be referred to. Therefore the text informs us that there is a time still coming, when the Lord Jesus Christ will pour out His Spirit on the Jews, and do that for which He has been exalted a Prince and a Saviour; He will give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. II. **TRACE OUT SOME IMPORTANT INFERENCES WHICH THE SUBJECT SUGGESTS.** 1. The restoration of the Jews to the land of their forefathers. 2. The national conversion of Israel is not to be by miracle, without the use of means. This prophecy of Zechariah, then, assures us that the day is coming when the lost sheep of the house of Israel shall be gathered to the land of their fathers, restored to the favour of their God, and be the monuments of His grace, as they have long been the victims of His wrath and righteous indignation. (*A. McCaul, D.D.*) *The promise of the Spirit*:—In the preceding verses God declares what He will do in the way of defending His Church. In the text He declares what He will do in the way of reviving and humbling and purifying His Church. I. **THE PROMISE.** The Divine purpose in giving a promise is, that we may be led to ask for its fulfilment. The promise is, the Holy Spirit personally, and in His offices in the economy of grace and salvation. The promise of the Spirit is co-extensive with the earlier promise of Christ. What Christ was for purchasing, the Spirit is for applying—salvation. All other promises resolve themselves into this one—the Holy Spirit—as they did in Christ. In

this instance the Spirit is not promised generally, but in certain of His offices or operations. He is promised—1. As a Spirit of grace. By grace we understand those combined excellencies which go to form a perfect moral character. The Spirit of grace is the Spirit originating, nurturing, and maturing these. To have the Spirit of grace is to have the Holy Ghost producing these in us—grace itself. 2. As a Spirit of supplications. Supplications and prayers are the immediate fruit of the Holy Spirit. He leads, or shows, the way to the Divine throne. Reveals the blessings of grace. Implants the eager desire. Gives prevailing strength to faith. Causes unwearied importunity. As the author of prayer, the Spirit is here promised. Prayer is a proof of the Spirit's presence; the want of prayer is His absence. The promise of the Spirit was originally made and fulfilled to Christ Himself. Through Him it belongs to all His people. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. It is still on record, and its fulfilment is also on record. Why is His presence not felt and recognised? He has moved on congregations of late, and still, occasionally, individuals feel His quickening power. But the instances are few. Let us plead with God for His Spirit's presence. II. THE EFFECTS WHICH FLOW FROM THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT. It follows necessarily from the terms of the promise that grace and prayer will follow upon the fulfilment of this promise. But the text particularly describes certain results of the Spirit's presence which call for special attention. 1. Those on whom He descends shall look on Christ. It is the office of the Spirit to glorify Christ, as it was Christ's to glorify the Father. The Spirit makes the heart and eyes to turn to Christ, as the flower to the sun. The attention is then riveted on Christ. 2. It is on a pierced Saviour that the Spirit-anointed sinner looks. His body pierced with the scourge, thorns, nails, and spear. His heart pierced with many sorrows. His soul pierced with the arrows of the Almighty, which drank up His Spirit. His reputation pierced by calumny. His humanity pierced with the mortal shaft of death. 3. He on whom the Spirit rests looks on Christ as pierced by himself. His sins pierced Him in all these senses. He was represented by Christ's crucifiers. He has, by his conduct, crucified Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame. He has pierced Him in His people and cause. 4. When the Spirit has shown to a man Christ pierced by his sins, that man mourns. The sight of Christ pierced gives him a new view of sin. Each sin has been an arrow shot at God, and has penetrated the heart of Christ. This sight involves a new view of Christ's love—mercy—compassion. He sees what kind of Redeemer he has been thus treating. The sight of Christ pierced gives him a sense of pardon. His sins meet their punishment in Christ. A pardoned sinner mourns. Lessons—1. The sympathy of the Spirit with the Son. He reveals Him pierced, and produces mourning. 2. Seek the Spirit as here described. 3. Try yourselves by these fruits of His presence. (*James Stewart.*) *The promise to the Church*.—I. THE PROMISE HERE MADE TO THE CHURCH, BOTH IN HER COLLECTIVE FORM AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL MEMBER. 1. The person who makes the promise. Jehovah Himself, the everlasting Father, who created all things by His power. What could induce Him thus to look upon such a miserable and guilty creature as man? He was under no obligations to do so; there was no necessity on His part; there was nothing amiable in man to invite Him. It was His own free, sovereign, unmerited love. 2. The persons to whom the promise was made. By the "house of David" is here meant the seed royal, and by the "inhabitants of Jerusalem" is meant the common people. So the phrases include the whole Jewish nation. They were typical of all the people of God in future ages. 3. Their state prior to the application of the promise. It is a state of most deplorable ignorance; ignorance of God in His character, His works and requirements; and of the Lord Jesus Christ and His mediation; and of themselves, their sin, misery, and need. 4. The promise itself. "I will pour the Spirit of grace and supplications." He is called the Spirit of grace, because He is a gracious Spirit; because He is the author and worker of every grace in the hearts of believers; because He indites our supplications; and because He assists us in the offering up of our supplications. The promise is made good in the experience of every real believer, without respect to names, or parties, or denominations. II. TWO LEADING EFFECTS INVOLVED. "They shall look on Him," &c. Who is this? None other than Christ and Him crucified. "They shall mourn": i.e., they shall possess evangelical sorrow for and repentance of sin. Three things in real repentance—1. Hearty sorrow for sin. 2. Genuine confession of sin. 3. Entire forsaking of it as a principle of action. (*Griffith Williams.*) *Faith and repentance pro-*

duced by the Spirit being poured forth :—This language refers in the first instance to the Jews. The time is coming when, in consequence of God pouring out His Spirit on that people, they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. "Whom they have pierced." This language was literally fulfilled. The text admits of a legitimate application to others besides the Jews. I. THE NEED OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT IN ORDER TO FAITH AND REPENTANCE. The sinner is described in the Word as being dead in trespasses and sins. Not only does the sinner yet in his sins need to be quickened, the very people of God require again and again the living power of the same Spirit who at first regenerated their souls. For even after he has been raised from his natural deadness, he is apt anew to fall into spiritual slumber. I need not dwell on the necessity of repentance. If all men have sinned, it needs no argument to prove that all men should repent. Those who would repent need to be told that in order to repent they need power from on high. It is when the Spirit is poured out that sinners are brought to genuine repentance,—that is, repentance unto life. Without this, there will always be a shying, an avoiding of the humiliation implied,—always an obstacle in the way—and the heart will turn aside like a deceitful bow. As long as the heart is untouched by the Spirit of grace, it either remains in a state of utter insensibility in reference to God and sin on the one hand, or, on the other hand, it is troubled with feelings of reproach and fear, but without being persuaded or changed. Mere natural reproaches of conscience and alarms of coming judgments may stun the heart for a time, but they cannot break or melt it. The very people of God have reason at times to mourn over a narrowness of heart, over unfitness for the service of God, and an aversion to spiritual things. But while they are straitened the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. II. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS POURED OUT.—1. By looking unto a pierced Lord, we are to understand faith in one of its liveliest exercises. The believer looks to Christ and His wounds with the eye of the mind, just as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the serpent of brass which Moses raised by the command of God. Whenever the Spirit is poured out from on high, the instant effect is the production of faith. Faith, indeed, seems to be the first—always along with repentance—saving or spiritual grace of the Christian character. It must be so, from the very nature of things. Our attention is called in this passage to two features of saving faith—(1) You perceive that it looks to a "pierced Lord." Many have enlightened views of the nature and character of Jehovah, who, alas ! have none of that faith which appropriates salvation. Nor is it sufficient that we look to God through the medium of the operations of His hands in the work of creation. Faith looks specially to God the Mediator. The faith that saves is a faith in Jesus the appointed Saviour. Nor is it enough that we look to the Son of God as enthroned in heaven. If we would obtain that saving power which flows from Him, we must look to the wounds by which He was pierced, and the blood that flows from them. Never till we look to a pierced, a suffering, a bleeding Saviour, will we find our spiritual diseases healed, and our soul filled with light and comfort. (2) Another characteristic of saving faith is that it leads those who possess it to look to Jesus as pierced by them. But what share had *we* in the sufferings of Jesus ? Every sinner has had, in a sense, a part in inflicting the sufferings to which our Lord was subjected. You must learn to connect your sins with the Saviour's sufferings. Our sins are the true enemies and murderers of our Lord. It was the accumulated sins of all and each of His people which weighed Him down to the ground in the garden, and bowed His head on the Cross. This is a distinguishing feature of saving faith. The sinner connects his sin with the sufferings of the Redeemer. When he thinks of Christ's sufferings, he thinks how his sins were the cause of their infliction, and he thinks that if Christ had not borne them he himself must have borne them. He thus looks upon Jesus, not so much in the light of a Saviour for others as one suitable to himself. His faith thus becomes a faith in Jesus as his Saviour; it embraces Christ, and appropriates the blessings which He purchased. 2. Another effect is mourning or repentance. When Paul was at Ephesus, he preached repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sense of sin that drives us to the Saviour, and we come to the Saviour by faith. The sinner looks to Christ by the eye of faith, and as he does so he mourns and repents. A believing view of God is necessary to full repentance. How should sorrow be the effect of a saving view of Christ ? We are called to mourn over the sufferings of our Lord because of our connection with them. Note some of the characteristics

of evangelical sorrow. The penitent has a deep view of the evil of sin. The penitent mourns over his sin as deeply as over his greatest earthly loss. But this sorrow for sin is not a sorrow apart from Christ, or independent of Him; neither is it a sorrow without hope. If the wounds of Jesus cannot but open up wounds in our breast, they also supply the balm that heals the wounds. (*J. M'Cosh.*) *Effects of an outpouring of the Spirit*.—The immediate effects of this outpouring of the Spirit are strikingly set forth. They are indicated by a spirit of grace and supplication excited among the people; by their looking upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourning for their treatment of Him in deep repentance and bitterness of spirit. And when they shall thus be humbled for their sins, and shall look with an eye of faith to Him who is the only Saviour of lost men, God will show Himself their reconciled Father and Friend, receive them into His favour, and seal them heirs of His kingdom. In directing attention to the work of the Holy Spirit I shall assume two facts—1. That the influence of the Holy Spirit is exerted in every case of true conversion. 2. That there are times when this influence is granted in greater copiousness and power than at others. 1. One effect of such a visitation of mercy is to impart to the people of God a spirit of grace and supplication. Whenever God comes near to a people, and is about to display His power in the conversion of sinners, He always awakens a spirit of prayer among His friends; causes them to feel their dependence and need of His help. At such times there is wont to be felt, in the hearts of God's people, a deep and tender concern for the salvation of souls perishing in sin. They awake from their slumbers. They mourn over their past unfaithfulness in duty. They cast off the spirit of worldliness and unbelief, and realise in some measure, as they ought, the powers of the world to come. 2. Another effect is to arrest the attention of the impenitent, and turn their thoughts directly upon the things of their eternal peace. 3. Another effect is to produce in the impenitent a painful conviction of sin and danger. When God pours out His Spirit, an invariable effect is to convince men of sin, and to give them an abiding sense of its great evil, as a violation of His holy law. 4. Another effect is to cut off self-confidence, and produce a sense of entire dependence on God for pardoning mercy and renewing grace. 5. One other effect is to renew the heart and bring the sinner to repentance and cordial reconciliation to God. So it is plain that the effects of the outpouring of the Spirit are all of the most desirable and happy character. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *A revival of religion*.—1. There shall be a revival of religion in the future history of the Church that shall gather in the Jews. 2. This revival shall be characterised by the invariable marks of an outpouring of the Spirit, namely, a spirit of prayer and penitence. 3. Prayer is the barometer of the Church. When the spirit of supplication is low, there is but little of the Spirit of God, and as soon as the prayer-meeting begins to fill up with earnest suppliants, the Christian may hope for a blessing. 4. All true repentance arises from a sight of a dying Saviour, one who has died for us. Terror may produce remorse, only a sense of forgiven sin will ever produce true repentance. True repentance is after all only love weeping at the foot of the Cross, the soul sorrowing for sins that have been so freely forgiven. 5. True religion is a personal thing, and when it takes strong hold of the heart, will lead the soul apart to solitary wrestling with God, and acts of personal humbling before Him; confession of sins past, and resolutions of obedience for time to come. Grace needs solitary meditation in which to grow, just as much as the plant needs the repose and darkness of night. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The Spirit of grace and supplications*.—In studying prophecy, with a view to personal edification, two things should be borne in mind. Spiritual religion is ever and invariably the same, notwithstanding the different degrees of light which have marked different and successive dispensations. And, whatever promises of a purely spiritual nature are made to the Jewish nation may, and ought to be, generally and individually applied by those who constitute the true household of faith in all ages. The words of the text refer ultimately to the ingathering of the Jews, and their conversion to Christianity; but they receive an intermediate fulfilment in the case of every wandering sinner, Jew or Gentile, who is effectually brought home to God. They form a promise which applies to the believer's experience at all times; a promise to which he may advert, to his inexpressible consolation, until the language of prayer dies on his lips, and is superseded by songs of never-ceasing praise. By the "Spirit of grace and supplications" we are to understand that Divine Agent who helpeth the infirmities of the saints; whose influences are elsewhere predicted under the

metaphor of an *effusion* of grace ; and whose coming was to give its full effect to the sacrifice of the Redeemer, and to assign its prominent character to the Gospel dispensation. **I. OF PRAYER AS AN EXERCISE OF THE RENEWED SOUL.** Prayer is the language of the heart addressing itself to God, either in habitual spirituality of desire, in the way of silent ejaculation, or by means of words immediately suited to convey a sense of its wants to the throne of the heavenly mercy. It is founded in a strong conviction of internal poverty, weakness, and dependence, and is drawn forth by a humble persuasion that it reaches the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Spiritual prayer is an eager and determined effort of the soul to possess itself of the purchased blessings of salvation. Spiritual prayer is the fragrant incense which burns on the consecrated altar of the believer's heart. A renovating process must pass upon the moral system ere the spark of true devotion is lighted up. The man who is in willing league with sin and Satan cannot pray ; nor can he who is absorbed in the cares of this passing world ; nor he who addresses the Almighty under the impulse of sudden alarm, excessive grief, or occasional anxiety of mind. The exercise of spiritual prayer is habitual to him that engages in it. It may not always be the same delightful and refreshing employment. Too frequently, when the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. In every age and period of the Church the people of God have been a praying people. Then we have here a very close touchstone of self-examination. Are you in the habit of flying to a throne of grace for the purpose of obtaining relief to your burdened souls ? **II. THE COLLATERAL INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL PRAYER UPON THE EXPERIENCE.** 1. If the fervency of holy feeling in some measure subsides when the Christian withdraws from the presence-chamber of his Lord, still a hallowed glow remains in his breast, which tells him that the Spirit of grace and of supplications has not departed from him. It is the tendency of prayer, by exciting a continual apprehension of the nearness of God, to produce a feeling of sacred awe, a habit of solemnity, not indeed opposed to cheerfulness, but at variance with unhallowed levity. 2. Prayer keeps the mind alive to the important realities of an eternal state. It loosens that associating tie which enslaves the immortal spirit, and would confine its everlasting solitudes to the vanities of time and sense. The praying Christian bears away his spirituality from the throne of mercy, and blends it with the pursuits of his temporal vocation. 3. Spiritual prayer tends to purify and sweeten our intercourse with each other. By deepening the channel of humility, it causes peace, with all its attendant virtues, to flow on in a gentle and even course. Prayer is health to all who move in its genial atmosphere. It stifles the feelings of envy, hatred, and uncharitableness. **III. THE DIRECT RESULTS OF PRAYER AS AN APPOINTED MEANS OF GRACE.** Prayer, like the rod of Moses, is intended to strike the rock, that the waters may gush out. It is the sinner's application for blessings that cannot be denied or withholden. True it is that the people of God are a waiting as well as a praying people ; they are often kept in suspense, because there is a suitable time for prayer to be answered, and because spiritual blessings are never sent prematurely. It is likewise true that the prayer of faith itself is sometimes offered up ignorantly, or under erroneous impressions, and consequently fails in that particular point in which infinite wisdom saw it to be faulty. One piece of advice let me offer—Be not satisfied with the mere act of prayer, even as a spiritual exercise. Be thankful for enlargement of heart to prayer, and for a heavenly frame of mind, while you are prostrate before God. But still look beyond the effort itself. Watch the *result* of your petitions. Infer—1. The importance of the Holy Spirit's office in the economy of grace. 2. The necessity of attributing salvation wholly and solely to God. 3. The value of a prayerful disposition viewed as an earnest or pledge of salvation. He who is drawn to the Cross shall eventually be drawn to the throne. Continue to wait upon God, and you shall not be forsaken. (*W. Knight, M.A.*) *The Spirit of grace and of supplications* :—**I. THE PROMISE OF THE TEXT.** By the "house of David" is meant his descendants after the flesh, or the princes and rulers of the Jews ; and by the "inhabitants of Jerusalem," the rest of the people. On these the Lord promises to pour out His Spirit for their conviction, conversion, and salvation. 1. The Holy Spirit is here promised as a "Spirit of grace." He is the author and giver of all grace, of all goodness. The Holy Spirit is the author of all preventing grace. We never really forsake sin, we never truly turn to God by any strength or goodness of our own. It is God who begins, as well as perfects, the good work in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is the author of all renewing and sanctifying grace. Every

attempt to renew and sanctify our heart and conduct must, if we depend solely upon ourselves, be altogether in vain. The Spirit can renew us in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created us, and make us new creatures in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Holy Spirit is the author of all quickening and reviving grace. Our souls too often cleave unto the dust; our hearts become cold and dead. Where are we to find a remedy for this distressing state of things? In the same Fountain of living waters. The Spirit must send us those refreshing showers which He sends on God's inheritance when it is weary. And the Holy Spirit is the author of all comforting and supporting grace. And do we not often need comfort and support in such a world as this? 2. The Holy Spirit is here promised as a "Spirit of supplications." We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. This He does in various ways. (1) He shows us our need of supplications, by making us acquainted with our spiritual poverty and wants. Naturally, we are not at all conscious of our spiritual necessities. Though dead in trespasses and sins, we imagine we are living unto God. Though guilty of innumerable transgressions, we feel not our need of pardon. We think we are rich and have need of nothing. But the Spirit convinces us of our mistake. He leads us to feel our need of Divine mercy and grace, as well as our need of prayer and supplication for them. (2) He shows us the encouragement we have to use supplications. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. He shows God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. He thus encourages us to approach the throne of grace, and to use supplications for the blessings we need. (3) He further inclines us, or makes us willing to do this, by exciting in us an earnest desire to obtain such blessings. He removes that apathy and indifference which we naturally feel, and creates in us that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that ardent longing after spiritual benefits, which nothing can satisfy short of an actual participation in them. Prayer, fervent and persevering, becomes our constant employment. (4) And the Spirit assists us in this holy and delightful exercise. He removes that coldness, deadness, and formality we are so apt to feel. He gives us boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Jesus. II. THE EFFECTS ATTENDING THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. "Shall mourn," &c. The speaker here is evidently the Lord Jesus Christ. This application of the passage to Christ proves at once both His humanity and His Divinity. It proves His humanity, for He was pierced. It proves His Divinity; for who can communicate the Spirit but God alone? It is here pretold by the Lord, that when He would pour out His Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of grace and supplications, sinners would be led to look upon Him whom they had pierced, and to mourn bitterly for their sins, and especially their great sin in rejecting Him. This prophecy was fulfilled in part on the day of Pentecost. It will also be more fully accomplished whenever the conversion of the Jews, as a nation, shall take place. But this prophecy is also accomplished whenever sinners, Jews or Gentiles, are now turned to the Lord. Notice the nature of the sorrow which they feel on such an occasion. 1. It is a godly sorrow. Produced in their hearts under the operations of the Spirit of God. What are its effects? It humbles them in the dust before God; it softens their hard and unfeeling heart. It is also a bitter sorrow, for it is said, "They shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son." We can scarcely conceive of any sorrow of an earthly nature more bitter than that of a father when mourning for his only son. The feelings of some are quicker and more susceptible than those of others. But whatever differences there may be, all who are really taught by the Spirit are made so to see and feel the evil and bitterness of sin, as to learn in all sincerity to hate and forsake it. It is a secret sorrow. "The land shall mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart." And is not this always characteristic of deep and real sorrow? Then let us ask ourselves, What know we of the effects attending the fulfilment of the promise in the text? How important it is that we should have the Spirit! And how earnestly and perseveringly should we pray for His gracious and saving influences! (D. Rees.) They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.—*Gospel mourning a fruit of saving faith*:—Here we have a glorious privilege mentioned, namely, a view or manifestation of a crucified Redeemer; and the gracious exercise that is consequential to this distinguishing and glorious privilege. "They shall mourn for Him." From the words we observe that all whose privilege it is to get a supernatural discovery of a crucified Redeemer will mourn for Him, as wounded and pierced for their sins. I. THE GLORIOUS

PRIVILEGE. 1. Though Christ is not now visible to the bodily eyes, yet such a sight of Him as is necessary in order to the exercise of faith upon Him, and a real participation of the benefits of His purchase is attainable by persons in this world. 2. A spiritual and saving sight of Christ as crucified is what all should be concerned to obtain when they are attending upon the ordinances of the Gospel, upon the dispensation of the Word and sacraments. 3. Such a sight of Christ as is necessary in order to the exercise of faith and repentance is an effect of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a sinner. 4. A spiritual manifestation of Christ is in a special manner necessary on a day of fasting and humiliation. 5. A saving manifestation of Christ is a rare and distinguishing privilege. 6. A saving manifestation is ever accompanied with godly sorrow for sin. **II. THE GRACIOUS EXERCISE.** 1. Godly sorrow for sin supposes an inward and thorough change of heart, and mind, and nature. 2. It is real sorrow. 3. Such a sorrow as flows from a particular conviction of sin. 4. It is great sorrow. 5. It is evangelical sorrow. Application—(1) Both faith and repentance are fruits of the Spirit. (2) True repentance is a fruit of saving faith. (3) True faith is rare. (4) Formality in religion easily explained. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *True repentance* :—Repentance is the first duty of a sinner under a dispensation of mercy; prepares for a right reception of Christ as a Saviour; and is a part of that new and holy course of life which every true Christian leads. It accompanies every other exercise of piety, and terminates only when we arrive at heaven. The text contains a prediction of the repentance and conversion of the Jewish nation. In part fulfilled at Pentecost, in part to be yet fulfilled. **I. THE SOURCE FROM WHICH TRUE REPENTANCE FLOWS.** If true repentance imply an entire change of heart, comprehending a genuine sorrow for sin as committed against God, a hearty forsaking of it, and an acceptance of God's mercy as revealed in Jesus Christ, then it is obvious that it must spring from the influences of Divine grace. Accordingly the source of it is thus spoken of, "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." The allusion is to the pouring out of water, which is the usual emblem for the bestowing of the influences of the Holy Ghost. Refreshing as water to the thirsty, is the grace of the Holy Spirit to the Church of God. The peculiar effect of the Spirit of God in His operations on the heart, is described in the titles here given to the Holy Ghost—"the Spirit of grace and supplications,"—that is, the Spirit by whose influence grace is implanted in the mind, and supplications are addressed to the throne of mercy. The Holy Ghost is promised as the Spirit of grace, because all grace and holiness proceed from Him. As the "Spirit of supplications," because one of the earliest effects of Divine influences is prayer. We pray in the Holy Ghost. It is by His sacred instruction that we discover our ignorance, poverty, defilement, misery, and danger. It is by His teaching we receive with faith the truths and promises of the Gospel. The Spirit produces a return to God, and a thorough conversion of heart and life. **II. THE CHIEF MEANS BY WHICH REPENTANCE IS PRODUCED.** "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." Repentance, generally speaking, springs from a view of a crucified Saviour. The view of the crucified Redeemer which is spoken of in the text, cannot be understood as a bodily sight by the eye of sense. It is a spiritual and rational contemplation of Him by the eye of penitence and faith. Surely there is no object which in itself should so powerfully attract our notice. If the very circumstances of the spectacle should fix our attention, still more should we be moved when we reflect on the Divine dignity of the sufferer. But this is not all. You and I have had a share in this death. God had "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." But what if all this woe and suffering should be for our salvation! Should not this lead us to regard the scene with still more intense earnestness? **III. THE EFFECTS OF THE SPIRIT OF GRACE THUS LEADING THE SINNER TO LOOK BY FAITH TO HIM WHOM HE HAS PIERCED.** The returning Jews, when they shall view by faith their crucified Messiah, will mourn for their national sins in piercing Him, and for all their personal transgressions. See verses 11-14. The spiritual import of this prediction is accomplished in every true penitent. Mourning for sin will arise from that view of its malignity and hatefulness which the Cross of Christ displays. The genuine sorrow of a penitent flows from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. The law convinces of sin, but the Cross teaches us to abhor it. 1. Apply to the sincere Christian—that he may learn the important place which true penitence occupies in a Christian

life: the connection of repentance with the hopes and privileges of the Gospel: and that the exercise of evangelical repentance is connected with a holy and circumspect conduct. 2. To the ungodly and impenitent. If any subject can show them their obligation to repent, and affect their hearts with a desire to do so, it is the one we have been reviewing. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *Looking to the pierced One*:—Not only an external grace and favour was promised to the Jews, but an internal light of faith, the author of which is the Spirit; for He it is who illuminates our minds to see the goodness of God, and it is He also who turns our hearts. As Zechariah declares that the Jews would at length “look to” God, it follows that the spirit of repentance and the light of faith are promised to them, so that they may know God as the author of their salvation, and feel so assured that they are already saved, as in future to devote themselves entirely to Him. “Whom they have pierced.” Here also the prophet indirectly reproves the Jews for their great obstinacy, for God had restored them, and they had been as untameable as wild beasts: for this piercing is to be taken metaphorically for continual provocation, as though he had said that the Jews in their perverseness were prepared as it were for war, that they goaded and pierced God by their wickedness as by the weapons of their rebellion. As then they had been such, he says now that such a change would be wrought by God that they would become quite different, for they would learn to “look to Him whom” they had previously pierced. John says that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, when His side was pierced with a spear (*John xix. 37*). And this is most true; for it was necessary that the visible symbol should be exhibited in the person of Christ, in order that the Jews might know that He was the God who had spoken by the prophets. The Jews then had crucified their God when they grieved His Spirit; but Christ also was, as to His flesh, pierced by them. And this is what John meant—that God by that visible symbol made it evident that He had not only been formerly provoked in a disgraceful manner by the Jews, but that at length, in the person of His only-begotten Son, this great sin was added to their disgraceful impiety, that they pierced even the side of Christ. (*John Calvin.*) *Looking to Christ as pierced, and mourning for Him*:—May we not reckon the passage in which our text occurs, as one of those of which the prophets themselves, by whom they were uttered, did not at first understand the full import? How should we be affected by the contemplation of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus? 1. We should mourn to think of what He had to endure. A tale of woe may touch our hearts with sadness although we may have no personal concern with the individual of whom it is told. If we saw an innocent man led forth to execution, our hearts would be greatly moved. We wonder not then that when Jesus was delivered up to the will of His enemies, when one so holy, so meek, so beneficent, was led forth to be crucified, the spectacle could not be seen unmoved. 2. We should mourn to think of the wickedness of the men by whom He was so treated. Were the men of that generation which lived when Jesus was crucified, wicked above all others before them, or after them? No! Though temptation and opportunity combined to involve them in a crime, probably the greatest ever perpetrated on earth, they afford but a specimen of that depravity, it may be less fully developed, which we all have inherited. 3. We should mourn for our own sins, as we see in what was inflicted on our Surety the exceeding sinfulness and deep demerit of sin. How hateful must sin have been in the sight of a holy God, when for it He hid His face from His Son, and gave Him up to the pains of an accursed death! Notice some of the happy effects of penitent grief. (1) To yield to it may give even present relief to the troubled mind. (2) This sorrow may have a beneficial influence on all our tempers and affections. (3) This sorrow may give evidence of our interest in the promises of pardon and of peace with God. Sorrow for sin cannot be accepted as a price for forgiveness; yet we may find in the sense of it some proof that the change is begun which must be wrought by the Spirit of Christ in all to whom He applies the redemption which is through His blood. (*James Henderson, D.D.*) *Sinners mourning for their pierced Lord*:—What is true of a converted Jew, is true also of a converted Gentile. I. THE CHARACTER OF OODLY SORROW. It is like a parent's sorrow for the death of a child. This is a real, not a pretended sorrow. If we look into our hearts many of us will see that our sorrow for sin is all pretence. This is a deep, not a superficial or slight sorrow. We may really mourn for a friend, and yet mourn for him very little. Not so when our children die. Our grief then is pungent and bitter. It is not only in the heart, but down very low in it. It is a secret sorrow. Most

of us, when our hearts are full, wish to be alone. Deep emotions of any kind send us to our chambers. II. ONE OF THE CAUSES THAT EXCITE GODLY SORROW. "Look on Me whom they have pierced." Who is the speaker here? God Himself, but God in Christ. What is meant by "looking" on Him? Outward bodily actions are made use of to describe inward operations, the actings of the mind. These penitents look on Him as "pierced." Some say the reason why the Jews are not converted is that we do not sufficiently exhibit the Lord Jesus to them in His exaltation and glory. Others say if we want to prize the Lord Jesus more, we must think of Him more as enthroned in heaven. We must not suffer men to mislead us. If we want life for our perishing souls, if we wish to have our hard hearts broken to pieces, it is on His Cross, not on His throne, that we must contemplate our Lord. And these contrite sinners look on Jesus as pierced by them. "The chastisement of our peace was on Him," so we wounded Him. III. HOW IS IT THAT GODLY SORROW ARISES FROM THIS SOURCE? Why does looking on the crucified Lord make the believer mourn? How, I would ask, can it be otherwise, as we think of our dying Lord, dying for us? Learn the high place that we ought to give sorrow for sin among the Christian graces. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) I. THE OBJECT OR SPECTACLE PROFOUNDED. Certain it is that Christ is here meant. 1. Specify and particularise the person of Christ, by the kind and most peculiar circumstances of His death. Not a natural but a violent death. The Psalmist says, "They pierced my hands and my feet," which is only proper to the death of the Cross. The prophet intimates that his heart was pierced, and this was peculiar to Christ. 2. Sever Christ from the rest of His doings and sufferings, to see what that is which we specially are to look to—Christ pierced. The perfection of our knowledge in or touching Christ, is the knowledge of Christ pierced. Know this, you know all. In the object, two things offer themselves. (1) The passion, or suffering itself. Consider the degree; for transfixerunt is a word of gradation; expressing the piercing, not of whips and scourges, or of nails and thorns, but of the spear-point, which went through the very heart itself. May a soul be pierced? It is not a spear-head of iron that entereth the soul, but a metal of another temper, the dint whereof no less goeth and woundeth the soul in proportion than those do the body. Soul-piercing includes sorrow and reproach. II. THE PERSONS. When one is found slain, it is usual to inquire by whom he came by his death. We incline to lay the sin of Christ's death on the soldiers, the executioners; on Pilate the judge; on the people who urged Pilate; or on the elders of the Jews who animated the people. The prophet here says that they who are willed to "look upon Him," are they who "pierced Him." In every case of condemnation to death, sin, and sin only is the murderer. It was not Christ's own sin that He died for. It must have been for the sin of others that Christ Jesus was pierced. God laid on Him the "transgressions of us all." It was the sin of our polluted hands that pierced His hands; the swiftness of our feet to do evil that nailed His feet; the wicked devices of our heads that goled His head; and the wretched desires of our hearts that pierced His heart. If we feel that we were the cause of this His piercing, we ought to have remorse, to be pierced with it. III. THE ACT OR DUTY ENJOINED. To look upon Him. A request most natural and reasonable. To this look Christ invites us. "Upon Me." Our own profit inviteth us. Our danger may move us to look. In the act itself are three things. 1. That we do it with attention. 2. That we do it oft, again and again; with iteration. 3. That we cause our nature to do it, as it were, by virtue of an injunction. In the original it is a commanding injunction. Look upon Him, and be pierced. Look upon Him, and pierce that in thee that was the cause of Christ's piercing, sin and the lusts thereof. As it was sin that gave Christ these wounds, so it was love to us that made Him receive them, being otherwise liable enough to have avoided them all. So that He was pierced with love, no less than with grief. And it was that wound of love made Him so constantly endure all the other. Which sight ought to pierce us with love too, no less than before it did with sorrow. We should join looking with believing. And believing, what is there that the eye of our hope shall not look for from Him? What would He not do for us, that for us would suffer all this? Our expectation may be reduced to these two things,—the deliverance from the evil of our present misery; and the restoring to the good of our primitive felicity. . . . Shall we always receive grace, even streams of grace, issuing from Him that is pierced, and shall there not from us issue something back again, that He may look for and receive from us, that from Him have and do daily receive so many good things? No doubt there shall;

if love which pierced Him, have pierced us aright. (*Bishop Launcelot Andrewes.*) *Looking to Christ crucified*:—The words have reference, in their primary sense, to the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; and received their first fulfilment on the day of Pentecost. But the text invites us also to look on Him who was pierced for us, and mourn. We are to look long and earnestly on Him whom we have pierced, that by long looking we may learn to mourn, and in mourning much may love much, and loving much, may have much forgiven. How shall we look on Him whom we have pierced? Not with our fleshly eyes, but with the eye of faith. We are to look to Him, in order to see that the "Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It was our polluted hands that pierced His hands; the swiftness of our feet to do evil that nailed His feet; the wicked devices of our hearts that pierced His heart. Yet we must not look wholly to His bodily sufferings, the wounds we have given Him have gone deeper, even to His soul, yea, pierced Him through and through with many sorrows. The pangs which He suffered on His spiritual Cross were infinitely more than those He suffered on the natural. Great as were His bodily sufferings, from the prospect of them He never shrank. He ever views and speaks calmly of them. Not so does He announce His spiritual Cross, it was the internal Cross which caused His bitterest passion. Shall we not then look on Him, and "remember and be confounded, and never open our mouths any more, because of our shame," as we look upward to that Cross to which our sins have nailed Him? He was lifted up on that Cross that all from the ends of the world might look unto Him and be saved. It is by looking on Him whom we have pierced that we alone can learn somewhat of the deadly bitterness of our sins, which might not be forgiven, but by that awful blood-shedding. It is at the foot of the Cross alone that the mystery of the Cross is learnt, and a true estimate of our sins gained. (*R. A. Suckling, M.A.*) *Jesus' pierced side*:—Out of the pierced heart of Jesus proceeds a stream of tears, of grace, and of prayer. For us, also, as we look at the pierced side of the Saviour, there opens—I. A FLOOD OF TEARS. The prophet foretells the time when Israel at the sight of the Man of Sorrows shall break forth into deep lamentation, when the water which flows from the pierced side of the Saviour shall be turned into a stream of tears, flowing from the hearts of the children of Israel. It is the simplest but certainly also the most painful truth, that your sins and mine have brought Jesus to the Cross. Therefore a glance at Him must become a crystal glass which reflects our sins more distinctly, and which represents us in our sins blacker than the whole law from Sinai, with its thunder and lightning, its curse and judgment, can do. II. A STREAM OF GRACE. In ancient Athens, mercy was represented with eyes streaming with tears, holding in her hand a torn and bleeding heart. By God's grace we have free access to the Father. We have a Saviour who opens the Father's heart for us, and we need no other Mediator. III. A FOUNT OF PRAYER. In these prophetic words the Lord declares that He will pour out the Spirit of prayer and of grace. The stream of grace from the wounds of the Saviour, which He causes to be poured over us, is to become a fount of prayer, flowing from our heart to God's heart. There has scarcely ever been a time in which the streams of Divine grace were so abundantly poured forth in the preached Word, as well as in works of mercy, and in zeal for the Lord's house, as in our days. But how long will it last, if the Spirit of supplication does not join the spirit of grace? And that is wanting. Ours is a prayerless time. (*A. Schröter.*) *Christ pierced by us* (to children):—There can be no doubt about the reference of these words. St. John quotes them in his Gospel, and refers them to Christ. "They" are the Jews, and more particularly the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And the prophet informs us that a time is coming when the people of Jerusalem shall look upon Jesus, and bitterly repent of having refused to accept Him as their Messiah and their King. 1. The Jews were, and still are, God's people, though now they are God's people in disgrace. He chose them out of all the nations of the earth, and drew them close to Himself, and gave them the Scriptures, and the temple, and the sacrifices, and thus prepared them for the coming of the Messiah, or Christ, who was promised in the prophets. But when the Messiah did come they rejected Him. Their great and terrible crime brought down God's wrath upon them. About forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus the Romans came and laid siege to Jerusalem, killed many Jews, and burnt the beautiful temple. We are expressly told that this destruction of Jerusalem was a punishment for the murder of Christ. From that time the Jews have been driven out of their own land, and scattered abroad amongst the nations of the

earth. There are Jews almost everywhere. But the Bible says that one day they will be gathered together into their own land again. But will they be Christians when they return? I think not. They will still reject the Lord Jesus Christ. But I believe that, when assaulted by enemies, the Lord Jesus Christ will come down from Heaven, and appear for the rescue of His people, to deliver them. At that moment they shall look on "Him whom they pierced," and the effect of their looking will be that they will mourn over their sin, and repent of it, and become true followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then they will become the most successful preachers of the Gospel that the world has ever seen. 2. Now turn to ourselves. It is possible to look on Jesus, who was pierced, and to say, "Well, He was pierced, and I am glad of it, for He deserved His fate. He pretended to be what He was not." That is what the Jews nowadays think, and what many of them do not hesitate to say. And many of us are inclined to say, "I had nothing to do with the piercing of Jesus. I was not there at the time. It was a fearful deed, and I am sorry for the sufferings of Jesus, but I really do not think it true in any sense that I pierced Him!" Let us pause a moment, and think. The Lord Jesus, who was the Son of God and Son of Man, bore upon the cross the whole dark load of human sin. All the sins of all mankind were gathered, as it were, into one vast horrible mass, and laid upon Him, the Sin-bearer; and He could not get rid of it, or "put it away" except by dying. By dying on the cross He took it away from us, and shook it off Himself. Now your sin and mine were in that load, and because our sin formed part of the burden which was laid upon Christ we *had* something to do with His death. We helped to pierce Him. Our sin made it necessary that Christ should die, and therefore you and I had something to do really with "piercing" Christ, and nailing Him to His cross. But unless we have the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, we shall never think rightly or feel rightly in this matter. It was when "the Spirit of grace and supplication" was poured out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem that they looked on Him whom they pierced, and repented of their sin. What a deep feeling we have when a thing is brought home to ourselves, and we are made to feel that we did it. If we feel that we pierced Christ two things will happen. (1) We shall have a horror of sin. (2) We shall come to understand the wonderful love of God. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus, the Son of God, gave up His life for us; He died upon the cross for us; for there was no other way of saving us from our sins. Surely, if we have not got hearts of stone, we shall feel thankful, most thankful, for what He has done, and love Him because He first loved us. (*Gordon Calthrop, M.A.*)

Looking to Jesus in penitential sorrow:—The legend of Camillo, the artist who sold his soul to the devil in order to gain power to paint to the life whatever subject he chose, is full of suggestion. After a long life of sin, Camillo painted a picture of the Christ, the Man of Sorrows. The tender, searching eyes were such a source of annoyance to him and to his sinful friends that he veiled the picture and went to a priest with his story. Following the priest's advice, he unveiled the picture and let the eyes of the Christ search his soul. Then he went out and made such reparation as he was able to the lives he had wronged. But he had no peace. The priest sent him back to the unveiled Christ. Again he went out, and ordered a dealer to buy up and destroy every inch of canvas he had painted that would suggest evil thoughts. Still he had no peace. Again and yet again he was led to realise and to renounce and to undo sin after sin. But the peace he longed for was withheld. At length, as he knelt in prayer before the Christ, came the realisation that he had sinned, not only against his fellow-men, but against Christ, and he yielded his life to Him. Then as the eyes of Christ looked into the sorrow and anguish of his soul, there came also joy and peace.

Looking at Him who was pierced:—When the late Dr. Andrew Bonar was sitting in his study one day, a man and woman entered, to see him about joining the church. When they had told their errand the doctor said to them, "When any one comes to me and wishes to join the church, I generally ask them a few questions. Now, first, how did you come to think of joining the church?" "Ah!" said the woman, "it was all through our little son. One night I was telling him about the Jews killing my Lord Jesus, and how they nailed Him to the cross on Calvary, and, looking up into my face, he asked, 'Mother, was it your sins that nailed Him to the cross?' Ah, sir, I could not answer him. There was a big lump in my throat; and when he saw that I did not reply he turned to his father and said, 'Father, was it your sins that nailed Jesus to

the cross ? ' I stole a look at my husband, and I saw a tear glisten in his eye—he could not answer either. Then the little boy clasped his hands and said, ' O Lord Jesus, it must have been my sins which nailed Thee to the cross.' From that time, sir, he has been a changed boy, and it was that which made us think of joining the church. (*W. Thompson.*) *Looking at Christ*:—Passing through a graveyard with her parents, a little girl drew them after her to look at a beautiful stone figure of the Christ, with a face full of suffering and yet of tenderest pity, leaning upon a massive marble cross. As they paused to look she held her head down and said in a low voice, "I have done so many wrong things, I can hardly lift up my eyes to look at Him." It is just those who have done "so many wrong things" that have need to lift up their eyes and look at Him. (*Quiver.*) *Penitential sorrow*:—I. THE SUBJECTS. Jews, not Gentiles. The Jewish people had often been reduced to this state of sorrow. When in Babylonian exile, they wept when they remembered "Zion." II. THE CAUSE of this penitential sorrow. "I will pour." The prophet Joel (chap. ii. 28) refers to this outpouring of Divine influence. III. THE OCCASION of this penitential sorrow. A believing sight of Christ produces this penitential sorrow. IV. THE POIGNANCY of this penitential sorrow. "And they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." "There are few states of deeper and acuter sorrow than this—that which is felt by affectionate parents when bereft of those objects of their fondest affections. As to the poignancy of this grief, it is further said, "In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon," &c. Perhaps the greatest sorrow ever known amongst the Jews was the sorrow in the valley of Megiddon, occasioned by the death of King Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 24). Jeremiah composed a funeral dirge on the occasion; and other odes and lamentations were composed, and were sung by males and females. But true penitential sorrow is far more poignant than that occasioned by the death of an only son or a noble king. It is tinged with moral remorse. V. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS POIGNANT SORROW. "The land shall mourn," &c. All the families of the land shall mourn, and mourn "apart." Deep sorrow craves loneliness. (*Homilist.*) *True mourning for Christ*:—Though this prophecy is fulfilling there is not complete fulfilment. There was, among the Jews, no such general grief as Zechariah pictures. They showed no signs of heart-broken sorrow. We must seek further for the mourners looking on the pierced One. There is no doubt where they are to be found. Christians have succeeded to the place, and occupy more than the place, of the Jews; it is ourselves who are to be "looking upon Him whom we have pierced." Some great divines hold that Zechariah's words describe the special mourning of Lent and Holy Week and Good Friday. In any case we have a picture of the effect which a real spiritual view of the cross must produce upon faithful Christians, and one which supplies us with a test of our Good Friday reality and sincerity. It is a hard test, but we must not flinch from it. It is of God's own proposing; nay, rather, it occurs in the announcement of His most gracious purpose. Compare our recollections of earthly bereavements with our memory of Christ's death. Can we say that we feel for Christ at all as we feel at the death of husband or wife, father or mother? Yet God expects us to feel very deeply. We know that Christ's passion ought to excite in us the deepest imaginable sorrow. As there was never sorrow like unto His sorrow; as there was never death like unto His death; as there was never love like unto His love, so we cannot wonder if we are expected to feel a grief for Him as great as that which springs from the severest trial of our human affections. Yet it may safely be said that, generally, it is not so. We fall far short of that which is to be the state of the citizens of the true city of David, and of the inhabitants of Christian Jerusalem. (*M. H. Ricketts.*) *England's rejection of Christ*:—Let me set in order before you the greater sin that we have committed in rejecting Jesus than did the Jews. I. WE HAVE REJECTED JESUS AS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH. What is the Church? It is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The Church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head, to pour into it continually the glory of His own power and the excellency of His own beauty and the perfectness of His own holiness. It is a Church embodied, that is the mystery, and not a Church disembodied. A Church disembodied is only a fraction of the mystery of godliness; the mystery of godliness is God manifest in the flesh. And the Church was intended to reveal the whole excellency and power of Jesus

seated on the throne of God. What were the Church's gifts? The word of wisdom, to search all the deep things of God. The word of knowledge, to tell all that was passing in all parts of His dominions; the gift of faith, never to doubt that whatever she desired she would receive. The gift of healing, to go forth and show the power of Jesus over all flesh, to forgive sin in the soul, and to heal disease in the body. The power of miracles, to order in the things of creation, to get all disorder into order, and to command the various powers of nature. To this the Church was called; deny it who dare! This is the dignity of the Church, but we reject it. The Jews rejected a man of flesh,—we have rejected a Man in the power of the Spirit. II. JESUS HAS BEEN REJECTED AS THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. This is a title which He maketh great account of. It is written on His raiment, and on His thigh. But it has been denied; it is denied round the whole world. In the papacy the pope has taken the supremacy. In the Greek Church it is denied; the Czar is the head of the Church. In Britain it is denied. Who is King of kings?—Their majesties the people. "All power is from the people." That is the baser denial—the basest of all denial. Power is no longer held as from Jesus, nor is it any longer held to be responsible to Him. III. ANOTHER GREAT SIN HAS BEEN THE REJECTION OF JESUS AS THE OWNER OF ALL: as the merchantman, as the householder, the head of the house, whose is all the goods and chattels, and all the furniture, and all the provision, and all the treasure of the house. There is not one man in a hundred to whom the idea has once occurred, everything in his house is Christ's; everything in the banker's hands is Christ's; everything in the funds is Christ's. There is not aught that hath not the stamp of His name. IV. WE HAVE REJECTED CHRIST AS THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND. Who was first the preacher of good tidings to the poor? Who blessed and honoured the estate of poverty? Who said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? We have forgotten to preach Him as the Bringer of glad tidings to the poor. We have rejected Him who was the Redeemer of poverty,—who is its friend; and we have chosen for Him demagogues who are not worthy to be trusted with the lowest of the goods of creation. (*Edward Irving, A.M.*) *Sinners repenting*:—Consider the language of the prophet as denoting a state of mind which in its great lineaments is becoming to all men in all ages, and which must be felt in order to secure the enjoyment of spiritual blessing. I. THE SORROW HERE EMBODIED IS TO BE REGARDED IN ITS CAUSE. Here sorrow is traced to one cause. It is sorrow on account of sin. The sense of its being, its guilt and consequence, is pungently pressed upon the consciences. Observe—1. The particular order of the sin. Although, in their relationship to the death of the Lord Jesus, the Jews were of course peculiar, there is an important sense in which all men must be regarded as participating in the guilt of "piercing Him." His death was an atoning sacrifice; the sins of men being the cause of what He endured, in order to expiate wrath and to secure salvation. "He is the propitiation for our sins," and thus it is that every sinner becomes an accomplice in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. Set forth as Christ has been to men in the institutes and by the ministry of the Gospel, each thought and each deed of sin, cherished and loved, has been but striking at Christ another and another blow—rearing the Cross again, fastening the nails again. 2. This being the precise nature of the sin, we must notice the influence by which the guilt of it is recognised and felt. The sinner admits no guilt; his heart is a heart of stone. The consciousness of guilt is ascribed directly to Divine influence, the influence of the Holy Spirit. II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS SORROW. The conviction of sin, arising from the influence of the Spirit of grace, leads men to that mourning which constitutes the theme of these verses. That mourning of sorrow will be found suggested to us in its three great characteristics of intensity, solitude, and prayerfulness. III. THE RESULTS. One is pardon: connected with pardon is sanctification. And the third result of this sorrow for sin is joy: nothing can compare with the joy arising from the hope of pardon for sin. (*James Parsons.*)

Ver. 12. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*—*Personal and family fasting*:—On the pouring out of the Spirit the land is to mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart. The duties of fasting consist of—I. AN EXTERNAL AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL PART. 1. A proper time must be set apart for these duties. And this is to be regulated by Christian prudence, as best suits the circumstance of the person or family. As to the quantity of time to be spent

in personal or family fasting and humiliation, the duty, I judge, is to regulate it, and not it to regulate the duty. None need be solicitous as to what quantity of time, more or less, they spend in these exercises, so that the work of the time be done. 2. A proper place is to be chosen where the person or family may perform the duty without disturbance from others (see Matt. vi. 18). 3. Abstinence is included in the nature of the thing; abstinence from meat and drink, and all bodily pleasures whatsoever, as well as ceasing from worldly business. The rule for abstinence from meat and drink cannot be the same for all. These, however, are but the outward shell of these duties. II. THE INTERNAL AND SPIRITUAL PART. 1. Serious meditation and consideration of our ways. Such times are to be set apart from conversing with the world, that we may the more solemnly commune with our own hearts as to the state of matters between God and us. In them we are diligently to review our past life. 2. Deep humiliation of soul before the Lord; the which was signified by the sackcloth and ashes used, under the law, on such occasions. 3. Free and open confession of sin before God, without reserve. 4. The exercise of repentance in turning from sin unto God, both in heart and life, the native result of deep humiliation and sincere confession. The true way to deal with a hard heart is to believe the Gospel. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and therefore impossible to reach true humiliation, right confession, and sincere repentance, which are very pleasing to Him. 5. Solemn covenanting with God, entering into or renewing covenant with Him in express words. 6. Extraordinary prayer, in importunate addresses and petitions unto our covenanted God, for that which is the particular occasion of our fast. Now consider personal fasting and humiliation in particular. III. THE DIVINE WARRANT FOR IT. 1. God requires it in His Word, and that both directly and indirectly. 2. It is promised that the saints shall perform this duty. 3. It is recommended unto us by the practice of the saints mentioned in Scripture. 4. The duty of personal fasting and humiliation may be thus evinced. (1) There is nothing in the nature of religious fasting and humiliation that of itself is public, or necessarily requiring a plurality of persons to join therein. The preaching of the Word and celebration of the sacraments do, in their own nature, require society, and therefore are not to be used by a single person alone in his closet. But one may keep a fast alone. (2) Extraordinary duties are called for on extraordinary emergents and occasions. If, then, a church or congregation is called to fasting and humiliation on such occasions, is not a particular person called to the same, or such occasions in his cave? (3) Extraordinary duties to be performed by a whole nation, church, or congregation cannot soon be overtaken, because all bodies are slow in their operations. What should particular persons do in such cases? Should they not keep personal and family fasts? Now consider a providential call to personal fasting and humiliation. 1. When there is any special evil actually lying upon us, the Church, or our neighbour, in whom we have a special concern; whether it be a sinful or a penal evil. And when the tokens of God's high displeasure are gone out in afflicting providences, it is time for us to roll ourselves in the dust, and so to accommodate our spirit and way to the dispensation, humbling ourselves before Him with fasting. 2. When there is any special stroke threatening or impending. 3. When there is some special mercy or favour to be desired of the Lord. Take a variety of these particular cases—(1) When through a long track of sinning and careless walking, the case of one's soul is left quite in disorder and confusion. (2) When one is under convictions, entertaining some thoughts to reform. (3) When the conscience is defiled with the guilt of some atrocious sin. (4) When one would fain get over a snare he is often caught in, and have victory over a lust that hath often mastered him. (5) When one is under a dead desertion. (6) When one is under a felt and smarting desertion. (7) When one is pressed with some outward affliction, whether in his body, relations, name, substance, or otherwise. (8) When, by the aspect of providence, one is threatened with some such affliction. (9) When one would have light and direction in some matter of special weight. (10) When duty being cleared in a matter of special weight, it comes to the setting to. (11) When one, having some unordinary difficulty to encounter, is in hazard of being ensnared either into sin or danger. (12) When one hath in view some solemn approach unto God; in which case a special preparation is requisite. . . . Now consider some directions anent personal fasting and humiliation. 1. Make choice of a fit time and place. 2. Make some preparation for it the night before. 3. Rise early in the morning, even sooner than ordinary. 4. Let holy thoughts

at once have access to your soul. 5. Let your ordinary duties of prayer and reading of the Word be first performed; for extraordinary duties are not to jostle out the ordinary. 6. Begin with a solemn review of your sins—the sins of your nature, of your childhood, of your youth, of your middle age. . . . To recommend the practice of these duties to persons and families, these five things are offered in favour thereof; namely, that the practice of them is a proper means—1. To bring strangers to religion acquainted with it. 2. To recover backsliders. 3. To prevent relapses. 4. To prepare for a time of trial. 5. To get matters clear for eternity. (*T. Boston.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VER. 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened, &c.—The Fountain of Life*:—To what can the prophet refer but the exclamation of John, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” I. EXPLAIN THE PROMISE. 1. The fountain. This image holds forth the Redeemer. In distinction from creatures, which are “cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” He may well call Himself the “Fountain of living waters.” He shall possess a plenitude Himself. The fulness of the Christian is derived and limited: it is the fulness of a vessel. The vessel is supplied from the fulness of a fountain. This fountain is the Lord Jesus. His fulness is original and boundless. It is the fulness of a spring. 2. The fountain was to be opened. A fountain sealed would be useless; it would only provoke desire. What would the Saviour’s excellencies and benefits be to us if unattainable and inaccessible? The fountain was actually opened in His sufferings. The apostles laid it open doctrinally, in their preaching and in their epistles. 3. This fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness. There had been provisions for ceremonial pollution, under the Mosaic economy. The brazen sea. Ten lavers. See also the Pool of Siloam. Sin is uncleanness. Its very nature is contamination. Sin is a pollution the most deep and diffusive. The very conscience is defiled. It is the “abominable thing.” But there is a fountain that washes out even the stains of the soul,—and of sin. And it was opened for this very purpose. II. TO IMPROVE THE TRUTH CONTAINED IN THE PROMISE. Five classes have a relation to the truth before us. 1. The ignorant. Such as cry, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” 2. The presumptuous. Antinomian perversion is worse than mere ignorance. 3. The self-righteous, who hope to cleanse themselves in some other way. 4. The fearful. For it is no easy thing to satisfy the conscience of awakened sinners. 5. Those who by faith have applied to the Saviour, and who know by experience that there is indeed a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. (*William Jay.*) *The fountain for sin*:—I. WHAT THEY NEEDED. Two things: deliverance from guilt and condemnation, and deliverance from sin’s impurity. These are the very blessings for which our text represents provision has been made. The fountain is opened “for sin and for uncleanness.” The former meaning “guilt,” the latter “pollution.” The whole context prohibits our regarding the language as referring to anything ceremonial. The guilt, contracted, and requiring remission, is the guilt of “piercing,” that is, of putting to death the true, divinely promised Messiah, and the “uncleanness” points to those unholy and hellish principles and dispositions in the soul from which the guilt originated, by which the fearful act was prompted. The guilt was deep. The depth of moral debasement and violence was fearful from which they who had been guilty of it required to be purified. II. HOW THESE BLESSINGS ARE PROVIDED FOR THEM. 1. What is the fountain? It is a twofold figure, comprehending the grace of Christ’s Spirit as well as the virtue of Christ’s blood, cleansing as well as forgiveness. These blessings are always found in union. Christ died that sinners might be both pardoned and purified; and the two designs were emblematically indicated by the mingling of the blood and water that flowed from His pierced heart. The fountain means at once the blood of Christ’s atonement and the grace of Christ’s Spirit; the one required for forgiveness, and the other for regeneration and cleansing: the two, however, being inseparable; the faith which interests in the pardoning virtue of the blood, being the product of the grace of the Spirit,

and the grace of the Spirit effecting the renewal and sanctification of the soul by means of the doctrine which makes known the pardoning virtue of the blood : it being the same faith, under the agency of the same Spirit, which at once justifies and sanctifies. And it is thus that the blood is represented as the means of purifying as well as of procuring pardon. 2. When was this fountain opened ? When Christ died ; when His blood was shed on the cross, for the remission of sins ; when the blood and the water flowed in union from His pierced side. While strictly and properly, the fountain was opened then,—it might be said to have been opened from the time when it came first to be needed,—from the time when man sinned. It was then opened by anticipation. The first promise opened it. The moment man became a sinner he needed the two blessings of pardon and sanctification. 3. How is it here said to be opened “in that day” ? The answer is, that although there have now and then, since the judgments of God overtook the Jewish people for their unbelief, been instances of Jews brought to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour, and to obtain salvation by faith in Him ; yet to the large mass of that dispersed, and for the time divinely abandoned people, the fountain has not been open. It has been sealed ; sealed by themselves, and for their unbelief judicially sealed by God. When the time of mercy arrives the fountain shall, in God’s providence and by God’s grace, be opened for their cleansing from their guilt and their pollution. It is said of them, “They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn.” 4. For what purpose ? Two—the washing away of guilt, and the washing away of moral defilement. Both these purposes were in the mind of God, as to be alike effected by the mediation of the Son. That the guilt of sin might be fully taken away, and thus the sinner escape its punishment, atonement was necessary. 5. For what persons ? Not simply for the restored of Israel,—but for the “house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The idea thus conveyed is that of all ranks, from the royal occupants of the palace to the tenants of the meanest dwelling. All shall be stricken through with the conviction and alarm ; all shall feel the bitterness of contrition ; all shall mourn. And for all, in like manner, the fountain shall be opened. All shall need it. All shall have access to it. All shall avail themselves of it. (*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The best fountain.*—It is a beautiful thing to see a fountain playing. Fountain in the text is the best fountain. What is meant by this fountain ? It means the blood which Jesus shed when He hung upon the cross. It is in consequence of what Jesus then suffered—the blood He shed, and the death He died—that God pardons the sins of men, and saves their souls. It is the best fountain—1. Because it is easy to get at. No long journey is needed. You may find it everywhere. 2. It never changes. Other fountains are sometimes in full play, and sometimes very feeble. Illustrate by the Pool of Bethesda. This is always the same. 3. Because of its wonderful powers. Some fountains cure diseases and restore health. This is designed for the souls of men. This has a wonderful cleansing power, and a wonderful healing power, and a wonderful preserving power against the worms of pride and selfishness that may imperil our souls, as they do the good ships ; a wonderful beautifying power, and a wonderful saving power. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *Christ our fountain.*—I. WHEREIN IS CHRIST A FOUNTAIN ? When it is said Christ is our fountain, it holds forth two things : 1. Fulness. A fountain is not like a cistern ; a cistern may be full, but the fulness of it may be emptied ; so may the fulness of a fountain too, but then a fountain, or a spring, fills itself again immediately. So doth not a cistern. A cistern may be full, but it doth not rise up and run over, as a fountain doth, and that continually. For this reason the corrupt nature in us is compared to a fountain (Jer. vi. 7)—bubbling up in vain thoughts, inordinate desires, corrupt affections. Now, in Jesus Christ there is a fulness, and it is a fountain-fulness (Col. i. 19), fulness—all fulness, and all fulness dwelling, and by the good pleasure of the Father. What is He full of ? The two things that our poor souls have most need of towards the making of us happy. Merit and righteousness for justification ; and spirit and grace for sanctification. He hath merit enough ; His merit is of infinite value, sufficient to take away all sin (Heb. vii. 25)—able to save. He hath Spirit enough, to sanctify us throughout, to break the power of every lust, to strengthen us to every good word and work. He is such a fountain as can open in us a fountain, springing up into eternal life (John iv. 14, i. 16). 2. Uses—fulness. A fountain is of great use. What striving was there in Abraham’s time, and Isaac’s time, and Jacob’s time, about wells of water (Gen. xxi. and xxvi.). When Achsah was to ask a boon of her

father Caleb, Give me, said she, springs of water (Judg. i. 15). Were we to ask but one thing of our heavenly Father, there were reason it should be, Lord, give us a fountain. Why, blessed be His name, He hath given us one. Not only springs of water, useful for our outward man, a land of springs, like Canaan, but a Christ, a Christ for our souls. A fountain of water is useful for three things: (1) For quenching of thirst. How glad is the weary traveller, or labourer, of a spring of water; though it be but fair water. Oh, says he, it hath saved my life. The Israelites in the wilderness, when there was no water, what an affliction was it to them. When they had it, it was sweet as honey and oil (1 Cor. x. 4). Now, this fountain is very useful for this purpose. Is thy soul athirst?—athirst for peace, pardon, life, salvation, for grace, strength? Here is a fountain for thee, come and drink (Isa. lv. 1)—buying frightens; therefore, come freely. Thou art called (John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 15). See the discourse of our Lord Jesus with the woman of Samaria (John iv. 10–14). Alas! the most of men know not what this means—they are sensible of no need, and therefore of no desire, but (Psa. xlii. 1) “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” (2) For washing away filth. Water cleanses; we could not tell what to do without it—to make our bodies, our clothes, comfortable. This fountain also is cleansing. Sin defiles, leaves a blot, a stain, upon the soul. It is uncleanness. The guilt of it is so: from that we are washed by the blood of Christ, satisfying God’s justice and making atonement; also purging the conscience (1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5; Heb. ix. 14). The corrupt nature, which is the root and principle of it, is so (Psa. xiv. 3). From this the Spirit of Christ washes in the laver of regeneration (Tit. iii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. vi. 11). (3) For watering the earth and making it fruitful. They use to have fountains for that purpose in their gardens, to be ready in a dry season to fetch water to refresh the plants. Herein also Christ is our fountain. Did He not water us every moment, grace in us would languish and die (Isa. xxvii. 3, xlv. 3, 4). Now, it is the second of these especially that this text speaks of—Jesus Christ is a cleansing fountain; we have need of Him as such, for we are filthy and defiled. II. WHAT KIND OF FOUNTAIN IS THE LORD JESUS? As a cleansing fountain He hath these properties. 1. He is full, He hath enough wherewithal to cleanse us; merit enough, spirit enough. Under the law they had cleansing appointments as to ceremonial pollutions, but ours is beyond theirs. They had blood, but it was but the blood of bulls and goats, and that in a bason only; but we have the blood of the Son of God, not in a bason, but a fountain full of it. They had water; one particularly, called the water of purification, made of the ashes of a red heifer. Open and free as to terms. We say—What is freer than a gift? He is the gift of God (John iv. 10), the free gift (Rom. v.), the unspeakable gift (2 Cor. ix. 15). Though thou hast no worthiness, no matter, He is worthy. Cordial acceptance makes Him ours. He forgives freely (Isa. xliii. 25). 2. The only fountain. Besides Him there is no other (Acts iv. 12). We may think, perhaps, as Naaman—“Aro not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?” (2 Kings v. 12). But no other fountain will do. III. THE APPLICATION, IN FOUR PARTICULARS. 1. Here is matter for thanksgiving to God, who—(1) Appointed this fountain in the counsel of His will from all eternity (John iii. 16). (2) Opened it in the fulness of time, after it had been shut for four thousand years (Gal. iv. 4). (3) Opened it to us; to us of this nation, country, neighbourhood, of this present age and generation. We are within hearing of the joyful sound. (4) And specially, that He hath brought us to it and washed us in it. This is certainly the mercy of mercies,—“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. i. 5). This is more than angels can say. When ten lepers were cleansed, only one returned to give thanks (Luke xvii.). 2. Here is matter for conviction. Convincing! Of what? Of your need of this fountain to wash in. That which is unclean doth certainly need washing; but thou art unclean, I mean, thy soul, thy mind, thy conscience; inwardly, spiritually. I am sure thou wast so by nature; born in guilt and filth; like an infant weltering in blood and pollution (Ezek. xvi.). And art thou washed? When, and how? And by whom, and with what? I am sure that every sin thou hast committed hath added to that original pollution, and hath made thee more and more filthy (Psa. cvi. 39; Matt. xv. 19, 20). Even vain thoughts (Jer. iv. 17). So is the world also (Jam. i. 27). Nay, our best duties have their pollutions (Isa. lxiv. 6). But there is one particular

kind of sins, those against the seventh commandment, that is especially called uncleanness. And have we been in no sort guilty of that, neither in thought, word, nor deed? (*Philip Henry.*) *The fountain opened*.—I. A FOUNTAIN. Water is much valued in the East. We cannot wonder that spiritual blessings are so often exhibited to us in Scripture under images borrowed from water. These images found their way at once to the understandings and feelings of Jewish men. The Lord Jesus is meant by the text. He is represented as a fountain for a particular purpose; not for the thirsty to drink from, but for the unclean to wash in. Here again the text carries us into eastern climes. Bodily ablutions are much more common there than among us. With the Jews, too, they partook sometimes of a sacred character. The prophet mentions two things, sin and uncleanness, but he has only one in his mind—sin under the figure of uncleanness. Does uncleanness degrade whatever it touches? So has sin degraded us. Is uncleanness a disgusting and loathsome thing? If there is anything disgusting in the universe, it is sin. When God calls it by this name, He represents it as something which He cannot bear to look upon. In the text is a remedy for this hateful evil. It is a suitable, a real, effectual remedy for it. It is a fountain that can remove uncleanness, and is intended to remove it. This fountain is nothing else than the precious blood of God's own dear Son. That blood was shed for us. As water removes uncleanness from the body, so does this blood remove the guilt of sin from the soul. It does away with it, frees the soul from it, makes our condition as safe, and in the end as happy, as though we had never sinned. This effectual remedy for sin is here described as an abundant, lasting remedy. Thousands may wash in it, and it will be as everflowing as ever, able to cleanse thousands and thousands more. II. FOR WHOM THIS FOUNTAIN IS INTENDED. For the Jews first, then for all others. 1. The utter insufficiency of all rites and ordinances to cleanse the soul from sin. Who were these men? The very men to whom pertained the law, with all its sacrifices. When guilt oppressed or conscience disquieted them, they could in a few minutes be in their temple, and sharing in its sacrifices and service. But the text addresses them as if they were the very heathen. All their legal ordinances could not expiate their guilt. It is the same with our Christian sacraments. God has ordained them, not to take away sin, but to keep us mindful of it, and of that blood which can take it away. 2. We are taught here the all-sufficiency of Christ's blood to cleanse the soul. There is no guilt too great for the blood of Christ to wash out, no sinner whom He cannot recover and save. III. THE TIME WHEN THIS FOUNTAIN SHALL BE OPENED TO THESE SINFUL MEN. "In that day." The day of our Lord's crucifixion. They point also to a day yet to come, when the Jews as a nation shall be brought to repentance and the reception of Christ. Learn—1. There can be no real knowledge of Christ without repentance. 2. Wherever there is real repentance there also will God give in the end a real knowledge of His salvation. Would that we might all learn from this Scripture to seek for ourselves a deeper consciousness of sin, a more heartfelt and abiding sorrow on account of it! (*C. Bradley.*) *The fountain for sin and uncleanness*.—The prophet leads us to consider the legal uncleannesses so much and so fully developed in the Old Testament, and leads us through them to look at the great disease of sin—the leprosy of the soul. I. THE GREAT UNCLEANNESS—THE SPIRITUAL LEPROSY OF THE SOUL. This is that that defileth a man. It is not poverty; it is not sickness nor disease—however terrible or however sinful. That which defileth a man. This inward leprosy maketh a man an offence to God. This evil pervadeth the world, and yet men are as insensible of it as if there were no truth in it. II. A FOUNTAIN OPEN FOR SIN AND FOR UNCLEANNESS. The fountain is the blood of Jesus. A bubbling fountain, ever full, ever abundant. III. THIS FOUNTAIN IS SAID TO BE OPENED. Formerly, this fountain exclusively belonged to the priests and to the Jews; now, it is for the whole house of David, and for all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There it stands, a fountain without cover, open and free for the very vilest. (*J. H. Evans.*) *The fountain opened*.—The text contains one important prediction which was fulfilled in Christ. It relates to the consequences of His death, with regard to His people, and shows of what great importance this event was to the whole Christian Church. The accomplishment shows with what confidence and comfort we may rely on the great doctrine of the atonement which it involves. I. THE PROMISE OF PROVISION TO BE MADE AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF SIN. 1. The prophet speaks of a fountain to be opened. A fountain is properly the source or spring-head of waters. Springs or fountains are called, "living," when they never

cease or intermit, but are always sending forth their streams. 2. The blood of Christ was shed expressly, by appointment of God, and by covenant with the Son of God, for the expiation of human guilt, and for the cleansing and purifying of sinful men. 3. There is an inexhaustible fulness and sufficiency of merit in this blood of the Redeemer for the complete expiation of human sin. In its atoning and cleansing properties, the blood of Immanuel is as infinite as the mercy of God which it procures for sinners, and for the exercise of which it prepares the way. 4. This blood of Jesus Christ may be appropriated to the case and wants of any sinner that comes. Sinners may apply believingly to this blood, and obtain from it, not only the cleansing they require, but also plenteous forgiveness, substantial peace, and animating hope. II. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PROVISION AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF SIN IS PROMISED. 1. By this expression the prophet intended primarily God's ancient people, the Jews. But the Jews, as the peculiar people of God, were a type of Christians, and His people everywhere. It is no presumption in us to conclude, as we have already assumed, that this promised provision is intended for us. 2. The double phrase may denote both rich and poor in God's Church. III. THE TIME WHEN THE PROMISE WAS TO BE VERIFIED. The promise was actually fulfilled on the day of the Saviour's crucifixion on Calvary. (*J. Jaques, M.A.*) *The opened fountain*.—The application of this prophecy to Messiah is beyond all doubt. It contains the announcement of a divinely appointed and effectual remedy for the guilt and misery of man. 1. The certainty of this provision. "There shall be a fountain." 2. The perpetuity of this provision. 3. The freeness of this provision. 4. The sufficiency of this provision. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The Lord Jesus Christ a fountain*.—I. IN WHAT SENSE MAY THE LORD JESUS BE DEPICTED AS THE FOUNTAIN OPENED? In opposition to those many broken cisterns of human invention to which men are prone to apply. In opposition to those rivulets, those brooks, which are occasionally good, but which soon flow away and are lost. Under the law there were various lavers prepared for the purpose of purifying from ceremonial guilt and pollution. Jesus is a fountain in opposition to all these types and images. The Lord Jesus is the fountain, because He Himself in His own power, in His own essence, contains inexhaustible and perpetual fulness. II. FOR WHAT PURPOSE THE LORD JESUS IS THIS FOUNTAIN. For sin and for uncleanness. All sin is uncleanness. Repeating the expression gives more enlarged views of the efficacy of faith, and the grace of our Lord. For the purpose of giving comfort and peace to the believer the terms are doubled. This fountain cleanses not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the accusing and terrifying power of sin in the conscience. III. TO WHOM IS IT OPENED? "The house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem." In the East there were often contentions over fountains; this one is free to all. An open fountain, to which all ranks, all stations, all ages, all conditions, may repair. (*Archdeacon Law.*) *The fountain opened*.—I. THE FOUNTAIN THAT IS OPENED. 1. The plenitude of Divine grace. It is not a wasting stream, that soon exhausts its store, but a never-failing fountain, ever flowing in plenteous supplies for every demand. The Lord Jehovah is emphatically styled, "The God of all grace." Millions have been refreshed by this fountain, and still it is undiminished. There is "enough for all, and enough for evermore." 2. The freeness of Divine grace. It is not a fountain sealed up, and forbidden; but freely opened and accessible to all. None are excluded from participating its richest blessings (*Rev. xxii. 17*). No personal merit, or moral worthiness, is required in its willing recipients. II. THE PERIOD WHEN IT WAS OPENED. "In that day," &c. When this expression occurs in the prophetic writings, it generally refers to the actual appearing, or spiritual reign of the Messiah. But we ought to notice respecting this fountain, that—1. It was virtually opened in the original scheme of redemption. According to God's gracious promise to mankind, Christ is called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." 2. It was actually opened in the mediatorial work of the Redeemer. When the fulness of time was come, Christ was manifested in the flesh, to accomplish the will of God, and procure the salvation of sinners. He then fully opened this fountain, by fulfilling all righteousness in His own person—becoming the propitiation for our sins—rising again for our justification—ascending to heaven to be our Advocate with the Father—and diffusing an enlarged dispensation of the Holy Ghost; it was ministerially opened in the labours and writings of the Apostles, as "ambassadors for Christ" (*1 Cor. i. 23, 24, 30*); and it still continues open. III. THE PEOPLE TO WHOM IT IS

OPENED. "The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." It is very evident—1. This fountain was primarily opened to the Jews. To the Jews Christ was promised, and to them He came as His own people, according to the flesh. His personal ministry was generally confined to them; and He commanded His apostles to open their commission at Jerusalem, and preach the Gospel first to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47). 2. This fountain is now graciously opened to the Gentiles. The blessings of the Messiah were not to be confined to the Jewish Church. He was sent "to be a light of the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth." "By the grace of God He tasted death for every man." IV. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT IS OPENED. It is "for sin and for uncleanness." This implies—1. A fountain is opened for the expiation of sin. The death of Christ was a perfect sacrifice, by which an atonement was made for the sins of mankind. 2. A fountain is opened for the destruction of sin. It must not only be sacrificially expiated, but personally destroyed. The Son of God effects this destruction by the merit of His death, and the operation of His grace (Titus ii. 14). All sin is moral uncleanness, and spreads its infectious disease through every power, both of body and soul. The ceremonial purifications under the law were emblematic of the efficacy of this fountain (Heb. ix. 13, 14). (*Skeletons of Sermons.*) *The fountain opened*:—The fulfilment of this prophecy has never yet taken place, and will probably be considerably posterior to our times. Though not fulfilled to the Jews, yet, to us the fountain is opened. I. WHAT IS THIS FOUNTAIN? The ancient Jews had their sacrifices, and purifying oblations. They have now been long without a sacrifice and a priesthood. We are not to understand that these Levitical fountains will be opened again, as some have dreamed. The blood of animals might be an instituted means of taking away a ceremonial guilt, which yet left the sinner as he was before, in regard to the Governor of the world; but it had no fitness to take away moral guilt, because it failed in the two great principles of a true atonement,—a manifestation of the evil of sin, and a demonstration of God's righteous government. These meet in Christ, who is the true fountain. II. ITS EFFICACY. In the removal of "sin and uncleanness." 1. Sin is the "transgression of the law." The law is transgressed in three ways,—by a violation of its precepts, by a neglect of its injunctions, and by a defect in its observance. Bringing all under the penalty of death. 2. Uncleanness (margin, "separation for uncleanness"). Allusion to arrangements in the Levitical system; typical of the manner in which sin separates between the soul and God. III. THE DAY WHEN THE FOUNTAIN IS OPENED. The day of our Lord's crucifixion. The day when the Gospel is first preached in a heathen land. The day when a "Spirit of grace and supplication" is poured out. Whenever a penitent mourns. In every means of grace, that pardon may be repeated, and our sinful nature cleansed. We need never attend any of the ordinances of religious worship without receiving a renewed application of the blood of Christ, and a fresh communication of sanctifying grace. (*R. Watson.*) *The fountain opened*:—In the text the prophet anticipates the personal manifestation of the Messiah, and the unspeakable benefits to mankind from His atoning sacrifice. I. THE FOUNTAIN THAT IS OPENED. Fountain is a metaphor. It represents the mediatorial character of Christ, as the source and medium of salvation to the human race. A fountain opened implies—1. The plenitude of Divine grace. It is a never-failing fountain, ever flowing in plenteous supplies for every demand. 2. The freeness of Divine grace. It is not sealed, but freely opened, and accessible to all. II. THE PERIOD WHEN IT WAS OPENED. "In that day." This expression, in the prophetic writings, generally refers to the actual appearing, or spiritual reign of Messiah. It refers to Christ's assumption of our nature, and sacrifice for our sins. 1. It was virtually opened in the original scheme of redemption. 2. It was actually opened in the mediatorial work of the Redeemer. III. THE PEOPLE TO WHOM IT IS OPENED. 1. This fountain was primarily opened to the Jews. 2. It is now graciously opened to the Gentiles. IV. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT IS OPENED. It is "for sin and for uncleanness." This implies—1. A fountain is opened for the expiation of sin. The death of Christ was a perfect sacrifice, by which an atonement was made for the sins of mankind. 2. A fountain is opened for the destruction of sin. The ceremonial purifications under the law were emblematic of the efficacy of this fountain. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*) *The new economy of grace*:—It is not to the advent of a person, or to the occurrence of any historical event, that the prophecy in the beginning of this section refers: what is announced is the estab-

lishment of the economy of grace, the bringing in of the kingdom of God, free access to which should be given to all, small and great. There was provision made for the cleansing from sin and uncleanness of all without respect of persons; the Jew first, but also the Greek. The manifestation of this was by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who came to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; but it is the thing done rather than the doer of it that is here announced. It is for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that this fountain is said to be opened. They seem to err grievously, however, who infer from this that this prophecy refers to the final conversion of the Jewish people. The prophets are wont to describe the new dispensation in language borrowed from the condition and usages of the old, and we interpret them aright when keeping this in view, we understand their descriptions, not as representations of simple historical facts, but as serving as the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, and as finding their fulfilment in crises and conditions of the kingdom of God on earth. They go upon the presumption that the Israel of God was never to be abolished, that its continuity was never to be interrupted, that though the outward national Israel might be cast off, because of their rejection of the Good Shepherd, the true Israel, the reality of which the other was but the symbol, the Israel that was really Israel, should continue for ever. This idea our Lord and His Apostles adopted, and in their teaching and administrations carried out. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*)

A fountain for sin:—Remission of sins and sanctification, purging away the guilt of sin by the grace of God in forgiving sins through Christ's blood, and the virtue of His blood applied by the Spirit, and laid hold upon by faith, for purging all uncleanness of sin; this is compared to a springing fountain made open to all, in opposition to the small measure of water carried into the temple for legal washings. This benefit will be very conspicuous toward converted Israel, when the Redeemer shall turn iniquity from Jacob. 1. The great and chief privilege of the Gospel is remission and purging of sin, which, as they are only attainable through faith laying hold on Christ's blood and the grace of God offered through Him in the Gospel, so without these, no other advantages by the Gospel will avail much, or be comfortable. 2. The free grace of God toward lost man, and the virtue of Christ's blood is a treasure inexhaustible, and which cannot be overcome, with the greatness and multiplicity of sin in those who flee unto it, for it is a fountain or spring. 3. Pardon and virtue for purging of sin is not only purchased, and the way to it made patent, by the death of Christ, giving access unto God through Him; but is held forth in the offer of the Gospel and ministry of the Word, that none may pretend ignorance, nor any who need it seclude themselves from so free an offer, "A fountain opened." 4. As the greatest must be in Christ's reverence for this benefit, even those who have greatest gifts and are rulers of others, so the meanest in the Church, however they be not equal to others in gifts, yet have a like interest with them in this saving benefit. 5. When the Lord pours out upon His people the spirit of repentance and humiliation, it is a forerunner of ample manifestations of the grace of God, in opening up the treasures of the Gospel by the ministry of the Word, and in granting of pardon, and growth in purity. For, when "the land shall mourn," "in that day there shall be a fountain opened." (*George Hutcheson.*)

A word full of Gospel:—The twelfth chapter of Zechariah is principally occupied with the indications of some particular day. Thus, we read again and again: "In that day" (ver. 3); "In that day" (ver. 4); "In that day" (ver. 6); "In that day" (ver. 8); "In that day" (ver. 9); and "In that day," in the opening of the thirteenth chapter—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened." The reference is not in reality to some particular day; the day was not the same, the calendar was filled with that particular day, and yet the day was singular from all other days round about it. In all the previous instances we find nothing equal to the music that is discoverable in the opening of the thirteenth chapter. We read, "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone"; "In that day I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness"; "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf"; "In that day shall there be great mourning in Jerusalem"; but now, in the thirteenth chapter, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness"—a fountain of water, a living fountain, hidden all the time in the rock; not a new fountain, the fountain was always there, but not always open; its existence was recognised by many a ceremonial action. We read of water in the Book

of Numbers that is known in the literal Hebrew as "the sin-water," that is to say, the water that was applied to the cleansing of moral and spiritual offences. We delight to give an evangelical interpretation to this fountain. We call Jesus Christ the Son of God, the fountain that was opened for sin and for uncleanness. He offered to make men clean, He offered to refresh the souls of men with living water; He is described as the Water of earth, or the Water of heaven. David did not open the fountain, the fountain was opened in his house; the very grammar suggests an external and superintending act. In this living fountain we recognise God's supreme miracle. For whom is the fountain opened? For a special class, and for that class only. It is not opened for Pharisees, righteous persons, or those who would carve their own way to heaven. This fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness. Is any man conscious of sin? Here is the fountain. Has any man sat down by rivers of water and taken to him soap and nitre, and tried to cleanse his life of sin stains, and has consciously and pitifully failed in his attempt? Here is the fountain opened for uncleanness. Have we tried this fountain? Until we have tried it we cannot condemn it; until we have gone to it and sat beside it and invoked the spirit of its Creator, we cannot tell what virtue it possesses. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

The fountain of life:— Old mythology tells of one who discovered in his wanderings a fountain of peculiar qualities, and on bathing in it, found himself endowed with immortality. In the Holy Scripture this fiction is turned into solid fact. The Saviour's fulness is original and boundless; the fulness of a spring always flowing and never diminished. The whole abundance of God's free grace is poured unto us from this unfailing source. The fountain of life was opened on the day when the Divine Redeemer suffered and died for us. During the brief period of our Saviour's ministry, the fountain flowed in partial streams, but at His death it was fully and for ever opened. The Mosaic law had made ample provision for ceremonial pollution, and there were pools, like that of Siloam, where bodily disease might be cured, but the soul must be washed in another fountain. The stains of sin were so deep and so pervading, that even the conscience itself was defiled, and "the everlasting benediction of God's heavenly washing," could alone render the soul meet for His presence and glory. Such provision, accordingly, has been made, and a fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. There are those who hope to cleanse themselves by some methods of their own. Would God have opened this fountain, if any other would have sufficed? The fountain stands open in the means of grace; in the invitations of God's Word; in the nearness, the power, the grace of our adorable Lord and Saviour. (*John N. Norton.*)

*The gospel age:—*I. It is a "DAY" FOR THE ABOUNDING OF SIN CLEANSING INFLUENCES.—To the Jews, washing from sin and ceremonial impurity was an idea with which they were well acquainted. It was enjoined by the law (Numbers viii. 7, see also Ezekiel xxxvi. 25). That sin and uncleanness are in the world. This is a fact written in all history, patent to every man's observation and consciousness. 2. The removal of sin is the world's great necessity. Its existence is the cause of all the miseries of the world, physical, social, political, religious. 3. Provision for its removal abounds. "A fountain opened." Sin and uncleanness are not an essential part of human nature. Men have lived without sin, and men in heaven do now. It is a mere stain on human nature, separable from it, and the means of separation are provided, provided in the Gospel. It is a fountain. This implies—1. Abundance. It is not a rill, a brook, a lake, but a fountain. What is the fountain? Infinite love. This implies—2. Freeness. Flowing, ever open to all. This implies—3. Perpetuity. The hottest sun does not dry up the fountain. It has an under connection with the boundless deep. II. It is a "day" in WHICH IDOLATRY SHALL BE UTTERLY ABOLISHED. What a blessed age will that be, when all men on the face of the earth shall have their souls centred in love and devotion on the one great and common Father of us all! III. It is a "day" in which ALL FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS SHALL CEASE. "And I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land," &c. 1. False religious teachers are great curses to a community. This is implied in the promise here of their destruction. They deceive souls on the most vital of all points. 2. False religious teachers may become objects of indignation even to their nearest relations. Thank God there is an age of reality coming, an age when men will recoil from shams as from "demons vile." 3. False teachers will on this "day" be ashamed to exercise their mission. If any false prophets should continue to exercise their function, they will have to do it—(1) in secrecy;

(2) and disclaiming their profession. Should their disclaiming be questioned, they will take shelter in falsehood. "And one shall say unto Him, what are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." *Christ cleanses as well as forgives*:—A criminal, condemned by our law to die, can only be spared by the King empowering the Home Secretary to reprieve or pardon. Even then to remove the stain that must always rest upon that person's character is utterly beyond the power of them both. How different with Jesus. His power is unlimited. He not only is able to forgive sins, but He can cleanse away every trace of guilt, and present us faultless unto God. *The cleansing fountain*:—"A fountain," says James Bailie, "not a stagnant pool or a sluggish canal, but a torrent, a waterfall. God's love flows forth like a great river over the Rock of Ages. Men bathe in that fountain, and their sins are swept away into the dead sea of God's forgetfulness. God has pardoned transgressions, the very recital of which would have utterly destroyed our faith in human nature. One of the strongest proofs of Divine origin of Christianity is that it has received in its embrace liars, swindlers, and adulterers, and having cleansed and purified them, made them ornaments of society. *The remedy near at hand*:—Do you know that the wound that Hedley Vicars received before Sebastopol was not necessarily fatal? It was a wound that was very common, and a wound over which the surgeons had complete control, yet he died. How was it? It was because, in the hurry and haste of the march in the grey morning from the heights of the Crimea, the tents where the stores were, were left behind. Had there been a bandage near, had there been lint and cotton-wool near, Hedley Vicars would have been saved; but he bled his life away before they could reach the tents. Ah, David tells you to-day that the tents where God's supplies are, are never too far away. Blessed be God, the bandages, and lint, and healing efficacy of the blood of Christ, are not confined to Calvary, where it was shed. Here it flows. Oh, plunge into the fountain that was opened for sin! (*John Robertson.*) *The sense of sin*:—The sense of sin, we are told, is weaker to-day than it once was. Are we quite sure, if we could penetrate beneath the crust of men's reserve? An American humorist has put it, but oh! so truly, "In his heart of hearts no man can have much respect for himself." In our heart of hearts, in our moments of colloquy with ourselves, when we feel ourselves to be in the presence of another whom we cannot name, we accuse ourselves, and there is no escape from the accusation and its penalty. The sense of sin may be outwardly weaker, but you are always upon safe ground if you appeal to the condemned conscience that is in every man. We have seen our life is marred by the presence of sin; and that mournful fact is not partial but universal. Touch the man and you touch one who has been seared and scored by the presence of an enemy, and that enemy is sin. (*R. J. Campbell, B.A.*)

Ver. 6. **What are these wounds in Thine hands?**—*The Christianising of Christianity*:—Christ, or Christianity—the system of thought and life which bears the name of Christ—has been injured by its friends, more, perhaps, than by its enemies. The process of Christianising modern Christianity is a process of purification, of elimination, of dropping what is inferior, of what is a mere misrepresentation; a process of exalting those great spiritual principles that Christ brought into the world, and for which He gave His life. The question is asked, Why is it that Christianity has not yet conquered the world? Christianity did not succeed in the East, its triumphs were only in the West, and we are hearing on every hand to-day that the forces of Christianity in the Western World seem to be spent. We are even told it is not holding its own against the advancing intelligence of Europe and America. I don't believe these objections are true. I believe real Christianity is conquering and has conquered. I believe that real Christianity is holding its own against this advancing intelligence. I do but mention these objections to call attention to the process that is going on in these days—the process of eliminating from this current popular Christianity that which is unreal in it, and does not belong to it. The first great mistake of the Church was the association of Christianity with the State. Christianity ceasing to be a spiritual religion, and becoming simply a political system allied to the existing Government. Christianity was made into a vast secularised power. Hardly had Christianity time to show what was in it, and what it could do, than the stormy barbarisms of Europe broke upon it, and a wild sea of

barbarian tribes surged and heaved where once the cultured fields of the Old World had been. There was thus destruction of civilisation, and there could be no greater proof of the vitality that was at the heart of Christianity, than the fact that after this storm had spent itself, the Church was the only power that raised its head. The sight that met the Church might have appalled the stoutest heart. Half-naked savages were masters of the world. As we look back on the conversion of the barbarians, it was very wonderful, but at the same time most unsatisfactory. It is idle to blame the past. It is the very genius of Christianity to take the world as it finds it, and bring out of its evils and errors some love of goodness and truth. Hallam says, "Had religion been more pure, it would have been less permanent, and Christianity has been saved by means of its corruptions." The corruptions of medievalism encased the spiritual truths of Christ which were too pure and lofty for that generation to receive. The Church consecrated almost all the ceremonies of the barbarians, and absorbed a great many of their superstitions. Medieval Christianity is not the Christianity of Christ. It is an amalgam; a union of three things,—the simplicity of Christ; Roman imperialism; and barbarian superstitions. There was, at the time of the Reformation, a great protest against Roman imperialism, and a grave protest against the barbarian superstitions; and these protests are going on to-day. On the political side it is going on in all Protestant countries. On the religious side, it is the movement which aims to bring to the front what is distinctively Christian. So that when it is said that Christianity has spent its force in the West, that it is not holding its own against advancing intelligence, that missionary triumphs are not so great to-day as in the apostolic era, we must remember that Christianity has not yet had time to free itself from the alliance with the State, nor yet had time to free itself from barbarian superstitions; and that this process is going on to-day. It is a process that we can all see going on before our eyes. (*K. C. Anderson, D.D.*)

Christ wounded in the house of His friends:—Wittingly or unwittingly, through a culpable negligence or haste, Christ is wounded in His cause, or in His spiritual body, in the house of His friends. 1. He is wounded when Christians grow cold in zeal, slack in duty, or forgetful of their solemn vows. They show indifference, ingratitude, selfishness. 2. When His cause is injured by the unbecoming conduct of His followers. Scandal in the Church is scandal heaped upon His name. 3. When indifference is shown by them to the success of the instrumentalities by which His cause is promoted. These instrumentalities are vital with Christ, as though His blood flowed through them, and His voice spake by them, and His heart beat in them. He is in the word, the sermon, the prayer, the praise. 4. By inattention to the Gospel, with its messages of duty, its invitations and exhortations. 5. By their lack of sympathy and co-operation within their sphere, with the institutions of charitable beneficence for the spread of the Gospel. 6. When Christians, instead of keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, treat one another with superciliousness and bitterness; when their intercourse is not marked by that gentleness and forbearance which the Gospel requires. Here looks may be daggers, and words blows. And are there not those who, by inconsistent conduct, by neglect of the ordinances of the sanctuary, by worldliness, by passion, by unbrotherly feeling and act, dishonour their profession, disregard their solemn vows, and do injury to the cause of Christ? Is it not a fact, that all the assaults of infidelity, all the rage of profanity, all the recklessness of vice and crime, do far less to check the power of the Gospel than the scandals and offences of professed disciples? (*E. H. Gillet.*)

The unkindness of friends:—

I. WHO IS THE PERSON MENTIONED AS BEING WOUNDED? No other than the great God, our Creator and Redeemer, the "Man Christ Jesus." It was this mysterious man, this God-man, of whom the prophet inquires in the words of our text, "What are these wounds in Thy hands?"

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING "WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FRIENDS"? This "fair world" is meant by "the house of His friends." "All things were made by Him." The house of His friends was His own house; He built it for them; He came into it because He had a right to; He came into it to do them good, to save them from their wickedness and woe; but they wounded Him, and cast Him out. You all know the history of the Divine Jesus, who was "wounded for our transgressions." In what sense can they be called His "friends" who used Him thus? I may call a man my friend in one or both of two senses. 1. Because he acts a friendly part towards me, though I have not deserved it; or, 2. Because I act a friendly part towards him, though he has not deserved it. A man may be a friend to

me; or I may be a friend to him. Christ calls us friends, because He was a friend to us, though we were no friends to Him. III. WHAT IS MEANT BY ITS BEING MENTIONED THAT HE WAS WOUNDED IN THE HANDS? By the feet are signified the ways or goings of a man, his moral conduct. By the hands are signified the works of a man, or the deeds of his life in general. The hands are the instruments of the heart, or will, or mind, or soul. In the house of His friends, Jesus was taunted with all His good deeds. His hands were pierced, because He wrought His Father's will; and His feet were nailed because He chose His Father's ways. IV. WHAT THINK YOU OF THE CREATOR AND PROPRIETOR OF THE WORLD BEING THUS DEALT WITH BY HIS UNGRATEFUL CREATURES? Nevertheless, He deigns to designate them by the gracious name of friends. What think you of the human beings who could persecute to death the benefactor that was come to bless them, to buy them with His blood? Can you possibly be guilty of their crime? Every evil deed you do crucifies the Lord of Glory. (*W. H. Henslowe, M.A.*) *Wounded by friends*:—The prophet says, that such would be the discipline among the new people after having repented that each in his own house would chastise his sons and relatives: and it is an evidence of perfect zeal, when not only judges perform their office in correcting wickedness, but when also private individuals assist to preserve public order, each according to his power. We may gather from the answer what proves true repentance. "Say will" one (it is put indefinitely), or it will be said, "What mean these wounds in Thine hands?" Then He will say, "I have been stricken by My friends." The prophet shows that those who had previously deceived the people, would become new men, so as patiently to bear correction; though it might seem hard when the hands are wounded and pierced, yet he says that the punishment, which was in itself severe, would yet be counted mild, for they would be endued with such meekness as willingly to bear to be corrected. Some apply this to Christ, because Zechariah has mentioned wounds on the hands; but this is very puerile; for it is quite evident that he speaks here of false teachers, who had for a time falsely pretended God's name. As then they say, that they were friends by whom they were smitten, they acknowledge themselves worthy of such punishment, and they murmur not, nor set up any complaint. (Marckins, Adam Clarke, and Henderson, agree with Calvin in repudiating the notion that this verse is to be understood of the Crucifixion of our Saviour,—a notion commonly entertained by papal expositors.) (*John Calvin.*) *Wounded by friends*:—There is no wound so painful as the wound inflicted by a familiar friend. The secret devices of the hireling may be anticipated. The blows of an avowed foe can be healed. The neglect of the proudly indifferent can be endured. But the slight of a friend, the faithlessness of the lover, inflicts a wound for which earth provides no cordial and no balm. "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." When, in the palace of the High Priest, in the dim light of the early morning, "one of the officers, which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand," the wound was only skin-deep; but when in the outer court of that same palace a friend called Peter was saying, "I know not the man," the wound was attended with an agony. When the chief priests and elders "gave large money unto the soldiers" to induce them to give false witness, the pangs of the crucifixion were intensified; but when "Barnabas also was carried away with dissimulation," our Lord was crucified afresh. I am not doubting the friendship; nay, it is essential to my purpose that we should quietly assume its sincerity and its strength. I am not now dealing with masked foes, who wear the King's livery, who have caught the King's tones and expression, but who are inwardly fiercely and determinedly hostile to His claim and dominion. No, I speak of His genuine friends, friends as genuine as Simon Peter, and I want to speak of some of the ways in which we sorely wound Him when He abides beneath our roof. 1. We wound our Lord by our destructive zeal. Zeal is a very essential element in the religious life. It is as welcome a thing in the indifferent world as a warm fire on a winter's night. Zeal is genial and heartening. It keeps the affections fresh and radiant; it provides the requisite atmosphere in which all the powers of the life can attain their maturity. If the flame of zeal be in any way corrupted it works against the kingdom of our Lord. If the fire of zeal be kept clean it is the friend of life, if it become unclean it is the friend of death. The pure fervour may so easily become an evil fever! when we assume we are working in hallowed zeal. "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." How friendly was the

disposition to the Lord, and how strong and decisive the act! A fiery zeal for truth was being corrupted into a clouded passion for sect. "Master, wilt Thou that we call down fire from heaven to consume them?" How zealous, and yet how blind! It is always so much easier to burn your enemies than to convert them. You know what kind of armour is used by an illiberal zeal. In the supposed interests of the Kingdom we use methods of misrepresentation, misinterpretation, exaggeration—I do not say wilfully, for that would place us outside the ranks of the Master's friends, but blinded by our perverted zeal—and the issue of such warfare is not the discomfiture of the devil but the wounding of the Lord. We detach things from their context. 2. We wound our Lord by our thoughtless kindness. "And they brought unto Him little children, that He should touch them; and the disciples rebuked them." The disciples acted in presumed kindness to their Master, and yet how unkind was the ministry! They were protecting the Lord because He was tired, saving Him from the embarrassment of the multitude. Their purpose was right; the means they employed were thoughtless. And it frequently happens that even when our deeds are right, the manner in which we perform them is offensive. We can wound the Lord by the clumsy way in which we serve Him. There are some men who boast of their want of refinement. We are responsible to God both for the man and the manner. It is not enough that we serve Him; we must serve Him in a way that will make no wounds. "Let your light so shine!" It is not enough that the light is shining; we are to take pains that it shines in the right way. There are well-meaning men who throw their kindness at you. All such kindness wounds the Lord Himself. "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" They are the wounds the Master received from the clumsy kindness of His friends. 3. We wound our Lord by our faithlessness when in the warfare of life the odds are against us. It is easy to be His friends when He walks along the palm-strewn ways of Jerusalem, and everybody vies with everybody else in acclaiming Him the King of Glory. But when the crowd melts away, and the minority is very small, it is so easy to become ashamed of the leader and to say: "I know not the man." Our true friends are revealed when we are "down." The nightingale is lovely, not because his song is sweeter than the note of the thrush, but because he sings in the night. And this is just our Lord's friendship; He is at His best when we are at our weakest. If I am in company, and the intercourse is unseemly, am I a friend of the Lord or a deserter? I would far rather be called a prig by the men of the world than be known as a faithless friend of my Lord. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The wounds of Jesus*:—The wounds of Jesus speak more eloquently than words. I. OF WHAT DO THEY SPEAK TO US? 1. Of the love of God. How full the Bible is of messages of God's love. 2. Of sin. 3. Of forgiveness, intercession, and atonement. II. TO WHOM DO THESE WOUNDS SPEAK? 1. To the children of God. To the advanced Christian ripe for glory. To him they speak of the heavenly perfection to which the Captain of our salvation attained through the suffering of which they are the sign. To those just starting out in the Christian life. To such they point to the path of suffering for His sake; that by the fellowship of suffering we may also be united with Him in His glory. To those who have been unfaithful and neglectful of duty. To these they speak reproach, that they have wounded the Lord afresh, and the voice of tender appeal that they may repent and return to Him. 2. To the doubting, trembling inquirer who has not yet accepted the Lord as his Saviour, and to the hardened unbeliever. III. BY WHOM INFLECTED? The text says they were received in the "house of His friends." You ask how the friends of Christ may wound Him? 1. By indifference. The present indifference of the Church greatly wounds the Divine heart of our Lord. 2. By opposition. Many things that are being done by His professed followers are out of harmony with His desires, and therefore must wound Him. 3. By preferring other persons and other things to Him. He wants the first place in the hearts of all His disciples, and not to give it to Him wounds Him. (*J. I. Blackburn, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. *Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd.*—*The sword of Jehovah smiting His Shepherd*:—We have our Lord's own authority for applying this passage to Himself. I. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN US OF HIM. In looking at the terms in which our Lord is here described, we are struck at once with the natural manner in which they bring together His Divine and human nature. This mode of describing Him is of frequent occurrence in the

Old Testament. It seems as though the Holy Spirit exulted beforehand in that union of the two natures, which was to be accomplished in His nature, and wished the ancient Church also to foresee and exult in it. In the text, He is described in the same twofold character. He is a man, and yet "the man that is My fellow," saith the Lord of hosts. "My fellow" signifies "my equal," "my companion." It is expressive of our Lord's Divine equality with the Father, and His eternal existence with Him. It intimates exactly what St. John afterwards plainly declared,—*"The Word was with God, and the Word was God."* But He is man as well as God. Not, however, originally, naturally man, as He was God. Here is an anticipation of a character He afterwards took on Him. And this assumption of our nature was necessary for the work of suffering He had to go through. In this human nature, He is set forth in the text under a third character. He is a shepherd. So called because the charge of His people devolves upon Him; because He performs towards them a shepherd's part, watching over, providing for, and guiding them. He is called God's shepherd, because the flock under His charge is God's flock, a flock committed to Him by God, to be rendered back by Him to God again. Happy they who are fed by Him! II. *THE COMMAND GIVEN BY JEHOVAH.* It is couched in figurative and highly poetic language. The Lord places Himself on the throne of a king or magistrate. They who bear these offices have often a sword near them as an emblem of their authority, and if need be, a ready instrument to execute any sentence they may pass on the guilty. Here the Lord describes Himself as suddenly addressing the sword near Him, and calling on it to smite, not the guilty but His own Son, and Him as shepherd. 1. We see in it that the sufferings of our Lord were divinely appointed. The persecuting Jews indeed were willing agents in all they did against Him. They did it voluntarily; yet they did "whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel had determined before to be done." 2. Here, too, we see that the sufferings of our Lord were most severe. Man can inflict much misery, but his power is limited. When God calls off our attention from man as the author of our Lord's sufferings, and directs it to Himself, we feel at once that our Lord must be a most severe sufferer. The language of the text conveys this idea forcibly. It is sword—not a scourge or a rack. It is "smite"; strike hard. Mark the word "awake." It implies that, up to this hour, the sword of Jehovah had been sleeping. Now it is to awake, to rise up in its vigour and majesty. It is to strike in the greatness of its strength. 3. The text represents our Lord's sufferings as surprising. Against whom? The very Being of all others, whom we should have expected Him to shield from every sword. The Being who is the nearest and dearest to Him, the man that is His fellow. To add to our surprise, the Lord seems to afflict Him, not reluctantly, but willingly; yea, more than willingly, almost eagerly. He is well-pleased in this thing for "His righteousness' sake." III. *THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH ARE TO FOLLOW THE EXECUTION OF THIS COMMAND.* 1. The shepherd is to be smitten, and the sheep, frightened at the violence done to Him, are to be scattered. 2. The smiting of this shepherd is to be followed by a signal interposition of Jehovah in behalf of the scattered sheep. "I will turn My hand upon the little ones." This term represents to us the feeble and helpless condition of our Lord's followers at the time of His crucifixion. These timid disciples of our Lord were strangely kept together, in spite of their unbelief and fears, after His crucifixion, and sheltered from every danger. And we know what the early Church soon became. It was a wonder in the world, itself doing wonders. Look at the practical purposes to which we may turn this text. 1. To strengthen our faith in Holy Scripture. I do not allude to the predictions we find in it, which were afterwards so exactly fulfilled. I refer rather to that beautiful harmony of thoughts and expression, which exists between this verse of the Old Testament, and another passage of the New. (Compare the passage John x.) 2. The fearful evil of sin. There are moments when we cannot read this text without an inward shudder—it exhibits the great Jehovah to us in a character so awful, and in an attitude so dismaying. He is represented as an offended Judge, calling for, and eager for the sacrifice of His own dear Son. Evidently, the evil of sin is a reality; the Divine justice is a reality; the inflexible unbending character of God's law is a reality; his determination to punish every breach of it, everywhere throughout His wide universe, is a reality. The cross of Jesus Christ proclaims all these things to be most solemn realities. 3. The perfect safety of all who are indeed resting for safety on our crucified Lord. You have nothing to fear from this awful God. In the greatness of Him whom He here commands to

be smitten for you, you may see the sufficiency, the completeness, and more than that,—the grandeur and glory of the atonement He has made for sins. (*C. Bradley.*) *Jehovah's sword*.—I. THE COMMISSION GIVEN TO JEHOVAH'S SWORD. 1. Whom was it to smite? 2. In whose hand was it to inflict the stroke? II. THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF THIS COMMISSION. 1. To show His indignation against sin. 2. To reconcile justice with mercy in the salvation of sinners. III. THE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IT. 1. The immediate effect was the scattering of our Lord's disciples. 2. The ultimate effect was their restoration and recovery. (*G. Brooks.*) *The Passion sermon*.—It is the observation of SS. Austine and Gregorie, that the four beasts mentioned by St. John mystically represent the four main acts of Christ, or works of man's redemption, His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. I have to do with a prophecy somewhat dark before the light of the Gospel shone upon it. "Awake, O Sword," &c. I. THE SPEAKER, "the Lord of hosts." II. THE SPEECH. "O Sword." As all the creatures are God's soldiers, so when He employeth them against man they are called His swords. When the Lord is pleased to execute His wrath He never wanteth instruments or means. Of the blow here threatened, God Himself is the Author. God never awaketh His sword to smite, but for sin. In this shepherd there was no sin of His own. "Against My Shepherd." Popish writers say that a shepherd should have three things, a scrip, a hook, and a whistle. This Shepherd is the good, the universal Shepherd. Daniel says,—The Messiah shall be slain, but not for Himself, "God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The first and main cause of the Shepherd's slaughter is, our sins. "The man." Hebrews have four words for man—Adam, red earth; Enosh, a man of sorrow; Ish, a man of a noble spirit; Geber, a strong man. "My fellow," for in Him the Godhead dwelleth bodily: and yet a man. God's fellow to offer an infinite sacrifice for all mankind, and a man that He might be Himself the sacrifice killed by the sword that is now awake to smite Him. Consider this, and tremble, ye that forget God. The Shepherd is smitten; if you look to it in time, it may be for you; if not, a worse disaster remaineth for you than befell these sheep. (*D. Feally, D.D.*) *The character and sufferings of Christ*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST, AS HERE REPRESENTED. 1. God's Shepherd (Psa. xxiii. 1). Great Shepherd (Heb. xiii. 20). Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. v. 4). The term shepherd is relative, and refers to His followers, whom He calls His sheep (John x. 16). It expresses His tender care over them, which is always proportioned to their peculiar trials, temptations, &c. (Isa. xl. 11). He expresses also His love to them, infinitely surpassing the love of the sons of men. He died for the sheep (John x. 15). 2. God's fellow—His equal. They are one in essence, intimately and essentially one. They are one in power. When on earth the Son did the works His Father did. One in honour and glory. His sacrifice was voluntary. As Jehovah's equal, He had an absolute right and propriety in Himself, and could lay down His life, and take it up again, when He pleased (John x. 17, 18). II. THE AWFUL MANDATE HERE GIVEN AGAINST GOD'S SHEPHERD AND GOD'S FELLOW. "Awake, O Sword, smite the Shepherd!" The command proceeds from the Eternal Father, whose justice demanded the death of our Lord (Isa. liii. 10). Divine justice had no demands on Christ, simply considered as the Son of God; only when viewed as our voluntary substitute. 1. The principal scenes of sorrow were in the Garden of Gethsemane. 2. Also in the hall of judgment. 3. Calvary was the place that witnessed the dreadful deed. III. THE EFFECT TO BE PRODUCED. "The sheep shall be scattered." 1. By the sheep are meant the disciples of our Lord. 2. Jesus foretold that His disciples would forsake Him. It was fully accomplished (Matt. xxvi. 56). IV. BEHOLD THE TENDER COMPASSION OF A GRACIOUS GOD. He promises to turn His hand upon the little ones. Little ones who at that time had but little knowledge of human nature, little faith, and little courage. See God's gracious dealings with the apostles and disciples of Christ. Thus He will deal also with all the faithful followers of Christ. Improvement. 1. Behold in this awful transaction the displeasure of God against sin. 2. As Divine justice is fully satisfied by the tremendous sufferings of Jesus Christ, here we behold sufficient ground for a sinner's hope of pardon. Jesus hath died; the sinner may be forgiven (Rom. iii. 25). (*T. Hannam.*) *The character of Christ as the Shepherd of Israel*.—That this text contains clear and remarkable revelation of the Saviour no one of spiritual discernment can hesitate to believe. It is one of the clearest of those prophetic testimonies which declared to the Church beforehand "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." I. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN

OF THE SAVIOUR. 1. My Shepherd. What precise view of the Saviour's place and character is this expression intended to convey? The expression significantly points to His mediatorial character and work. It reminds us that a people have been committed to His hands—that He has graciously undertaken on their behalf—and that, in the whole matter of their salvation, He is their head, representative, surety. Whatever is affirmed in the text concerning Him is affirmed in this view of His character and work. The ideas suggested by this title as to the benefits derived by His people from the exercise of His mediatorial offices are full of interest and comfort to the children of God. Why is He designated "My Shepherd"? Because He was appointed and commissioned by the Father, in the counsels of eternity, to execute this office. 2. The man. Believers, in their zealous regard for the glory and honour of the Divine Redeemer, sometimes lose the comfort to be derived from a believing contemplation of the man "Christ Jesus." The righteousness wrought out was wrought out in the nature of man. 3. The fellow of Jehovah. The equal of Jehovah. "God was manifest in the flesh." This is the crowning of truth in the doctrine of salvation. II. THE VIEW OF GOD'S DEALINGS. Our thoughts are directed to the immediate infliction of the Father's wrath. He pierced Him even to the soul, till the sword of infinite justice was satisfied with blood. Learn—1. Every word in the text is comforting and instructive to the sheep of Christ. 2. There is precious light in this subject for awakened and trembling sinners. 3. There is here a lesson of solemn warning to careless sinners. (*Robert Elder, A.M.*) *Messiah smitten*.—We know what was the transaction in which this prophecy was fulfilled; we know the awful epoch which that transaction bears. We hasten to no imaginary scene, but to a true historic one—to an actual time in the calendar of the world's ages. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE VICTIM. We perceive in His character—1. Manhood, "found in fashion as a man." Man, as never man otherwise could be. Man by a most astonishing process of condescension and self-diminution. 2. Mediation is included. As the shepherd guards his flock, and perils his own life for its rescue and deliverance, so we are considered as entrusted to the hands of Christ, that He may ward off every danger from us to which we are exposed. How far-reaching is His sympathy! How touching is His care. 3. Co-equality is supposed. If He be the associate and compeer of the Lord of hosts, then it may suggest the emulation of His honours, the expression of His glories, the assimilation of His deeds, and the concentration of His affections. II. THE PECULIARITY OF THE ACTION. The "sword" is the emblem of state, of authority, of power, of justice, or retributive execution. 1. This person is the subject of Divine complacency. 2. This person was the object of the Divine infliction. The sword is not the weapon of correction, of momentary chastening; it is the instrument of vengeance and of wrath. The same personage is the subject of Divine complacency and of Divine infliction. How is it explained? Christ is without sin. He is relatively liable for certain penalties, to which He subjects Himself voluntarily and solely. Substitution is the simplifying principle of all. We cannot place the doctrine of atonement on any other than the vicarious principle. See then—(1) The necessity for the atonement. (2) Mark the nature of justice. (3) Learn what is sin. (4) We see what is the great concert and covenant between the Father and the Son. (5) What must be the position of the unbeliever who rejects the atonement of Christ, to whom all this is as strange things, an idle dream? (*R. Winter Hamilton, D.D.*) *The Shepherd of the flock smitten*.—Observe that it is God the Eternal Father who gives the decree for the smiting of the Shepherd. "Saith the Lord of hosts." We have no sympathy with the unguarded language of those who speak of God as an avenging deity, whose wrath can be appeased and propitiated only by offerings of blood. Love is a thing that cannot be bribed. God's love needed not thus to be purchased. That love was the primal cause of all blessing to His creatures. The manifestation, however, of love on the part of a great moral Governor must be compatible with the exercise of His moral perfections. God's justice, holiness, righteousness must be upheld inviolate. While mercy and truth go before His face, justice and judgment must continue the habitation of His throne. As the Omnipotent, God could do anything. So far as power is concerned, He could easily have dispensed with any medium of atonement. But what God, as the Omnipotent, could do, God, as the holy, just, righteous, true, could not do. He could not promulgate laws and leave the transgressor to mock them with impunity. Was there, then, in the case of guilty man, any possible method by which the honour of God's name and character and throne

could be preserved intact, and yet the transgressor be saved? Reason is silent here. The principle of substitution—the innocent suffering for the guilty—is one undreamt of in earthly philosophy. The Shepherd has been smitten. The Divine honour has been upheld. Mercy and truth have been betrothed before the altar of Calvary; God hath joined them together for the salvation of the human race, and that marriage covenant never can be disannulled. Justice is now equally interested with love in the rescue of the fallen. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Christ smitten by the Father*:—I. THE PERSON TO BE SMITTEN.

1. He is Jehovah's fellow. He is in equality with God. 2. He is man. His humanity—His manhood—are as distinctly affirmed as His Deity and His equality with God. 3. The title given to Him as the Son of man—the Shepherd. II. THE SWORD WHICH IS TO WAKE AGAINST HIM. 1. What is this sword? It is the sword of Divine justice. 2. What are we to understand by its awakenings? Every manifestation of God in punishing sin is as nothing compared with the manifestation in Christ's sufferings. 3. Who demands this sword, who calls for its awakening? "The Lord of hosts." The crucifixion as much as the exaltation of Christ—was "the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." 4. What was the sword to awaken to? It was to smite unto death. III. THE REASONS WHY IT WAS SAID, "AWAKE, O SWORD, AGAINST THE VICTIM." It was to make manifest Divine justice, that there should be no connivance with the enormity of sin. IV. THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOWED. "The sheep were scattered." But they were brought back again from their dispersion. (*J. Stratten.*) *The fellow of Jehovah*:—I. THE TERMS IN WHICH OUR LORD IS DESCRIBED. 1. The man that is the fellow of Jehovah. 2. Jehovah's Shepherd. II. THE COMMAND GIVEN IN REFERENCE TO HIM. 1. It relates to sufferings divinely appointed. 2. It relates to sufferings most severe. 3. It relates to sufferings most surprising. III. THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH ARE TO FOLLOW THE EXECUTION OF THIS COMMAND. 1. The dispersion of the sheep. 2. A signal interposition in their behalf. (*G. Brooks.*) *The solitariness of Christ's death*:—Four things to consider. 1. The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. 2. The person against whom it is commissioned. 3. The dismal effect of that stroke; and 4. The gracious mitigation of it. Doctrine—That Christ's dearest friends forsook and left Him alone in the time of His greatest distress and danger. (1) Who were the sheep that were scattered from their Shepherd, and left Him alone? They were those precious elect souls that He had gathered to Himself, who had long followed Him, and dearly loved Him, and were dearly beloved by Him. They had faithfully continued with Him in His temptations. They were resolved so to do. (2) But were they as good as their word? Did they stick faithfully to Him? There was not a total and final apostasy, only a temporary lapse. It was a very sinful and sad relapse; for it was against the very articles of agreement, which they had sealed to Christ at their first admission to His service. So it was unfaithfulness. It was against the very principles of grace implanted by Christ in their hearts. They were holy, sanctified persons, in whom dwelt the love and fear of God. By these they were strongly inclined to adhere to Christ in the time of His sufferings, as appears by those honest resolves they had made in the case. Their grace strongly inclined them to their duty; their corruptions swayed them the contrary way. It was much against the honour of their Lord and Master. By this their sinful flight they exposed the Lord Jesus to the contempt and scorn of His enemies. As it was against Christ's honour, so it was against their own solemn promise made to Him before His apprehension, to live and die with Him. They break promise with Christ. It was against Christ's heart-melting exhortations with them, which should have abode in their hearts while they lived. It was against a late direful example presented to them in the fall of Judas. In him, as in a glass, they might see how fearful a thing it is to apostatise from Christ. It was against the law of love, which should have knit them closer to Christ, and to one another. This their departure from Christ was accompanied with some offence at Christ. 3. The grounds and reasons of this scattering. God's suspending wonted influences and aids of grace from them. They would not have done so had there been influences of power, zeal, and love from heaven upon them. But how, then, should Christ have "trodden the wine-press alone"? As God permitted it, and withheld usual aid from them, so the efficacy of that temptation was great, yea, much greater than ordinary. As they were weaker than they used to be, so the temptation was stronger than any they had yet

met withal. It is called, "Their hour and the power of darkness." That which concurred to their shameful relapse, as a special cause of it, was the remaining corruptions that were in their hearts yet unmortified. 4. The issue and event of this sad apostasy. It ended far better than it began. They were scattered for a time, but the Lord turned His hand upon them to gather them. Peter repents of his perfidious denial, and never denied Him more. All the rest likewise returned to Christ, and never forsook Him any more. And though they forsook Christ, Christ never forsook them. Inference—1. Self-confidence is a sin too incident to the best of men. Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it will. Shall we be self-confident after such instances of human frailty? 2. A resolved adherence to God and duty, though left alone, without company, or encouragement, is Christ-like, and truly excellent. 3. Though believers are not privileged from backslidings, yet they are secured from final apostasy and ruin. 4. How sad a thing it is for the best of men to be left to their own carnal fears in the day of temptation. 5. How much a man may differ from himself, according as the Lord is with him or withdrawn from him. 6. The best of men know not their own strength till they come to the trial. 7. The holiest of men have no reason either to repine or despond, though God should at once strip them of all their outward and inward comforts together. (*John Flavel.*) *The flock scattered*.—I. THE PERSON HERE REPRESENTED IS SMITTEN BY THE SWORD OF DIVINE JUSTICE. This is none other than the Messiah, the Christ. To Him alone can the language here used to describe the object of the smiting apply. No other being but He is at once man and the fellow of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts; and He alone is the Shepherd whom God promised to set over His people Israel to feed them as a flock. II. THE STROKE INFLICTED ON HIM. This was the deadly stroke of Divine justice. The sword had long slept in its scabbard, but when the fitting time arrived God summoned the sword to awake and do execution on the appointed victim. There is but one event to which the command here given can be understood as pointing—the slaying of Him who, as God's Shepherd, laid down His life for the sheep. Wherefore was He thus smitten? Because, though Himself sinless, He bore the sins of others. The flock had gone astray, and incurred the penalty of apostasy, and He, the Shepherd, had come to give His life for theirs. III. THE CONSEQUENCE TO THE FLOCK OF THIS SMITING OF THE SHEPHERD. It was twofold. The sheep were to be scattered, but God was to turn back His hand over the humble and meek ones of His flock. The former of these applied to the dispersion of His disciples as consequent on His crucifixion; the other was realised when the Lord, having been raised from the dead, showed Himself to individuals and to groups of them. But though preserved and rescued, Christ's little flock would not escape all trouble and suffering. God would bring them through the fire, and refine and purify them in the furnace of affliction. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *God's government of the world*.—I. AS BRINGING PENAL RUIN UPON MANY. 1. The destruction of their leader. In the Bible language political religious leaders are represented as shepherds. It was applied to Cyrus (*Isa. xliv. 28*). The person defined is represented as "the man that is my fellow." Dr. Keil's rendering is, "the man who is my neighbour"; and Dr. Henderson's, "the man who is united to me." Who is this man? On this question there are different opinions. "Calion thought it was Zechariah himself, as representative of all the prophets, and that the prophecy referred only indirectly to Christ. Grotius, Eichhorn, Bauer, and Juhnke apply it to Judas Maccabeus, Ewald to Pehak, Hitzig to the pretended prophets spoken of in the preceding verses." The expression "my fellow" does not necessarily mean one who is equal in nature and character, but rather one who has the fellowship of interests and aims. Evangelical writers, however, apply the language to Christ without much critical examination and without hesitation. They do this mainly on the ground that Christ Himself quotes the passage on the night in which He was betrayed, as an illustration of what was immediately awaiting Him (*Matt. xxvi. 31*). He does not say that the prophecy referred to Him, but merely that the passage was about being illustrated in His history. The shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep scattered. This, indeed, is a common fact in the history of the world; when the leader is gone the fold is scattered. Our point is that God often brings sufferings on a people by striking down their leader. There are few greater calamities that can befall a people than when nations lose their shepherds and leaders, or when churches

lose their pastors. Even when families lose their heads the loss is incalculable. Here is—2. The dispersion of the flock. This comes to most communities when the true leader is taken away. The removal of a leader in a family, a parent, often leads to a scattering of the children. The scattering is a great evil. Unity is strength and harmony; division is weakness and disorder. When communities are broken up and dispersed the various members often place themselves in antagonism with each other, and rivalries, jealousies, and envyings run riot. 3. The ruin of multitudes. "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two-parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein." Probably this refers primarily to the destruction of two-thirds of the inhabitants of Judea by the Roman arms, and the famine or the pestilence and other destructive influences which are the usual concomitants of all wars. Thus the afflictions of the great majority of the human race here represented as the two-thirds of a community come upon them as the retribution of justice—the Divine sword here invoked. They are not disciplinary, but penal. "They are cut off and die." Here we have God's government of the world. II. BRINGING REMEDIAL DISCIPLINE TO A FEW. "And I will bring the third-part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined," &c. The very calamities which were penal, and utterly ruinous to two-thirds of that population, were morally disciplinary and improving to the remaining third. In the one case they were the strokes of the "sword" of justice. In the other the calamities were but fire in the "pot of the refiner." These by the purifying influence of trials—1. Pray and are heard. "Shall call on My name, and I will hear them." 2. Are accepted of God as His people. They acknowledge their relationship. "I will say it is My people, and they shall say, the Lord is my God." Conclusion. This doctrine stands out in sublime prominence—that afflictions which are penal and destructive to the many are remedial and merciful to the few. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 9. *And I will bring the third part through the fire.*—*Trials and triumphs of the Christian*:—This chapter, though consisting of nine verses only, is a little Gospel. In some of the preceding verses are to be found all the particulars of the Gospel—such as, the substitution of Christ as a sacrifice in behalf of His offending people, the satisfaction made to Divine justice by His death, the purification of the Church through sanctified afflictions, the blessed privileges and intercourse they are allowed to enjoy with their God and Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The text was fulfilled when the nation was destroyed by the Roman army, and when, amidst all the dreadful scenes which were then beheld, He preserved His own people. This is the primary meaning of the text, but it refers also to the dealings of God with all His people, in all generations of the Church, down to the end of time. The words describe the trials and triumphs of God's people. The trials which come before their triumphs in some cases, and the triumphs which accompany their trials in others. I. THE TRIALS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. "I will bring them through the fire." 1. This implies that He will bring them into the fire. Afflictions are our lot. They are what we must expect. We may resist them, avoid them, be angry with them, harden our hearts under them, ascribe them to second causes, but we cannot escape them. 2. The nature of afflictions. They are called "fire," which denotes the severity of the Divine chastenings. Afflictions must be felt, or they are not afflictions. If we do not feel, the end of these afflictions is not answered. 3. The end and design of affliction. "I will bring them through the fire." God does not chastise for the sake of chastising. Fire is searching, and fire is purifying. II. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. Ultimate deliverance. It is a happiness to know that He can bring you through, and a still greater happiness to know that He will bring you through. 2. Communion with God. They that belong to God make their requests known to Him. He has commanded and encouraged them to do this. In this we may win a triumph. 3. Covenant relation to God is another part of the Christian's triumph. God owns them in adversity. There is no backwardness on the part of the believer to own the relationship when God says that it exists. (*W. Thomas.*) *As silver is refined*:—"I saw in Rome," says a modern writer, "an old coin, a silver denarius, all coated and crusted with green and purple rust. I called it rust, but was told that it was copper, the alloy thrown out from the silver until there was none left within; the silver was all pure. It takes ages to do it, but it does get done. Souls are like that. Something moves in them slowly, till the debasement is all thrown out. Some

day, perhaps, the very tarnish shall be taken off." Well, there is this alloy, this tarnish in all of us, and the education of life is to purge it all away—by sorrows, by disappointments, by failures, by judgments—

"By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate."

(*Great Thoughts.*)

God's method of dealing with His people :—The wisdom, sovereignty, and power of the Supreme Ruler are nowhere more clearly and impressively set forth and illustrated than in the fundamental methods which mark His government of mankind. What these methods or principles are it is not difficult to determine from Scripture and providence. And the choice of methods and the disclosure of them are made for the purposes of instruction and moral discipline. Among these methods are the following—1. Agencies wholly inadequate, seemingly, to accomplish purposes so grand and infinite. 2. Instruments, "weak" and "foolish" in themselves, chosen to "confound things that are mighty"—the wisdom, philosophy, pride, and wealth of the world. 3. God's method is one to compel faith—the whole structure of the Supernatural rests on faith. (1) It is true in regard to the Scriptures. From Genesis to Revelation we "see as through a glass, darkly." God gives light enough to discern duty, but not to satisfy a thousand anxieties. We must believe, trust, patiently wait, or perish. (2) Providence is a book full of painful mysteries. We cannot break the seals and interpret. Darkness that may be felt encompasses our path here. We are shut up to faith. 4. The Divine method is the method of severe discipline. By the way of the Cross to the Crown! Fellowship in suffering the condition of joint-heirship in glory. "Whom He loves He rebukes and chastens." 5. God's method is one of slow growth and development. Light, grace, prosperity, favour, discipline, as we can bear it. 6. God's method of dealing has respect to that system of rewards and punishments which forms a part of His moral government. Sin and misery, virtue and happiness, obedience and reward, are so conjoined in this life that no man can mistake the will of God, or reasonably doubt that the law of eternal rectitude is bound ultimately to prevail. 7. Occasionally by "terrible acts of righteousness" God reveals Himself to the nations, "that all the earth may know there is a God in Israel." (*Homiletic Monthly.*) **I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.**—*Intercommunion between God and man* :—What a vivid representation this passage affords of the personality of God! Here He appears as One who thinks, observes, feels, and purposes; a far higher and juster view of the Eternal Power than that which sees only abstract law behind and above Nature. And how striking is the intercommunion here pictured between the Creator and His creatures! Owing to man having been made in the Divine image, he is capable of spiritual intercourse with his Maker. And what a delightful intimacy distinguishes this communion! **I. THE VOICE OF GOD**—"It is My people." 1. My rightful people. The Lord of all asserts His authority, puts forward His claim. This is a view of religion often overlooked. We are God's by right. 2. My loved people. We hear in this utterance the tone of affection. There is a touching tenderness in the possessive "my," in such expressions as "my friend," "my father," "my son," "my husband," "my wife." So here, when the Lord says, "My people." 3. My redeemed people. 4. My sealed people. It is usual to mark property with the owner's name. It is by the renewed character and the obedient life that the Lord's property in His own people is most surely attested. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Religion may be regarded as consisting of man's acknowledgment of God's revelation; an acknowledgment which is first of the heart—when it is faith; next of the language—when it is confession; and further, of the life—when it is obedience. **II. THE VOICE OF MAN**. "The Lord is my God." 1. This cry is a response to the Divine assurance. It is the faithful echo to the heavenly voice. 2. The Lord alone is our God, whom we honour supremely. None other divides our heart with Him. 3. The Lord is our God to trust. The greatest and most pressing need of man in this life is One upon whom his weakness and helplessness can absolutely rely. 4. The Lord is our God, to appropriate and enjoy. What gladness fills the soul when a long-hoped-for discovery has been made, a long-sought treasure found, a long-lost friend recovered! 5. The Lord

is our God, to serve and glorify. 6. The Lord is our God for ever. Our God is the eternal God. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1-3. And thy spoil shall be divided.—A sketch on bad men:—Three facts concerning such. I. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF PERPETRATING THE GREATEST ENORMITIES ON THEIR FELLOW-MEN. In the account given by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans we have a record of enormities at which we might stand aghast. The particulars, says Dr. Wardlaw, here noted are such as usually, it might be said, invariably attend the besieging, the capture, and the sacking of cities; especially when, as in this case, the assailing army has been exasperated by a long, harassing, and wasting defence. The entrance of the unpitied soldiery, the rifling of houses, the violation of women, the indiscriminate massacre, and the division of the spoil, are just what all expect, and what require no comment. And never were such scenes more frightfully realised than at the destruction of Jerusalem when God in His providence in judicial retribution gathered all nations against the devoted city to battle. "All nations," a correct description of the army of Titus, the empire of Rome embracing a large proportion of the then known world, and this army consisting of soldiers of all the different nations which composed it. And, while such was to be the destruction brought upon "the city," the desolation was to extend, and that in different ways, at short intervals, throughout "the land." The fact that men are capable of perpetrating on their fellow-men such enormities show—

1. Man's apostasy from the laws of his spiritual nature.
2. The great work which the Gospel has to do in our world.

II. THAT WHATEVER ENORMITIES THEY PERPETRATE, THEY ARE EVERMORE INSTRUMENTS IN THE HANDS OF THE WORLD'S GREAT RULER. The period in which these abominations were enacted is in the text called the "day of the Lord," and He is represented as calling the Roman armies to the work. "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished." God in His retributive procedure punishes the bad by the bad. In this case—

1. No injustice is done. The men of Jerusalem deserved their fate. They "filled up the measure of their iniquity."
2. There is no infringement of free agency. Good men might revolt from inflicting such enormities upon their fellow-creatures, but it is according to the wish of bad men. This is God's retributive method, to punish the bad by the bad.

III. THOUGH INSTRUMENTS IN HIS HANDS, GOD WILL PUNISH THEM FOR ALL THEIR DEEDS OF ENORMITY. But where is the justice of punishing men whom He employs to execute His own will? Two facts will answer this question. 1. What they did was essentially bad. 2. What they did was in accord with their own wills. He never inspired them or constrained them. He did but use them. (*Homilist.*)

VERS. 4, 5. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.—*God in relation to a suffering world:*—The men in Jerusalem were in great suffering and imminent peril, and here is a figurative representation of the Almighty in relation to them. I. HE OBSERVES THEIR TERRIBLE CONDITION. "And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." The idea suggested here is that God observes men in all their calamities and dangers. His eye is on them. This is especially the case with His people. We are assured that His eye is ever upon the righteous; Job said, "He knoweth the way I take." 1. He sees what we have to endure. 2. He sees how we behave ourselves in our condition, whether under our afflictions we are trustful, patient, and submissive or otherwise; whether in our perils we are making an effort to escape. "Thou compassed my path and my lying-down, and art acquainted with all my ways." II. HE MAKES A WAY FOR THEIR DELIVERANCE. "And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." "These verses," says Dr. Henderson, "convey, in language of the most beautiful poetical imagery, the assurance of the effectual means of escape that should be provided

for the truly pious. We accordingly learn from Eusebius that on the breaking out of the Jewish war the Christian Church at Jerusalem, in obedience to the warning of our Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 16) fled to Pella, a city beyond Jordan, where they lived in safety. As the Mount of Olives lay in their way, it is represented as cleaving into two halves, in order to make a passage for them." It is not necessary to suppose that the Mount of Olives was thus riven asunder. The idea is, that the obstruction to their escape, though formidable as a mountain, should be removed. The Almighty would give them every facility to escape to the refuge. This He does for our suffering race. He makes a way for their escape, from guilt, ignorance, and misery, which has been blocked up by mountains of difficulties. III. HE PROVIDED A REFUGE FOR THEIR SAFETY. 1. The scene of refuge, "Azal." An unknown place. Some spot to secure them from danger. 2. The impulse of flight. 3. The necessity for the flight. "The Lord thy God shall come." In some great manifestation of His power. Conclusion. How thankful we should be to know that God has not deserted humanity in its sins and sorrows. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark.—*The day of the Lord*:—This phrase denotes not one time, but many. Any signal manifestation of the Divine government of the world, or any such event as made men's hearts quake within them for fear, is described as the day of the Lord. Though all nature is, in truth, an exponent of the judgment, as well as the beneficence of God, there are times and places in which His right hand, as it were, is more manifestly bared. There are times when the fervent spirit is tempted to wish for one of the days of the Lord. Yet there are many reasons why, even in the worst times, we should not wish to hasten that day which will in appointed course come surely and will not tarry. Instead of encouraging in ourselves impatience for some great day of the Lord, let us rather engrave upon our minds a conviction that such coming will be at last inevitable. We may estimate the character of such general judgments as are here alluded to, by reading the description of those of old. What, then, is the sort of temper or sentiment with which the idea of any great national visitations should be blended in our minds? As citizens we should be aware that crime inevitably brings down judgment. There is emphatically ONE "day of the Lord." The great day of the Lord, previous to the day of judgment, is the Gospel dispensation, as commencing with the first destruction of the Christian Church of the Holy Spirit. (*R. Williams, B.D.*) *Mixed providences*:—The day of the Church's conflict is mixed, and yieldeth wonderful variety of providence. Sometimes truth and righteousness getteth the upper hand, and sometimes the contrary party, that foment error and unrighteousness. It is a doubtful day in a twofold regard—because light and darkness are either intermixed or alternate. Or else because our estate in respect of either is not durable and fixed, but liable to great uncertainties. There is an intermixture of providences at the same time, and the Church is in several respects both happy and miserable at once. Here things go well and there ill. It is a rare case when there is a perfect harmony between our private condition and public happiness. Successively there is a vicissitude and interchange of conditions. Good and evil succeed each other by turns. Human affairs, under God, depend much on the people's hearts, and how uncertain are they! Inquire the reason of this, why the day of our conflict is such a mixed, doubtful day. Consider—1. The equity of it. It is such a day as is very suitable to our condition in the world. We are in a middle place, between heaven and hell, and therefore partake somewhat of both. We have mixed principles—flesh and spirit. As long as sin remaineth in us we cannot be perfectly happy. The flesh needeth to be weakened by divers afflictions. As our principles are mixed, so are all our operations. There is a mixture of good and evil in all our services. 2. Consider the wisdom and justice of God in it. He hath many wise ends to be accomplished by these mixed providences. That a people worn out with long misery may be more pliable to God's purpose. By such mixed providences God will weaken and waste stubborn nature. To work us from earthly things to things heavenly. To put a cloud and veil on His proceedings. To prevent the excesses of either condition, God tempereth and qualifyeth the one with the other. To make way for the exercise of our faith. Faith is neither made void by too great a light, nor extinguished by too great a darkness. To win the heart by the various methods of judgments and mercies,

and to gain upon us by both means at first. God doth it to bring His people to a Christian union and accord. When religious interest is divided, God keeps the balance equal, and success is sometimes east on this side, sometimes on that. To prevent contempt and insolency towards those that are fallen under God's displeasure. It is also a ground of patience. Heavy afflictions lack not their comforts to make them tolerable. He measureth out good and evil with a great deal of wisdom and tenderness. To show that our comforts and crosses are in His hand; and He doth variously dispense weal or woe as our condition doth require. Application. What use should we make of all this? 1. Be sure you do not make an ill use of it. This is done when we are not thankful for our mercies, because they are not full and perfect. It is an abuse if we are discouraged in God's service because of this uncertainty. When you have any respite, or breathing-time, then is the time and season to put your hand to the work. If there be uncertainties, remember that never a great work is brought to pass without troubles. And change cometh not until our condition proveth a snare for us. 2. The right use we should make of it. By way of caution, take heed of human confidences, and presuming too much on temporal success by means and instruments. For direction—Walk by a sure rule. Get a sure guide. Encourage yourself by the sure promise that you have to build upon. A man wrapped up in the peace of God, and the quiet of a good conscience, and hopes of eternal life, is fortified against all encounters, storms, and difficulties whatsoever. (*T. Manton.*) *Light and solace*:—These verses present a suggestive description of human history as a whole, and of each godly life in that history. I. THE MIXED CHARACTER OF OUR EARTHLY EXISTENCE. "The light shall not be clear, nor dark"; "It shall be one day, not day, nor night." That is, the lot even of a good man is chequered. Every height has its hollow. And each blessing has its accompanying affliction. But no Christian is ever in absolute darkness. If the rough wind be blowing, God will take care that it be not from the east. Observe—1. Through the trials of the past God has disciplined us into fitness for present duties. Present trials are the prophecies of future efficiency. 2. Trials are frequently connected with our sins. Evil deeds are evil seeds which produce a harvest of bitterness. 3. Trials lead us to long for heaven, and wean us from the world. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S SUPPORT UNDER THIS MIXED EXPERIENCE—"It shall be one day which shall be known," &c. This means—1. Our condition as a whole—not one separate part, but the whole "day" of light and dark—is known unto the Lord. 2. Our lot is ordered for us by Jehovah, just according as the grand total demands it. III. THE HAPPY TERMINATION OF THIS MIXED STATE OF THINGS—"And it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." All doubts and clouds shall have been driven away by the Sun of Righteousness. Relief shall come when it is least expected. Light is the synonym for joy, for purity, for knowledge. In heaven all the elements of darkness shall be absent. It shall be light. (*Homilist.*) *Mingled experiences*:—I. The language of the text is descriptive of the PRESENT MINGLED STATE OF AFFAIRS, both in the Church and in the world. Darkness is the effect of our low situation. There is nothing really dark with God—nothing imperfect in the Gospel. The Gospel is to our perception not so distinct as to be perfectly clear; but it is not so dark as to be useless and unintelligible. There are clouds and obscurities resting on the subject arising from our weakness and imperfection of understanding. Illustrate—(1) By the partial distribution of the Gospel among the nations of the earth. (2) The language is also descriptive of the imperfect attainments of real Christians. In the matter of personal experience it is but twilight. You have faith, but not "the full assurance of faith." You have hope, but how few of you hope ever blooming! You have obedience, but it is partial, irregular, imperfect. You have joy, but it is meddled with. (3) The text finds its illustration in the inscrutable dispensations of the providence of God. How vast, how profound a subject! II. THE SUPERINTENDING CARE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE DURING THIS CHEQUERED AND MYSTERIOUS STATE OF THINGS. This intimates—1. God's superintendence of all things. 2. God's foreknowledge of all things. 3. The harmony of Divine providence. 4. The beneficial tendency of the providence of God. 5. The language is a ground of unlimited resignation and contentment; and 6. A motive for unlimited confidence. III. THE WONDERS AND GLORIES OF THAT AUSPICIOUS DAY IN WHICH THIS SINGULAR STATE OF AFFAIRS SHALL TERMINATE. This promise contains a reserve of consolation for the feeble Christian against the hour of dissolution. And a reserve of consolation for

the feeble Christian in seasons of perplexity and difficulty. The promise contains also an assurance of the final glory, the millennial reign of the Son of God. (*Joseph Beaumont, D.D.*) *Dark and bright periods in human life*:—The word rendered “clear” is in the margin “precious,” and is in the plural. The word here rendered “dark” is in the margin “thickness.” I. A period of UNMITIGATED DISTRESS. This period of unmitigated calamity primarily refers, we have no doubt, to those long centuries of oppression, cruelty, mockery, and scorn, to which the Jewish people have been subjected ever since the destruction of Jerusalem. In the predictions of Joel (ii. 31, iii. 15) referring to the destruction of the Holy City and breaking up of the Jewish commonwealth, the period is referred to as a period when the sun shall be “turned into darkness,” and the “moon into blood.” Three remarks are suggested concerning this dark day. 1. Such a day is the hard destiny of some men. Their life is a day of darkness. It is so with some nations. The history of some nations and tribes is little less than a history of crushing oppression, bloody revolutions and untold cruelties and sufferings. 2. Such a day is deserved by most men. All men are sinners and deserve this blackness and darkness for ever. The very tendency of sin, in fact, is to quench every light in the firmament of the soul. II. Here is a period of UNINTERRUPTED JOY. 1. Such a day as this is destined to dawn on every good man. Heaven is a scene of light. No clouds of ignorance or suffering obstruct the rays, nor will the sun ever go down. “The Lord God is the light thereof.” 2. Such a day as this is destined to dawn on the world in the future. (*Homilist.*) *Light and shade in the Christian life*:—I. THE MIXED CHARACTER OF OUR EARTHLY LIFE. “The light shall not be clear nor dark.” The lot even of the good man is chequered. No Christian is ever in absolute and unrelieved darkness. It may be a long twilight with him, but it is never night. Why does God permit so much of darkness in our lot? Set forth some of the reasons why we have so much of difficulty and affliction to contend with. 1. Through the trials of the past God has disciplined us into fitness for the duties of the present. We did not see this at first, but we have discovered it now. Resistance is needed for the development of physical vigour, and difficulty is as much required for the formation of strength in moral character. 2. Our trials are frequently connected with our sins. Illustrate from the history of Jacob. 3. The shades of darkness in our earthly lots lead us to long for heaven. If everything here were as we should wish to have it, we should not desire to go elsewhere; but “God has provided some better thing for us” in the world beyond, and He takes care that we shall not get wedded entirely to the concerns of earth. II. THE CHRISTIAN’S SOLACE AND SUPPORT. Suggested by the words, “It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord.” 1. Our condition is known to the Lord. The world is governed by a Person, and He under whose eye all things come to pass, is our Father. 2. Our lot is ordered by Jehovah. Our lives are not “by chance.” There is an order in them, and a plan running through them. Then things that seem to be working against us must really be working for us. III. THE HAPPY TERMINATION OF THIS MIXED STATE OF THINGS TO THE CHRISTIAN. Relief shall come, and that at the time when it is least expected. If the day has been lowering, we look for a deeper darkness than ordinary when evening comes: but here, when men usually anticipate that it will be evening, it will be morning. You have seen this illustrated very often in separate passages of your lives. These separate chapters are only miniatures of life as a whole, for, at its evening-time there comes to the Christian the dawning light of heaven. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Mingled light and darkness*:—The first clause of the text is religious. It does not refer to the light of the natural heavens. It refers to all there is in the religion of man, and in the things which affect him in the experience of it. His condition is to be one of a mixed character, not wholly good, and not wholly evil—not all light, not all dark. This mixture may be seen in several particulars. 1. In the matter of a believer’s holiness. Therein there is some light, but it is not clear nor dark. The believer has some true conformity to God, but it is not a perfect conformity. He often wonders at himself,—at the inconsistencies and contradictions that he finds in his own experience. In his poor soul faith struggles to get the better of unbelief—the love of the world comes up to combat the love of God. His heart is inconsistent, his soul unsteady, his way devious, and he cannot be ignorant that his holiness is only of an imperfect character. Whenever God spares a regenerated sinner upon the earth after the time of his regeneration, such a regenerated sinner will have this chequered experience.

2. This mixture may be seen in the believer's knowledge. There is a mixture of clearness and obscurity in the knowledge of God's people which nothing could describe more perfectly than Zechariah has here described it. They have knowledge, but, in all parts of it, it is limited. Behold a disciplined believer. He is in the furnace. He knows who put him there. He knows that the process will stop when the purpose of it is accomplished. But there are other things he does not know. He attempts to know them, but he cannot find them out. He asks, For what particular sin am I thus afflicted? He knows not why God has sent that particular affliction on him. Behold a believer examining his own heart. He knows something about it. He very well knows its deceitfulness. But it is a wonder to him how his deceitfulness will work. When shall he ever be sure of a heart that has so often wandered? We ought to remember that the imperfection of our knowledge results from our creature littleness and the imperfection of our present state; and that so far as we have any necessity of knowing in order to be saved, our knowledge may be as clear and definite as our capacities will allow. 3. The comforts of God's people have in them a wonderful mingling of light and gloom. It is not all clear day with them. It is not all night. The alternation of comfort and depression which Christians experience, constitutes a chapter of facts which shows the mingled character of their life, whether we can have knowledge of the reasons for it or not. 4. The condition of life. We fail in few things as Christians more than we fail of fitly noticing the changes we pass through as God is leading us on. However this may be, there are strange minglings of light and darkness in our condition. So fluctuating and uncertain is the condition of life here, that no mortal can be found whose biography has any considerable resemblance to his anticipations; his life has not carried out the plans of his youth. We are knocked about in the world. Our condition is shifting, fluctuating, varying. There is scarcely a believer among us who is not compelled, amid this mingling of light and darkness, to recognise the immediate hand of his God. Amid all this mixture of good and evil, we cannot understand why it is so. How needful is faith! After Zechariah has mentioned the mingled clearness and obscurity of our state, he immediately points us to One who can understand it. "It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night." Of itself it is of a mixed character. To us it is mixed. We cannot understand it. God can. We can turn over the chequered scene into His hands. It is to Him all one day. He sees no darkness in it. It is all alike light—all "one." He has one intent in all the dispensations that affect us. When it is said, "At evening-time it shall be light," we are not to understand that the evening or night shall be turned into day. The mingled character of the believer's experience shall pass. Light shall come at the end. This may find illustration in all the features of the believer's experience. (*T. S. Spencer, D.D.*) *The mixed experience of the Church:*—The Church has had a mixed experience, not all dark, not all bright; now defeat and now success; now joy, now grief; mingled light and shade, but "at evening-time" light has always come. So with each Christian, the Church in miniature. Tears and smiles, sighs and songs mingle. Why this discipline? 1. We need it to correct mistakes of nature. 2. Our deliverance from sin and the development of Christian virtues are processes which involve this mingled experience. 3. Our hold on God by faith and prayer is made more steady. "But it shall be one day known to the Lord." A precious compensation is this assurance that God knows. God is working out a definite plan. The golden thread of His purpose runs through all that to us seems mixed and contradictory. He weaves the warp and woof. Nothing is confused. "It shall be light." (*J. Jackson Wray.*)

Ver. 7. *At evening-time it shall be light.*—*Aged people's service:*—Nature's sunset is beautiful, so beautiful that every painter strives in vain to catch it and give it permanence on his canvas. But the sunset of life transcends it, as the reality always transcends the type, as the spiritual always transcends the material, as the heavenly always transcends the earthly. What is there more beautiful in itself, what more interesting to contemplate than snowy age sustained by a living faith, and moving on toward the end of life's journey, calm, serene, cheerful, full of trust in God and the hope of heaven? But why picture a day of storms instead of a day of brightness and sunshine? Why a life of trials and sorrows and difficulties? Herein lies the chief beauty of the picture, the preciousness of the promise. Light is ever most glorious in contrast with darkness;

peace most blessed by contrast with strife. A peaceful, trustful, calm old age is pleasing always. But best is the peace after strife, the trust after doubt, the rest after toil. Such an old age bespeaks completeness. It is the maturing of the human mind, the ripening of a Godlike character, the perfecting of an immortal soul. Those lines of strength and beauty, those tokens of ripened character, that quiet patience, that glowing faith and hope, that chastened joy—all have been imprinted upon the aged face by the hand of experience the most painful. Sanctified sorrow is an indispensable element of heavenly joy. Spiritual strength and maturity cannot be attained except through difficulties overcome by the grace of God. Without strife there can be no conquest, no triumph. The promise of light at evening-time from its very nature implies something of storm during the day. But is there light? No; not always. Sometimes the promise seems to fail. Not every troubled and toil-worn life ends in peace and hope. Too often advancing years only bring increased darkness. Disappointment deepens into a perpetual bitterness of spirit. Old age is marked by peevishness, complaining, and discontent. It need not be so with any life. The promise is to all a Divine promise. Whence shall this light come? From the shining of the sun upon the clouds. And from the shining of God's love upon our trials. It is the brightness of His love that transfigures life, and fills its closing years with light and promise. The glory of the evening light comes, not from the removal of all clouds of evil, but from their transformation. Apart from difficulty and trial, we could never know the infinitude of God's love and power. So may it be with every soul that claims this promise; the darkness of the morning, and the storm of the noontide shall but enhance the glory of the evening light. If to any of you the evening-time still seems dark and gloomy, let in this light unto your soul; let it stream through your life, and it will brighten and transform everything with the likeness of its own glory. (*George H. Hubbard.*) *The light of evening:*—Evening is the time for stillness, and low, quiet tones, and communion with things and persons far away. So deep is the peace, so sweet the refreshment of that hour to one who, having done his work as a true man, may rest with a good conscience. Enlarge the range of view. Such as is the evening hour after a day of honest toil, such ought to be the latter years in every good man's life. As comes the evening to each mortal day, so comes an evening, at last, to all our days together; and with it the evening light, better far than the growing brilliancy of the early hours, or the set glare of the noonday sun. When the day of life has been a good and useful day, not idly spent or wasted, but passed in the fear of God, in piety and honesty, and in the performance of duty, then must its ending be calm and still. 1. In what does the light of the evening hour consist? In the evening of life comes the final and distinct realisation of the little value of this world. A true man outgrows, step by step, what he was; at last, if he live long enough, he outgrows the world. 2. To pass from this life to that in front, will be to go from ignorance and imperfection unto a wider knowledge and a deeper wisdom. The evening brings the time when the servant of God shall see and know many of the secrets of the universe, and read through and through what had long been dark mysteries to him. How many things there are which we do not understand! 3. It must bring great peace at last, to look back upon the life, and consider its moral and its lesson. One thing comes clearer and clearer out; the steady, never-failing presence and providence of God. 4. Many have feared lest they might, somehow, lose their faith. That is the darkest of all spectres to a Christian. How blessed then to know at last that, whatever mistakes are made, whatever sins are committed, we are saved from that gravest error, that heaviest and most hopeless sin, the denial of the Catholic faith. (*Morgan Dix.*) *Light at evening-time:*—There are different evening-times that happen to the Church and to God's people, and as a rule we may rest quite certain that at evening-time there shall be light. God very frequently acts in grace in such a manner that we can find a parallel in nature. The works of creation are very frequently the mirror of the works of grace. But sometimes God oversteps nature. In nature, after evening-time, there cometh night. But God is pleased to send to His people times when the eye of reason expects to see no more day, but fears that the glorious landscape of God's mercies will be shrouded in the darkness of His forgetfulness. But, instead, God overleapeth nature, and declares that at evening-time, instead of darkness, there shall be light. Illustrate—1. From the history of the Church at large. Especially the time of the Reformation. 2. This rule holds equally good in the little as

well as in the great. We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also the starry orbs. It is even so with the laws of grace. "At evening-time it shall be light" to every individual. There are our bright days in temporal matters. After them we have had our sunsets. Times of trouble, but they passed into times of deliverance. If God prolong thy sorrow, He shall multiply thy patience. 3. From the spiritual sorrows of God's own people. God's children have two kinds of trials, trials temporal and trials spiritual. Illustrate from the scene of Bunyan's pilgrim meeting Apollyon. 4. To the sinner when coming to Christ this also is a truth. 5. We shall all get into the evening-time of life. In a few more years the sere and yellow leaf will be the fit companion of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? Did you ever notice how venerable grandsires when they write a letter fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? The grey-headed man thinks of his children and forgets all besides. If he has served God, he has another light to cheer him. He has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Light at evening.*—It is when the day is drawing to its close that most men have their hour of leisure. We know, most of us, how nature looks at evening, better than we know how she seems in the busier hours of the day. In our evening leisure we have many a time had the opportunity of marking the sun's gradual withdrawal, the shadows as they darkened upon the landscape, the mist stealing upward from the river, and its murmur deepening upon the ear, the leaves so motionless, the silent fields, the universal hush and quiet. The one thing that makes evening is the gradual withdrawal of the light. It is the lessening light that makes the evening-time. "At the evening-time there shall be light," that is, light shall come at a period when it is not natural, when in the common course of things it is not looked for. It would be no surprise that light should come at noonday. If when the twilight shadows were falling deeper and deeper, with a sudden burst the noonday light were to spread around,—that would be a surprise. To state the promise in the form of a general principle, great and signal blessing shall come just when it is least expected. This special light is promised at the end of a day which should be somewhat overcast and dreary; not one of unmingled serenity, nor yet of unrelieved gloominess. At the evening-time there should be an end of the subdued twilight. Then there should be light at last. When the Christian's little day has drawn to its close; when the Christian's earthly sun has set, then there should be to him the beginning of a day whose sun shall never go down, and whose brightness shall be lessened by no intrusion of the dark. 1. In God's dealings with His children, it very often happens that signal blessing and deliverance come just when they are needed most, but expected least. Show the prevalence of this law in the Almighty's treatment of believers individually. How often the case has proved so as regards the collective Church. The least acquaintance with the history of the world will bring before us a host of instances in which the oppressed and persecuted, sometimes the cold and apathetic Church of God found better days dawn when they were least looked for, and so found the fulfilment of the promise, that "at evening-time there should be light." The humble Christian's life is the best sermon upon this text, and his own memory the best preacher. Illustrate by times of conversion and renewal; seasons of great trial—losses, disappointments, bereavements. Or the time of death—as the evening advances, as the hours go on in which the light that had lasted through the day might naturally grow less, how often it is that that unwearied light does but beam brighter and clearer! It is not indeed always so. Such a thing has been known as a true Christian dying in absolute despair, but in such a case disease is unusual and the mind unhinged. Perhaps with many Christians the death is as the life was: the evening is what the day was, "not clear nor dark." Is then the text not true? No, far from that. The light does come; and it comes at evening: but evening is the close of day; and the light may perhaps not beam forth until day has entirely closed. Not upon this side time may the blessed promise find its fulfilment. "At evening-time there shall be light," if not in this world, then in a better. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Lux e Tenebris.*—This old promise has received a thousand fulfilments, is receiving fulfilments every day, and will to the end of time. Nations that have fallen under the shadows of evening have often realised this truth. When the foot of the conqueror was about stamping on their heart, and the night of despair was settling on them, deliverance has come, light has broken on the darkness. Churches that have passed into twilight,

and about sinking into the night of extinction, have in unnumbered instances experienced the truth of the promise. The world at large had a grand fulfilment of it in the advent of Christ. Evening had settled on the pagan and Jewish world, the lights of the old philosophies and religions were all but quenched, when the Divine Logos rose like a sun into the heavens. But we may mention a few instances in individual life where fulfilments of the promise are abundant. I. In the PROCESS OF REPENTANCE. In passing through repentance, through the regions of a godly sorrow for sin, what darkness gathers around the soul. All the stars of hope, and the lights of self-righteousness are extinguished, and sometimes deep and horrible is the darkness that overcasts the heart. But then comes the light, Christ appears, "thy sins are all forgiven." II. In the EVENTS OF LIFE. How often the good man in passing through the world is brought into darkness, purposes broken, plans frustrated, hopes blasted, and he knows not whither to look. Just when it is not only evening with him, but almost midnight, light breaks forth, his heart is cheered, his path is made clear, and his energies are renewed. III. In the ARTICLE OF DISSOLUTION. Death is felt to be an evening with man. "The valley of the shadow." Most look forward to it as a terrible night; but the Christly, when the evening has come and the shadows have fallen densely all around, have found the breaking of the night. It was so with Dr. Johnson, who through life, it would seem, looked forward to the last hour with horror and alarm; but when the evening came, light came, joy seized his withered veins, and one bright gleam shone all around his heart. All men wish to die in the light. Goethe cried out in dying, "More light, more light"; and all will have it the centre of whose soul is the light of the world. (*Homilist.*) *Light at eventide* :—What is true of the Church is true also of its individual members. In reference to the dark days which now and then fall to the believer's lot in his earthly pilgrimage, the text suggests—1. That the day of severe affliction shall be followed by an eventide of calm and renewed confidence in his Father-God. In our day of trial we are too prone to centre all our thoughts in the scene immediately around us, and forget that our greatest affliction may be the harbinger of the greatest blessing. 2. That the day of temptation shall be followed by an eventide of triumph and repose. 3. That the day of providential bereavement shall be followed by an eventide of submission. At such times how hard it is to say "Thy will be done"! 4. That the believer generally realises the fulfilment of this promise in the evening of life. (*William Hurd.*) *Light at sundown* :—While "night," in all languages, is the symbol for gloom and suffering, it is often really cheerful, bright, and impressive. As the natural evening is often luminous, so it shall be light in the evening—1. Of our Christian sorrows. The night-blooming assurances of Christ's sympathy fill all the atmosphere with heaven. 2. In the time of old age. It is a grand thing to be young. Mid-life and old age will be denied to many of us, but youth—we all know what that is. But youth will not always last. Blessed old age, if you let it come naturally, and if it be found in the way of righteousness. 3. In the latter days of the Church. It is early yet in the history of everything good. Civilisation and Christianity are just getting out of the cradle. 4. At the end of the Christian's life. Life is a short winter's day. Baptism and burial are near together. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory. At evening-time it shall be light. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Evensong* :—So saith the sailor, when tossed about on a rocky coast, and dark clouds cover the heavens from his view, and the lights of the shore are shrouded in mist. So saith the star-gazer, when a strange comet visits the heavens, exciting the fears of the ignorant, and evoking the wonder of the wise. So saith the man of business, as in the dim and dingy city office he pores over doubtful debts, or ponders upon bad bargains, sensitive stocks, dull markets, baffled speculations. We ought ever to keep a sharp lookout for stars of promise, as we sail over the ocean of chance and change to the undiscovered continent of certainty. Let us, by the joint light of revelation and experience, consider heaven's cheering rays for earth's darksome seasons. The promise of the text applies to every stage of Christian experience. 1. At the evening-time of retrospect it shall be light. The Christian often looks back in his pilgrimage to the land whence he has come, not with feelings of regret at the step he has taken, but of thanksgiving that God has led him from the regions of death to the realms of life. These meditations on the past are sometimes disturbed by distressing doubts. But "at evening-time it shall be light." 2. At evening-time of conviction it shall be light. Conviction is the wrestling of fact with feeling. Wo

do not always feel equally convinced of our acceptance with God. But God has promised, if you wait patiently on Him, to renew the strength of your languishing convictions. 3. At evening-time of anticipation it shall be light. The Christian's home is not below, but above. The future is at best a land of shadows, the symbol of the uncertain and unreal. When the darkness grows deepest, the light begins to glow. The application of this balm of Gilead rests with each of you. (*G. Victor Macdonald.*) *At evening-time it shall be light*.—1. The primary application of these words. The chapter is eminently prophetic. It refers to Israel as a people, to Canaan as their land, Jerusalem as their capital, and our Lord Himself as their King. I believe in the literal restoration of Israel to their own land. 2. The figurative meaning we may attach to these words. The words "evening" and "light" are expressive of two states: they are opposite terms, meaning opposite things. "Evening," or darkness, is figurative for woe or sorrow, while "light" stands for joy, prosperity. At the time when things seem to have come to their worst, then prosperity begins to dawn, and the dismal past be succeeded by a bright and happy future. This is exemplified politically and religiously in secular and sacred history. Illustrate from experience of Israel in Egypt. From the condition of England in the time of King John. That was the darkest moment of English history. The darkness of sin brought forth the light of redeeming love. Sin gave cause for a Saviour. When the Saviour came, did the brightness immediately shine forth? No. Again sin darkened the world's light. The Saviour's love only excited the sinner's hatred, and He who loved the sinner was murdered by those whom He loved. But resurrection morn dispelled the darkness of crucifixion night. Learn that it is our duty to cheerfully expect the future to be happier than the present. (*Campbell Fair.*) *A surprising glory*.—The prophet refers to spiritual, not natural light; and his prophecy is, that in the experience of the believer in Christ, when, in the natural course of things he may expect spiritual darkness, behold light! 1. A long and fearful sickness overtakes the child of God. A fearful darkness gathers in his sick chamber. Wife and children are dependent upon him. As weeks and months painfully wear away the gloom deepens. Sun, moon and stars, one by one go out. When, in the course of nature, he faces death, suddenly the clouds disperse and the chastened soul rejoices in a light of peace and joy full of heaven, and goes forth, as it were, redeemed from the grave. 2. It is true of the whole discipline of life. The reference is to the end; at evening, &c. A long and weary pilgrimage may have to be taken; a severe and oft-repeated series of sorrows, losses, disappointments, first be endured. The light does not flash on him at the beginning; submission does not come with the first use of the rod. No; he must go through the scene—endure to the end. And, if he endure, just when the darkness seems to be settling down upon him, and the last ray of joy and hope seems about to be quenched, at the evening-time it becomes light! 3. Millions of deathbeds bear glorious testimony to this truth. Instead of a great darkness, celestial radiance! Instead of dismay, a peace unspeakable! (*Homiletic Review.*) *Glorious endings*.—The sacred writers are always true to nature. They never contradict natural facts. I. THE AMBIGUOUSNESS OF PROPHECY. Many of the prophecies have been literally fulfilled. But there is not a fulfilled prophecy on record which, prior to its accomplishment, was not more or less dark, obscure, or enigmatical in its meaning. What idea could the guilty pair in Eden form of their promised deliverer from sin and guilt? From the nature of prophecy it could have been but a sort of twilight knowledge of the Christ which ancient believers derived from it. The entire Old Testament dispensation was a day, known it is true to the Lord, but to His people it was "not day nor night." But as with all other days of nature, providence, or grace, that also had an end. The clouds that had covered the horizon of the moral world for long centuries broke at last. The evening of the Old Testament day, which witnessed the coming of the Son of God, was the brightest period of time that the world had seen since the fall of man! Turn to unfulfilled prophecy. How will it be realised; and when? The twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse has given occasion to hundreds of conjectures and theories of the millennium. But the Gospel dispensation, in regard to unfulfilled prophecy, is "neither clear nor dark,"—it is "not day nor night." But "at evening-time it shall be light." Presently all will be clear, and the Divine idea and purpose will be fully revealed. II. GOD'S GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS. It is often unintelligible. The government of an empire is too intricate to be understood by any

but the emperor himself. We are confused and perplexed when we attempt to trace out and explain God's government of the world from its beginning to the present day. We do not know often what He intends or means in His dealings with our race. The light is neither clear nor dark,—the light of providence. But the revolution of years is silently bringing nearer and nearer the evening-time of the moral world. Then there will be adjustment of contrary things. Then we may well be patient, and trust in God. (*W. H. Luckenbach.*) *Light at evening-tide* :—In recalling the incidents of his last year's ministry at Walton, Mr. Pennefather often spoke of the fact that during that time he had been called to attend the dying-beds of thirty of the most attached members of his flock, all in blessed hope of a joyful resurrection. "Do you call it a dark valley?" said one aged believer; "it is a very sweet valley to me! All praise! all praise!" "It is one thing to speak of Jesus," said a dying woman, "but it is another thing to have Him in full view." *Light at evening-time* :—It is said that Mirabeau cried out frantically for music to soothe his last moments; that Hobbes, the deist, said as he gasped his last breath, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark"; that Cardinal Beaufort said, "What! is there no bribing death?" Men with the Christian light have met death in another way. When Melancthon was asked if there was anything he desired, he said, "No, Luther, nothing but heaven." Dr. John Owen said at last, "I am going to Him whom my soul loveth, or rather, who has loved me with an everlasting love." John Brown of Haddington could say, "I am weak, but it is delightful to feel one's self in the everlasting arms." George Washington could say, "It is all well." Walter Scott, as he sank in the slumber of death, "Now I shall be myself again." Beethoven, as he could almost catch the melody of the mystic world, "Now I shall hear." Wesley could cheerily meet death with the words, "The best of all is God is with us." Locke, the Christian philosopher, exclaimed at dying, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the goodness and knowledge of God!" Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Paul, "having a desire to depart"; and, "to die is gain." (*F. Hastings.*) *The sunset glow* :—In the thought and in the speech of the world night is made the symbol of the dark experiences of human life. It is common to speak of the day of prosperity and of the night of adversity. Both of these symbols are frequently used in the Bible, the day standing for the bright experiences and the night standing for the dark experiences of life. But the Bible studs the night of darkness with stars of hope and suns of promise. "At evening-time it shall be light." That is grace overstepping and going beyond Nature. Nature's evening-time is darkness. When the evening-time comes in the experiences of God's people, and they fear that there shall be no more day, then God steps in, introduces a principle beyond Nature, and declares, "It shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light." 1. This is a promise for the evening-time of the world. The morning of the world was a bright and glorious sunrise. In the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And when He had finished His wide and wise creation, "God saw that it was good." But soon the dark cloud of man's sin overspread the earth. Light was shut out. Darkness reigned. Out of that darkness the world has been gradually emerging, until, through all the tears and tyrannies of the centuries, it has come into the noonday splendour of the Christian civilisation of our century. And it is distinctly Christian. It was the historian Froude who said: "All that we call modern civilisation, in a sense which deserves that name, is the visible expression of the transfiguring power of the Gospel." Our highest literature is swayed by the purest influences of Christianity. The scientific spirit of research and investigation, so conspicuous a fact and so important a factor in our modern life, owes its stimulation to the encouragement of Christianity. Christianity has created the laboratory as well as the library. Christianity is the parent of education. It has founded schools, established colleges, endowed seminaries. To benighted lands and to blighted homes Christianity has sent the teacher with the preacher. Our civic liberties and our social order are based upon Christianity. Burn the Bible, proclaim "there is no God," write over your cemetery gates "Death is an eternal sleep," and there is no power in all this land that will stay the ravages of that beetle-browed hag—infidelity's twin-sister in every age and in every land—Anarchism. I know that there are historians of discontent and prophets of calamity who cannot enjoy the splendour of the world's midday, and who are over telling us that the former times were better than these. They discount all inventions and all advancement by claiming that the morality of the present,

if as strong, is no stronger than the morality of the past. They are right in holding that all advancements go for naught if the people are not better than they were. The test of the world's advancement and strength is not that the grandson rides to-day in the Pullman car, while the grandfather rode yesterday in the stage-coach. The test is, Is the grandson a better man than the grandfather was? This world has not seen a brighter era since the gates of Eden were closed upon man than the last days of the nineteenth century. And the twentieth century will be better. Christ Jesus is to reign in this world. He has not yet ascended His throne. He is now on His Father's throne. When He went into Heaven He sat down at His Father's right hand, "henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." When His enemies shall be subdued, then, rising upon them as upon His footstool, He shall ascend His throne and reign. And it shall come to pass that in the evening-time of the world it shall be light. 2. The promise pertains to the Church of God. The Church of God has had two organisations in the world—the theocratic organisation of the Old Testament dispensation, and the spiritual organisation of the New Testament dispensation. Through all the Old Testament we can trace a gradual unfolding of the Church's life and power. This unfolding was not in a continuous advance. The whole history of the Old Testament Church shows a succession of onward marches, and then of quick retreats—progressing, retrograding, standing still for a while, then progressing once more, and again falling back. But in no instance did she fall back as far as she had been, and so her history was, on the whole, one of advance and growth. So with the Church of the New Testament dispensation. The Church was born on Pentecost—that was the sunrise of the Church, and it was glorious. From Pentecost the disciples went forth to tell the story of Him who had been crucified, who rose and ascended into heaven, and as the story spread the Church grew. Then came opposition and hatred and persecution, but the Church advanced through all until she entered the darkness of the Dark Ages. The heavens were shut, and a black cloud of superstition spread over the earth. Rome sat upon her ebony throne and stretched her rod of cruelty across the nations. It seemed as if the evening time of the Church had come. In that time every lamp of prophecy had ceased to shine. He who thundered in the streets of Rome had been burned at the stake, Savonarola had received the martyr's crown at Florence, the black clouds of ignorance, superstition, and vice shut out the sunlight of God's love from the world. It was evening-time, but God said, In the evening-time it shall be light. He kindled a beacon in the soul of a young monk in the monastery at Erfurt. As the monk mused the fire burned, and out from Erfurt went Martin Luther to proclaim God's message; and Rome shook, the Vatican trembled, the gates of brass were opened, the rod of cruelty was sundered, Germany was delivered, and civil and religious liberty were secured to the world. There came a time in England when religion became a formality, and when all good men trembled for the Church and longed for the mighty Puritans, who would crush the giant forces of evil beneath their onward progress. It was evening-time, and God had said, "It shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light." Four young Oxford students—William Morgan, Robert Kentham, Charles and John Wesley—met for prayer and Bible study. They were called by their fellow-students "Bible Moths," "the Holy Club," and "Methodists," because they were so methodical in all studies and their work. One resistance after another the Church has overcome; at times pressed back, but ever pushing onward, multiplying her victories and extending her dominions. No more hospitals, for there are no more sick; no more asylums, for there are no orphans; no more prisons, for there are no criminals; no more almshouses, for there are no poor; no more tears, for there is no sorrow. The long dirge of the earth's lamentations has come to an end in the triumphal march of the blessed redeemed Church; the New Jerusalem is with men, her children are gathered home, and across that city of a redeemed humanity earth's grandest outburst of hope and welcome breaks antiphonal from wall to jasper wall. The sunset glow; the evening-time of the Church, and at evening-time it shall be light. 3. This promise is for all human experience. The great promises of God, which apply to the whole kingdom of the redeemed, may be appropriated by each individual member of that kingdom. In Nature the laws which control the great forces direct the minute elements. The law that rules the grain of sand on the seashore governs the planets in their course. It is so in the realm of grace. "At evening-time it shall be light" to the Church; "at evening-time it shall be light" to every individual believer.

In the matter of the experience of the believer in Christian service it is true that "in the evening-time it shall be light." The majority of the men who have lived and laboured to make this world better have received the scorn and obloquy of the world. John Wesley was howled down by the mob to whom he preached; they threw bricks at him, they spat upon him, but where is there a more honoured name to-day? Light at evening-time. Wendell Phillips was scorned and spurned for his advocacy of the slave. Boston would not hear him, but in less than a generation afterward Boston built a monument to his honour, and men who would not defile their lips with his name taught their children the pathway to his tomb. "At evening-time it shall be light." 4. The promise brings its helpful message to every believer in his season of adversity and trouble. Very few people in this world escape the time of adversity. The bright, sunshiny day of prosperity is pretty certain to have a nightfall. "It was good that I have been afflicted," cries David. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," exclaims Job. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," says Paul. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," exclaims John in apocalyptic vision. At evening-time it shall be light. Ten thousand saints of God have found it so in the evening-time. 5. The text has a message for old age. Sometimes men look forward to it with trembling. It is a mistaken notion that youth is the time of gladness and old age the time of sadness. America's beloved artist, Horatio Greenough, a few days before his death, said: "I have found life to be a very cheerful thing, and not the dark and bitter thing with which my early days were clouded." At evening-time it was light. At eighty years of age Albert Barnes stood in the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and said: "The world is so attractive to me that I am very sorry I shall have to leave it so soon." Dr. Guthrie, past eighty, said: "You must not think that I am old because my hair is white; I never was so young as I am now." At evening-time it was light. New lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched; new candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim. At the evening-time of his life the Christian has many lights that he did not have before. There is the bright light of experience; the pleasing light of sweet memories; the cheering light of service done for God and humanity. The scientist tells us that no physical force is ever wasted. We whisper into the telephone, and the vibration, though it be less than one one-hundred-thousandth part of an inch, affects a diaphragm a thousand miles away, and our exact voice is heard by the listening ear in Chicago. So they tell us that the light from the farthest fixed star has been travelling steadily undiminished for more than a million years to greet our upturned eye to-night, and to reassure us that "the hand that made it is Divine." If it be true of physical forces, how much more is it true of moral and spiritual forces, that they are never lost! What a halo of glory this casts about the old age of a man, out from whose life have poured forth the streams of holy and sacred influences! At evening-time it shall be light. John Bunyan was right when he located Christian old age in the land of Beulah, in full sight of the ripe fruitage and the ravishing prospects of the Celestial City. The infirmities of old age are only "the land birds lighting on the sails, telling the weary mariner that he is nearing the haven." "And it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light." 6. This promise is for the time of the death of the believer. "It is a dark passage through which you are passing now," said a young man as he sat beside his dying mother. And her whole countenance lighted up as she said: "Oh no, my son; there is too bright a light at the other end to have it dark," and she passed out, and up, and into the palm and to the crown and to the throne. At the evening-time it was light. Paul drew near the end, and he said: "The time for the weighing of the anchor has come. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Take the promise with you into the future. Remember that if sorrow camps with you over-night, joy cometh in the morning. (*J. F. Carson, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.—*The living waters* :—Like all his predecessors, Zechariah speaks much of Christ. Some of his prophecies, owing partly to the predominance of figurative and symbolical language, are difficult and obscure. In the text he refers to Gospel days and to the Gospel blessings. He speaks of the Gospel under the figure of living, springing, running

waters; and under this figure he indicates to us the beginning, the progressive course, and the perpetual extension of the Gospel, together with its ultimate triumph, as seen in the universal dominion of the Messiah. 1. The character of the Gospel. We must think of the world as a desert, a vast moral waste, void of spiritual beauty and of moral life; and this is in strict accord with the actual condition of peoples apart from the Gospel. The land, the home, the heart, unvisited by the Gospel, is cursed with spiritual barrenness and moral death. If we caused a rivulet of living water to flow over a barren land, what would be the result? The desert land would soon cease to be barren. Let this land be ploughed, let the seed be cast into it, and what is the result? The desert becomes a garden; the wilderness a fruitful field, and the barren land a forest. So let the Gospel waters flow through the desert wastes of a sinner's heart, or through the moral wastes of a country, and what a blessed transformation is the result! Death gives place to life, depravity to beauty, and barrenness to fertility. It was so in the beginning of Christianity. The power of the Gospel has been strikingly proved in the missions to Fiji. 2. The progress of the Gospel. The living waters go out from Jerusalem. Christianity was not a new religion. It was the development, the outgrowth of Judaism. But the waters were to flow in every direction, carrying spiritual fertility with them: everywhere turning the desolate heritages of the Gentile world into the garden of the Lord. Note also the constancy with which the living waters flow; "in summer and winter shall it go." The summer heat usually dries up the rivulet. The frost of winter congeals it; but these living waters shall flow on through summer and winter. How strikingly has this been illustrated all through the Christian centuries. Nothing has proved able to arrest or stay the progress of the Gospel. 3. The triumph of the Gospel. From the beginning the Lord Christ has indeed been King over all the earth, but in the text there is associated with the idea of kingly authority that of willing submission. He shall then be universally acknowledged Lord, every knee to Him shall bow, and every tongue confess Him. The day will surely come when men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed. (*Walford Green.*) *The course of the Gospel*.—I. THE DESIGNATION OF THE GOSPEL. Here called "living waters." It points out the purity of the Gospel. Not the stagnant pool, but the running stream. Holiness to the Lord is stamped on all its principles, commandments, and rites. It is a dispensation of mercy, but it gives no indulgence to the least sin. It points out the refreshment which it yields. How sweet are its offers of pardon to the awakened conscience! It points out also the fertility which the Gospel produces. Christianity aims at forming the love of God in the heart and conduct. II. THE PLACE FROM WHICH THESE WATERS ISSUE. When Christ ordered repentance and remission of sins to be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the banks within which these living waters had flowed were broken down, and the stream began to rush over the Gentile world. These waters flow from Jerusalem, as it is by the Church that they are communicated. They are brought to the Church not only that they may be improved, but diffused. III. MARK THE COURSE OF THESE LIVING WATERS. The statement seems to intimate that the Gospel should bless the nations of the Eastern and of the Western world. There are various circumstances which indicate that a more extensive diffusion of the Gospel will soon take place. IV. THE CONTINUANCE OF THE COURSE OF THESE LIVING WATERS. Their flow shall neither be impeded by the drought of summer nor the frosts of winter. The effects of the Gospel on the souls of disciples are perpetual also. The knowledge it gives is everlasting light; the peace it yields is everlasting consolation; the love it inspires is a charity that never fails; and the holiness it forms is a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. (*Henry Belfrage, D.D.*) *The Gospel river*.—I. ITS NATURE AND ITS RISE. 1. Its nature. It is "living water." Water is precious, but not so precious as the Gospel. That is the river of life, the pure water of life. 2. Its rise. "It shall go out from Jerusalem." The Gospel might be said to have commenced at Jerusalem. "Beginning at Jerusalem." In Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, the river might be said to have broken forth. II. ITS DIFFUSION AND CONTINUOUSNESS. 1. Its diffusion. "Half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea." It is to go from the east and from the west, from its rising to its setting. The Gospel is for all climes. It is world-wide in its provisions, adaptations, and claims. 2. Continuousness. "Summer and winter." In all seasons of human life, individually and corporately. (1) It is constant in the

fitness of its supplies for human wants. Men, through all changes, in all places, and through all times, want Divine knowledge, moral purity, heavenly forgiveness, fellowship with the Eternal. The man will never be born who will not require these things. (2) It is constant in the fulness of its supplies for human wants. It is an inexhaustible river. After countless myriads have had their wants supplied it remains deep and full as ever. (3) It is constant in the availableness of its supplies for human wants. (*Homilist.*) *The changeful and the constant in life*.—I. THE CHANGES IN THIS SCENE OF OUR EARTHLY LIFE. Suggested by summer and winter. The changing seasons of nature may be regarded as only symbols of the constant mutations in our mortal life. 1. Human life has its changes. The man who reaches his three score years and ten, has run through all the seasons; the freshness of spring, the luxuriance of summer, the ripeness of autumn, and the dreary desolations of winter. 2. Human institutions have their changes. These changes are useful. (1) They supply us with excitements to action. (2) They impress us with the constant activity of God. (3) They remind us that this is not our rest. II. THE CONSTANT IN THIS SCENE OF OUR EARTHLY LIFE. "In summer and in winter shall it be." What is the "it" here, that is to remain so constant amidst the changes? The preceding part of the verse answers the question: "living waters." The reference is undoubtedly to Christianity, which is the "water of life." But our point is its constancy. In "summer and winter" it flows the same. The changes of the world have no influences on it: it continues the settled amongst the unsettled, the permanent amongst the transitory, the immortal amongst the dying. "Though all flesh is as grass the Word of our God shall stand for ever." 1. It is constant in the fitness of its supplies for human wants. Men through all changes, in all places, and through all times want Divine knowledge, moral purity, heavenly forgiveness, fellowship with the Eternal. 2. It is constant in the fulness of its supplies for human wants. It is an inexhaustible river. 3. It is constant in the availableness of its supplies for human wants. (*Ibid.*) *Summer and winter*.—I. THE CHANGEFUL IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE. There is as much variety as in the difference between July and December; between all that is summerly and all that is winterly in our English climate. 1. There is this changefulness in the experience of individuals. In the difference of differing age: Robustness of youth, decrepitude of age. In the difference of differing health: Buoyancy of strength, feebleness of disease. In the difference of differing circumstances: Prosperity, anxiety, poverty; success, failure; popularity, neglect, or scorn. In the difference of differing moods: Joy, sadness; doubt, faith. 2. There is this changefulness in the experience of families. Unbroken home circles, and desolated hearths. Wedding days, and funerals. The cradle the centre of the household, and anon the coffin. 3. There is this changefulness in the experience of nations. Commercially there is a summer and a winter. So politically; so religiously. Rome, Greece, Spain, &c., have had summer and winter. We seem getting towards winter. But though all, whether individuals, families, or nations, thus have "in the changes and chances of this mortal life" their bright, genial, glowing summers, and their chill, gloomy, cruel winters, we notice—II. THE UNCHANGEABLE PROVISION GOD HAS MADE FOR MAN'S NEEDS. The prophet is telling of a river of blessing that, though it roll through winterly and summerly landscapes, is itself unchanged, perpetually the same. In summer and winter it shall be. That river is surely the revealed love of God in Christianity. What else fulfils what the prophet declares about—1. The fountain, 2. The progress, 3. The winter of this river? God's love in Christ does. And that is the sublimely unchangeable it, which remains the same in all the summers and winters of human experience. (*Urijah R. Thomas.*) *Christianity*.—The Bible is full of promises. Some of them refer to temporal and some to spiritual things. Some relate to the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. I. THE DISPENSATION OF CHRISTIANITY. Here are four things. 1. Its representation. It is called—"living waters." This softens, purifies, refreshes the soul. It fertilises. It is described as "living water,"—water that springs up. Rising, or springing up, in thought, desire, prayer, pursuit, until it even reaches heaven. All is vitality where this living water is. It is the all-healing balm. It produces a principle of life which strengthens amidst bodily debility, and grows amidst bodily decay. 2. Its origin. "Go out of Jerusalem." Our Lord was of Jewish parents; the apostles were Jews; and most of the first disciples were Jews. In the Acts of the Apostles we discover how these "living waters," issuing from the land of Judæa, spread

abroad in every direction. In this we see—(1) The accomplishment of prophecy. (2) The proof that Christianity can bear investigation. (3) Showing the goodness of God our Saviour. No nation was ever so favoured as the Jews. Yet they rejected the Messiah. 3. The directions of these “living waters.” “Half of them toward the former sea; and half of them toward the hinder sea.” The meaning is that these living waters were to spread all abroad. The Jewish Church was a local stationary witness for God. The Christian Church is not local and stationary, but is to go to the world. No dispensation of God can be final, but that which is universal. The blessings procured by our Saviour’s death, are offered freely to all men. 4. Its perpetuity. “In summer and in winter shall it be.” The most unfavourable seasons for rivers are here mentioned; yet they are not able to hinder the flow and efficacy of these “living waters.” Earthly rivers may be frozen by the cold of winter, and dried up by the heat of summer; not so with the river of life. II. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF CHRISTIANITY. “The Lord shall be King over all the earth.” It is impossible to think of the introducing of Christianity, without expecting great results. The effects of Christianity are described in two ways. 1. By universal subjection. At first sight this seems to announce no more than what He is already. But we must distinguish between right and acknowledgment. The design of Christianity is to make men feel their obligations to God. There is a difference between God’s providential and God’s spiritual government. The great thing to be attained is, for God to reign in us, by His grace; for Christ to reign in the heart, in the conscience, and in the affections. 2. By uniformity of homage. “One Lord, and His name one.” Here the image changes, and the prophet leads us from the palace to the temple. “Our Lord” does not exclude personal distinctions in the Divine essence. Now there are lords many and gods many. Many have idols in their hearts. The time is coming when all these idols shall be utterly destroyed. “His name one.” The Lord shall be known by all the tribes of mankind, and in all places of His dominion. (*Timothy Gibson, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **The Lord shall be King over all the earth.**—*The Second Advent of Christ*:—That the passage Job xix. 25–27 has reference to Jesus Christ, and to His coming to judgment at the last great day, I think there can be no dispute. Unless, then, we look to the reappearing of the Son of Man upon this earth, we stultify the expectation of the patriarch, we impugn the inspiration of his prophecy, virtually esteeming his declaration as little better than words of a mere sound. That we may arrive at some knowledge of wherein the reward of the Son, after having made His soul an offering for sin, consists, let us search the Scriptures. In Psa. ii. Jesus is invested with supreme and absolute authority in the administration of His inalienable sovereignty. But has Jesus, the Son of Man, ever occupied the earth as here represented? “His own received Him not.” Has He ever dashed in pieces like a potter’s vessel the heathen, either the baptized or unbaptized portion of them? It may be said that, in His spiritual dominion, He may be said to occupy the earth by subjugating the hearts of His people, making them willing in the day of His power. We need not make light of Christ’s spiritual government; but we are compelled to look for something more than a spiritual sovereignty as the result of the Father’s grant, even to the personal occupation of the earth as the seat of His kingly power. And the attitude of expectation naturally excites watchfulness, watchfulness producing prayer, and prayer holiness. (*M. J. Taylor, M.A.*) *Meat out of the Eater*:—One day; one entire period and joint of providence. Described by its beginning and progress; and by its end and close. The comfort and happiness of this glorious evening is set forth in three things. The propagation of the Gospel; the reign of Christ; the unity of the Churches. Doctrine—That in the latter days there shall be great unity in the Church of God. And that this unity shall spring from their acknowledging of the right Lord and the right way. As to the unity, observe—1. This will suit best with the quiet and happy estate of those times. God will usher in the glorious and everlasting estate by some preparative degrees. 2. God will then make some visible provision against the scandal of dissensions. 3. The misery of these times doth seem to enforce the greater unity. For use of consolation, consider your hopes; and know the reason of such providences. For use of exhortation. It serveth to exhort and press you to hasten, and set on these hopes. Promises do not exclude action, but engage to it. The promises hold forth unity; strive after it, by prayers, and by endeavours.

Let every one of us mortify such ill affections as may any way engage us to a disturbance and vexatious bitterness. Keep yourselves pure from ill opinions. You must as carefully avoid an error in judgment as a vice in conversation. Do not impropriate Christ to any one party or sort of professors. Never serve a faction or party to the prejudice and detriment of truth and religion. As far as truth and conscience will give leave, there should be a profession of brotherhood, a condescension and yielding to one another in love; a walking together, or at least, a Christian forbearance. Abstain from reproaches and undue provocations, and dispense all civil respects with meekness. Let me entreat you to mind a few things. Beware of passion in your own interests; though they may be much shaken and endamaged in the present controversies, yet self-denying patience will be the best way to settle them. Press doctrines of Christ, and the main things of religion. When you deal with the errors of the time, do it with a great deal of caution and wariness. Take heed of aggravating and greatening matters, making them of more importance than indeed they are. Former ages were possessed with this spirit, every lesser dissent and mistake was made a heresy or error in the faith. Let me entreat you to improve your interests for brotherly and friendly collations. Rational and friendly conviction will do much, at least it will beget a sweet and brotherly correspondence, and it is to be hoped we shall find more meekness where things are not carried in the way of a set disputation. (*T. Manton.*) *The coming moral reign of God on the earth*.—Physically, God reigns everywhere. Morally, His reign depends upon the will of men, and that will is hostile. The coming moral reign is—I. To BE EXTENSIVE. "All the earth," or "land," may mean the land of Judea, but we are authorised to believe that He will one day reign over all the earth, that all souls will bow to His influence, as the ripened fields of autumn to the winds of heaven. II. To BE EXCLUSIVE. He will be regarded as the one King whose laws all study and obey. The great question of all souls will be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" No other power will rule the soul where He becomes the moral monarch. III. It will be BENEFICENT. "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem." Taking verses 10 and 11, we gather at least two beneficent results of His moral reign. 1. The removal of all obstructions to the river of truth. "The land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon," &c. That is from the northern to the southern boundary of Judea. The levelling of this land would not only leave Jerusalem conspicuous but allow the "living waters" to have free flow. 2. The elevation and establishment of the good. Jerusalem is here represented not only as being razed and made conspicuous, but as settling down and dwelling securely. "It shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place." There shall be no more utter destruction, Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. Conclusion: Who will not pray, Let Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven? (*Homilist.*) *The kingdom of Christ upon the earth*.—I. THE INCALCULABLE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PROPHECY. 1. To the world at large. 2. To the Church in particular. 3. To every individual of mankind. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PERIOD TO WHICH IT REFERS. 1. It will be a season of temporal prosperity. 2. Spiritual blessings will most richly abound. It will be a season when God will manifest Himself on earth. Then (1) Seek the establishment of Christ's kingdom in your own souls; and (2) Seek to promote its establishment throughout the world. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*) *One heart and one way*.—The Lord forewarns His people of greater sufferings that they were to undergo in the last times. Here we have the judgment itself denounced. A description of their miserable condition at this time. The assurance of deliverance, and that by divers agents. Though the trial were sharp, it should be short. The issue should be happy for the evening should be light. The author of their deliverance shall be Jehovah. As to the manner of doing it, God will make it appear to be His work. Look at the glorious condition of this Church after this deliverance, and that in these particulars—after this Jerusalem shall be made eminent and honourable. Jerusalem shall be exalted, as the mother Church. The blessed and glorious government of this state after this deliverance. Here is the fruit and consequence of this government, "Jehovah shall be one, and His name one." The name of God is diversely taken in Scripture; but here is meant the religion that God has set forth in His Word, and the worship that He hath set up in the Church. The meaning of the promise seems to be this, whereas before they worshipped many gods, now they should turn from dead idols and serve only the living God,

The Lord promises that as all the idols shall be taken away, so all idolatrous and superstitious worship also. Jehovah one, the rule of His worship one, and His worship according to that rule one. Doctrine—When a people turn to God by repentance, and He returns to them in mercy, He will give unto them one name, that is, He will free them from all superstitions, and human mixtures in His worship. 1. In all ages it hath been the main labour of Satan and all the enemies of the Church, when they could not root out the worship of God wholly, then to corrupt the simplicity of it by human inventions, traditions, and superstitious mixtures. 2. When they turn unto God, and God unto them, He will free them from all these. (*W. Strong.*)

Vers. 12-14. *And this shall be the plague.—The punishment of God's enemies:*—This is a figurative description of the punishment of sin. The first element of the punishment is corruption, which is set forth by the terrible image of a living death, a fearful anomalous state, in which the mouldy rottenness of death is combined in horrible union with the vivid, conscious sensibility of life. The soul of the sinner, in its future consciousness of sin, shall feel its loathsome corruption as vividly as now it would feel the slow putrefaction of the body that rotted piecemeal to the grave. The second element is—mutual hate and contention (ver. 13). The image is that of a panic-struck army, in which man clutches and strikes in frantic fury his nearest neighbour. Hell shall be hate, in its fiercest and hatefullest forms. Sin is now the cause of all the quarrels on earth; it shall be the cause of endless quarrels in hell. The third element is—loss of the blessings previously enjoyed (ver. 14). This is represented by the image of spoil. The wealth of the nations that besieged Jerusalem shall be taken by Judah and Jerusalem, which are here combined in the triumph, as they were combined in the struggle described in chap. xii. A fourth element is—the infectious nature of sin. It defiles all that it touches. It has defiled the earth and all it contains, so that it must be burned up; and it will hereafter transform the dwelling-place of its possessors into a hell, and their companions into fiends, and make it necessary that the very instruments of enjoyment they have possessed in life should be taken from them and destroyed. Learn that the most fearful punishment of sinners is simply to leave them to themselves. Sin is but hell in embryo, hell is but sin in development. (*T. V. Moore, D.D.*) *The elements by which the Divine government punishes sin:*—I. PHYSICAL DISEASES. "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." "This description of the plague-stricken people," says a modern author, "is shocking, but it is not more than what actually occurs." See Defoe's *Plague of London*. Kingsley says, "What so terrible as war? I will tell you what is ten times and ten thousand times more terrible than war, and that is outraged nature. Nature, insidious, inexpensive, silent, sends no roar of cannon, no glitter of arms to do her work: she gives no warning note of preparation. . . . Man has his courtesies of war and his chivalries of war, he does not strike the unarmed man, he spares the woman and the child. But nature . . . spares neither woman or child; . . . silently she strikes the sleeping child with as little remorse as she would strike the strong man with the musket or the pick-axe in his hand." One could scarcely imagine a more revolting condition of humanity than is here presented, a living skeleton, nearly all the flesh gone, the eyes all but blotted out, the tongue withered. Physical disease has ever been one of the instruments by which God has punished men in this world, pestilences, plagues, epidemics, and so on. But it is not merely a plague amongst the people, but also amongst the cattle, as we see in ver. 15. II. MUTUAL ANIMOSITY. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be amongst them, and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour." The idea is, perhaps, that God would permit such circumstances to spring up amongst them as would generate in their minds mutual misunderstandings, malignities, quarrellings, and battlings. "They shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour." "Every man's sword shall be against his brother." Sin punishes sin, bad passions not only work misery but are in themselves miseries. Another element of punishment here is—III. TEMPORAL LOSSES. "And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem." Not against Jerusalem. "And the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold and silver, and apparel in abundance." Earthly

property, men in their unrenewed state have always valued as the highest good. To attain it they devote all their powers with an unquenchable enthusiasm, and to hold it they are ever on the alert, and their grasp is unrelaxable and firm. To have it snatched from them is among their greatest calamities, and how often this occurs in society ! (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 16. *Shall go up from year to year to worship the King.*—*The genius and inner heart of Christianity* :—1. It brings us into the possession of a new life. We are Christians, not because we avow a certain creed, or conform to certain outward exercises ; but because we have received the life, the Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us in Jesus. And is it possible to restrict the manifestations of life ? Is not God's life always the same in its abundant and infinite variety ? So surely the life of God in the soul should, and must, express itself in all the outgoings of our existence,—in speech, act, movement—equally on the six days as the one day ; as much in the kitchen, or the shop, as the Church. If you are possessed by the life of the Holy One, it will as certainly appear as the idiosyncrasy of your character, which underlies, moulds, and fashions your every gesture. 2. Christianity is consecration to Christ. It may be questioned if we have a right to call ourselves Christians unless we regard Him as our Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King, and are deliberately obeying and serving Him. But if we are going to reserve our religion to certain days, places, and actions, we necessarily exclude Him from all that is not contained within the fences we erect. What right have we to suppose that our Master Christ will be satisfied with an arrangement which asks Him to accept a part for the whole, a composition for the entire debt ? 3. The needs of the world demand an entire and unbroken religious life. The world does not see us in our religious exercises, whether in our private retirement or our public worship. It has no idea, therefore, of the anguish of our penitence, the earnestness of our desires for a right and noble life, the persistency of our endeavours. And if we do not give evidence of our religion in dealing with matters that the men of the world understand, they will naturally and rightly consider that religion is an unpractical dream, the child of superstition and emotion. We should, therefore, refuse to maintain the false distinction between things that are sacred, and those that are secular. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The public worship of Jehovah* :—I. IT IS A DUTY BINDING ON ALL PEOPLE. "The feast of tabernacles was meant to keep them in mind that, amidst their abundant harvests, and well-cared-for fields and vineyards, that as in the desert, so still it was God who gave the increase. It was therefore a festival most suitable for all the nations to join in, by way of acknowledging that Jehovah was the God of Nature throughout the earth, however various might be the aspects of nature with which they were familiar. Besides, there can be little doubt that by the time of Zechariah, and probably long before, this feast had become a kind of symbol of the ingathering of the nations" (John iv. 35).—*Dr. Dods.* Whilst the thousands neglect public worship, not a few argue against it, they say it is uncalled for and unnecessary. In reply to this we state, where there is genuine religion—1. Public worship is a natural development. The Being we love most we crave an opportunity for extolling, we want that all shall know His merits. 2. Public worship is a happy development. What delights the soul so much as to hear others praise the object we love the most ? This at once gratifies the religious instinct and the social love. 3. Public worship is a beneficent development. There is nothing that tends so much to quicken and ennoble souls as worship, and nothing gives such a vital interest in one soul for another, as public worship. II. ITS NEGLECT EXPOSES TO TERRIBLE CALAMITIES. 1. The greatness of the punishment. "Upon them shall be no rain." Now the absence of rain involves every temporal evil you can think of, famine, pestilence, loss of physical enjoyment, loss of health, loss of life. 2. The fitness of the punishment. (1) To the offence. "The withholding of the rain." (2) To the offender. The idea of not having rain would not, perhaps, terrify the Egyptians, for they had the Nile. Hence a plague is threatened to them. The punishment here was to come because of the neglect of public worship. And this is punished by—(a) Loss of the highest spiritual enjoyments. (b) Hereafter, by the reproaching of conscience, and the banishment from all good. (*Homilist.*) *The worship of God a duty and a privilege* :—Though it is generally admitted that Zechariah is the most obscure of all the minor prophets, yet there were two topics on which we may safely affirm that

he was as luminous, or more so, than the rest. The first respected the public worship of God. He and Haggai were conspicuously active in urging the Jews, on their return from their captivity, to re-build their temple; and when the sanctuary was erected, we find him not only administering to the tribes themselves, but to the strangers and foreigners who had mixed themselves up with them to frequent the house of God, lest renewed judgment should break forth upon them to their injury and ruin. I. PRESS IT UPON YOU AS A DUTY AND PRIVILEGE. 1. It is founded in the relation in which we stand to God. He is our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor; He is our Father. We are the families of Israel here addressed; and has not God dealt fraternally with you as His children? Show your filial gratitude &c. 2. It is suggested by the appointment of Divine ordinances. 3. It is enforced by the commands and exhortations of the sacred Scriptures. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua issued these precepts. They are echoed by the prophets (Psa. xcv. 1-4, 7; c. 2-5). 4. It is recommended by the example of the best of men who ever lived. We are to be followers of "all those who through faith," &c., and ought we not to copy them in this feature? Read the histories of Moses—Joshua—Nehemiah—of the prophets and apostles—or select one conspicuous example, David; what was his principal wish? "One thing have I," &c. What his chief affliction? "The sparrow," &c. What his chief joy? "I was glad," &c. What his prayer for others? "O send out Thy light," &c. This was his testimony, this his appeal—"Lord, I have loved the habitation." "They continued daily in the temple," &c. 5. It is urged upon us by the advantages connected with its observance. It is the house of God which He has promised to keep with His especial presence. Of Zion He says, "This is My rest; here will I dwell," &c. It is through His institutions that light, grace, and comfort are imparted to His Church. II. TO SHOW YOU THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEGLECT OF THAT WORSHIP WHICH GOD REQUIRES. "Even upon them there shall be no rain." No doubt there was a literal meaning attached to this menace. But we must not satisfy ourselves with this comment. In making a spiritual application of this part of the text, observe that rain is often employed as a metaphor to denote the abundant communication of spiritual blessings—thus, the coming of the Messiah, and the bestowments of His grace; the influences of the Spirit; the instructions and consolations of the Word of God. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain." (*Evangelical Preacher.*)

Vers. 20, 21. In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.—*Universal holiness*:—This text may be a prediction of the latter-day glory, when the knowledge of Christ shall cover the whole earth. But at all times, and in all places, "holiness becometh the house of the Lord." It is His royal will and pleasure that all who name His name should depart from all iniquity. This holiness, which we call universal holiness, because it extends to the whole man, and to his whole conduct, is described in the text in a remarkable manner. The prophet foretells that holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells and bridles of the horses. It was originally engraved on a plate of gold, and fixed on the mitre or turban of the high priest. In wearing this, he was a type of Christ, our great High Priest. The meaning of writing this on the trappings of the horses is, that religion shall not be confined to sacred persons, times, and places, as this inscription originally was to the high priest; but that all real Christians, being a holy priesthood, shall be religious at all times and in all things; that true holiness shall extend itself to the ordinary concerns of life. The proposition we enforce is, that universal holiness becomes the profession of the Gospel. To be holy signifies, in Scripture, to be set apart from a common or profane use, to God and His service. Holiness is the renovation of our nature by the Spirit of God. The holiness required by the Gospel is something far superior to what is called morality. Holiness supposes the renewal of the heart. There is a universal change made in a real Christian, which is far superior to mere morality. God Himself is the author of holiness; there is nothing in our fallen nature to produce it. The principal instrument employed by the Spirit of grace in effecting this holy change, is the Word of the Gospel. "Sanctify them through Thy truth." The holiness of the Gospel has for its grand objects, God and our neighbour. Religion is to influence the common concerns of life. Holiness is not to be confined to sacred things, but mingled with our ordinary affairs. We see little practical religion among many nominal Christians and unstable professors. Even the most exemplary have cause to lament their deficiencies. I. WHAT SHOULD

BE THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPER AND VIEWS WITH REGARD TO HIMSELF? Let the Christian remember that he is "the temple of the Holy Ghost," and that the temple of the Lord must be holy. II. HOLINESS TO THE LORD IS TO BE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE RELATIVE DUTIES OF SOCIAL LIFE. In general, the Christian has two things to regard,—to do no harm, and to do much good. Active benevolence is a necessary fruit of holiness. There are certain situations in life wherein persons, being mutually related to each other, are expected more particularly to manifest the holiness of the Gospel. The conjugal state. The relation of parents and children. Of masters and servants. Then are we holy? A soul unsanctified can never gain admittance into heaven, the residence of a holy God, holy angels, and holy men. (*G. Burder.*) *Holiness* :—1. The holiness here predicted is evangelical. 2. The holiness here predicted is conspicuous and attractive. 3. The holiness here predicted is exemplified in the lives of the ministers of the Gospel. 4. The holiness here predicted embraces the transactions of ordinary business. 5. The holiness here predicted reaches to the social enjoyments of Christian professors. 6. The holiness here predicted pervades religious worship. 7. The holiness here predicted purifies the communion of the Christian Church. (*G. Brooks.*) *Holiness unto the Lord* :—The prevalence of sin in the world is a subject which the Christian daily reflects upon with unfeigned sorrow and humiliation. In every place iniquity abounds. Divine things are continually treated with presumptuous irreverence and disregard. The mind, however, is relieved from its depression, occasioned by the present gloomy state of things, while it contemplates the prospects of a brighter day, which in God's good time will arise. The sure word of prophecy unfolds to our view the most glorious representation of the Church prospering in the latter times. Zechariah foretells the general sanctification of men, and the consequent establishment of true religion in the world. I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THESE ENCOURAGING WORDS—"In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord"? This appears to be a prediction of the general prevalence of pure and undefiled religion. It teaches us that holiness shall become universal in its extent, entire in its influence, and unveiled by shame or fear. 1. Holiness shall hereafter become universal in its extent. It shall be written upon the bells or bridles of the horses. It shall not be limited to persons of any particular order or profession; it shall extend to all who are engaged in secular occupations and pursuits. Men shall then become, as it were, priests unto God. In God's good time, the things of God will be exalted to their just pre-eminence; and as they deserve, will occupy the attention and influence the hearts of men. Religion will be everywhere regarded as the one thing needful. 2. Holiness shall then become entire in its influence. It shall not be partial and defective; but perfect and complete. It shall govern the whole man, and regulate all that pertains to Him. As all men will make a profession of religion, so all who profess it will become truly and completely religious. Their piety will not be limited to particular occasions. They will walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long. They shall be influenced by a continual sense of His presence, and actuated by an habitual reverence for His laws. But not only shall the personal holiness of men be entire, their possessions, and everything pertaining to them shall, as it were, be holy too. "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." At present we have to lament that sacred things are most shamefully abused and profaned, but hereafter the case will be reversed; things of a worldly nature shall be sanctified to the purposes of religion. 3. Holiness shall be open and unreserved in man, free from any false feeling of shame, or fear of reproach. II. WHAT INSTRUCTION MAY BE DEDUCED FROM THESE WORDS? The prophet says, "In that day." The period has certainly not yet arrived; nor can it be expected till the mystery of iniquity has ceased to work. It is, however, even now in its progress towards fulfilment; for it has a reference to the whole period of the Gospel dispensation. Then what manner of persons ought they to be who make a profession of that Gospel? Surely holiness becomes the house of God. Every one that nameth the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. All who are privileged to bear the Christian name are required to cultivate extraordinary purity and holiness. 1. You are required to be holy by the very relation which you bear to God. 2. This is according to the express command of heaven: "for this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 3. This is the very end for which the Redeemer died. 4. The Scriptures represent this as an indispensable qualification for heaven. "Without holiness no man

shall see the Lord." Are you then living as persons truly devoted to God, and letting your conversation be in all things as becometh the Gospel of Christ? These questions are of supreme importance to us all; they are, as it were, the turning-point on which life and death, heaven and hell, depend. (*E. Whieldon, M.A.*) *Universal holiness the object of Christian hope*:—The words "Holiness to the Lord," were written on the mitre placed on the head of the Jewish high priest. They were intended to point out the sacredness of the office, and the peculiar sanctity of the priestly character; but they referred to a greater than he, even the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. **I. EARTHLY EMPLOYMENTS SANCTIFIED.** 1. This is not the case at present. Even the people of God find themselves in much danger of being careful and troubled about many things. There is not now on the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord." 2. There is a time when it shall be so. It will be evident, by the way in which common duties shall be discharged, that holiness to the Lord is the governing principle. All the intercourse of society shall be under the influence of Christian principle. In conducting the concerns of business, there will be no fraud or deceit—no taking advantage of the ignorance, the necessities, or the liberality of another—no tempting others to sin, in order to make gain by their iniquity. Many are the temptations necessarily arising from being associated with those who fear not God. **II. SPIRITUAL SERVICES BEAUTIFIED.** This embraces religion in the Church and in the family. 1. The services of the sanctuary. Things which have been deemed of small importance shall be attended to with a spirit of elevated piety. There is a prevalent error in undervaluing the devotional part of the service. The day is coming, may God hasten it on, "when the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." 2. The religion of the family. In private dwellings a spirit of devotion shall run through all the engagements of the family. Look how much this is neglected. How many who wait on God in His house, do not serve Him in their own. **III. THE PROFESSING CHURCH SHALL BE PURIFIED.** 1. Charity in circumstantial matters shall be exercised. There are now often more disputes about the way of worship than endeavours to attain the right spirit of worship. Love of party destroys the love of Christ. 2. Agreement in fundamental truth. There shall be none to broach heresy, or to lessen the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; but dependence on His righteousness shall be universal. Applying this subject to ourselves we see—(1) Ground for serious inquiry. Can we say, as respects business, public ordinances, Sa'bath and home duties, &c., that everywhere is written, "Holiness to the Lord"? 2. A source of important instruction. See here a standard for your daily conduct. Pray, and try to attain to it. No Christian man is so happy as he who sees and enjoys Christ in everything. 3. A subject for fervent prayer. Pray that you may exhibit in your lives the power of grace in the soul. We see the principles on which we ought to act, in order so to pass through things temporal, as not to lose the things which are eternal. We may have the world, and we may use the world, but let us not forget that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Let it be our constant prayer that God may be our guard and our guide in our religious intercourse with our families, with His Church and people, and with our own hearts in our prayer chambers. And may the Lord Jesus Christ fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His will, and the work of faith with power. (*J. G. Breeny, B.A.*) *Religion and business*:—How to retain the spirit of serious piety in the busy activities of life, is a question vital to Christian character. The practical divorce of religion and piety in our daily affairs is fraught with peril. Too many regard religion as out of place in the thoroughfares of trade, as a fabric of too fine a texture, or as an exotic transplanted from a tropical to a polar clime. The easy quietude of the sanctuary or closet befits it; "Holiness to the Lord" may be put on the Bible, but not on the ledger; on the mitre of priest, but not on the bells of horses. How can religion and business be properly blended? 1. By having all actions constrained by holy motives. We do not, indeed, have God as a distinct object before us every moment, but we do the work which He has appointed us, in our special sphere, as a service to Him: "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The blood circulates silently in our veins, and so religion is a silent, but vital, force in our hearts. 2. We are to remember that religion is being good and doing good. It is not quietism or asceticism, but a dominant principle that guides our thought and speech and action. It is a reflection of Christ's life in the flesh. It shows itself in minutest details—the soft step, the gentle voice, the courteous demeanour; in honest

speech, in nobility of dealing and truthfulness of disposition. True religion, someone says, puts no sand in sugar, alum in bread, water into milk, or otter into butter; it keeps the wife from ill-temper when her husband's dirty boots soil the floor, and keeps him from having dirty boots; it prevents him from fretting at a late dinner, and keeps her from having late dinners. 3. Religion is doing secular acts from sacred motives oftener than it is doing merely sacred acts, so called. When piety stamps our life, all our acts are religious. It is wrong to separate toil and worship, and to forget that motive gives character to deeds. An automaton may do many of our acts, but it has no moral character. The heart makes the work of the workman holy. "An anvil may be consecrated and a pulpit desecrated." A religion that is not fitted to week-day work never had a Sabbath-day origin. (*C. H. Buck.*) *The true Christian holiness:*—These words indicate that the great design, and ultimate result, of the diffusion of the Gospel is to promote holiness. In the view of many, salvation is simply deliverance from punishment. But salvation is a character as well as a condition, and the two can never be really divorced. Christianity is a life as well as a creed. The bestowment of forgiveness is not the great end of the Gospel, but only a means to the higher end of lifting men from their degradation and making them in heart and in conduct, as well as in name, the sons of God. To rest in pardon is a mean and contemptible thing, displaying a disposition of the grossest selfishness. When salvation is really possessed, it is a living character, produced by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and rooted in the simple faith which the soul is exercising in Jesus Christ. I. WHAT HOLINESS IS. What precisely do we mean when we say of a man that he is holy? We imply not simply that he is virtuous, but rather that his virtue has a special and peculiar quality. In our common speech there is a recognition of the distinction between virtue and holiness. The virtuous man regulates his conduct by moral principles alone, while the holy man maintains a close and constant fellowship with the living God. The one gives you a lofty idea of his own excellence, the other makes you feel the greatness and purity of God. The scriptural significance of the term is "consecrated to Jehovah." Holiness, so far as it is an inward principle, is the maintenance of close communion with God; and so far as it is an outward manifestation, it is the consecration of the life to God. Holiness is a disposition lying back behind all virtues, and giving to each of them its own distinctive peculiarity. Holiness is an inward, all-regulating principle. II. HOW THIS HOLINESS IS TO BE ATTAINED. Clearly, it is not possessed by every man. No man has it naturally, and as a thing of course. Indeed, the very reverse is true. Men do not like to retain God in their knowledge. How is all this to be changed? Not by the individual himself. From an unholy soul nothing but that which is unholy can proceed. By no mere process of development, or natural selection, can the unholy man train himself into holiness. Neither can this change be accomplished by means of external rites. The Scriptures state with the utmost explicitness that we are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost. If we inquire into the mode of His operations, we get no reply. If we ask how He can work in and upon a man, while not infringing on his free agency, we are not told. Though silent as to the mode, Scripture repeatedly asserts the fact. The other element of holiness is consecration to God. But the essence of sin is self-will, and so it is impossible that a man can dedicate himself to God until sin within him has been crushed. In order to holiness, the sinner needs to be reconciled to God, and to be made like to God. But these are the very things which are to be accomplished through his belief on the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. As to consecration to Him, the sight of the means by which his guilt and depravity have been removed, produces in the believer's soul a deep feeling of personal indebtedness to God. He cannot lay claim to himself after God has redeemed him to Himself by the precious blood of Christ. His gratitude takes the form of self-dedication. It follows, also, that we must seek to have faith, strong and abiding, in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, and in His death as the propitiation for our sins. This is a view of the Cross which is too seldom before our eyes. III. WHERE THIS HOLINESS IS TO BE MANIFESTED. It is to characterise the believer's life in all occupations and under all circumstances. Under the New Testament we have no holy places, or holy persons. To the Christian there should be nothing purely secular. Wherever piety is genuine, and our consecration unreserved, we shall seek in all things to glorify God. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Holiness on the bells of the horses:*—The period to which these verses

refer is still future. Piety is to be almost universal, extending generally to all persons and acts. Gather from the text what real piety is. Use the text as a standard. 1. On the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord," not on the priest's mitre only. Common occupations are to be performed with an eye to God. We are to serve God indirectly in our callings, as well as directly in our ordinances; secular things are to be conducted on the same holy principles of faith and obedience as our sacred services. Horses are used for state occasions, for recreation, for journeying, for merchandise. And bells on the horses give notice of their approach. And wherever a Christian comes, holiness to the Lord should attend him. 2. "And the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." Lesser things in the service of God should be attended to, as well as the more important; earthen pots, as well as golden bowls, should be held sacred. Where there is real holiness people are not nice and particular about ceremonial holiness. The true worshipper seeks to worship in spirit. This is the main thing. At the same time, he does not disparage sacred persons, places, days, and things, because he can make ordinary persons, places, days, and things, conducive and helpful to his spiritual growth. You should carry your religion into your ordinary affairs, but you should not carry your ordinary affairs into your religious worship, except for the sake of guidance and blessing, and that you may go forth to conduct them in a right manner and with a proper spirit. (*H. C. Mitchinson, M.A.*) *Holiness to the Lord*:—Jerusalem and Judah are referred to in a literal sense, but, as is common, they are ultimately referred to as a type of the universal Church of the latter day. In its real scope the prediction extends to the whole world. Everything in prophecy and providence unites to prove that the entire fulfilment is at the door. The term "holy" signifies "set apart," "devoted." To be holy to the Lord is to be consecrated to Him. But "holiness to the Lord" is a still more forcible expression, and denotes consecration in the abstract. Men will write "holiness to the Lord" on all that they are and have. This implies that they will go through and re-examine all their habits, and bring all to the touchstone of Scripture. They will consecrate to Him all their powers of body and mind, all their time, influence, and possessions. You have come upon the stage at a time when Christendom is teeming with projects and institutions to meliorate the condition of man, and to advance the kingdom of Christ. See that you give these institutions firm and unwearied support. Fall in with the spirit of your age. You ought to be wholly for God, because He made you what you are, and built the world you inhabit, and furnished it for your use, and placed you in it, and commanded you to serve Him with all your heart and soul. You are not your own. You ought to be wholly for Christ, because He died to redeem you from eternal fire and raise you to immortal happiness. You must devote your lives to the interests of His kingdom if you would most promote the happiness of men. You must be wholly devoted if you would wish for a life of comfort. A divided mind is an uneasy mind. Many people have just enough religion to make them wretched. A heart and life consecrated without reserve to Christ, would bring peace of conscience, the strong exercise of benevolent affection, the satisfaction of a delightful employment, and crown all with ecstatic communion with God, and an assured hope of immortality. (*E. Dorr Griffin, D.D.*) *Holiness to the Lord*:—The prophets and apostles often speak of a glorious day, which is to dawn upon the Church in the latter ages of the world. Respecting this glorious day two things are predicted in the chapter before us. The true religion shall then universally prevail. Christians shall make much greater attainments in religion, and its sanctifying influence shall pervade all the common concerns and employments of life. 1. These expressions of the text imply that, when the day here predicted arrives, all the common business, employments, and actions of men shall be performed with as much seriousness and devoutness, as the most pious Christians now feel when engaged in the most solemn duties of religion. The meaning of the prediction evidently is that, while persons are engaged in all the common business and concerns of life, whether at home or abroad, whether in the house or by the way, they shall feel as serious, as devout, as much engaged in the service of God, as did the Jewish high priest, when he wore that sacred inscription upon his forehead. 2. In that day, every house, every shop, and the whole world itself, will be a house of God, a temple consecrated to His praise. A temple is a place consecrated and devoted to God for religious purposes. But in that day every house will be such a place. 3. Every day will then be like a Sabbath.

4. Every common meal will be what the Lord's Supper is now. 5. When this day arrives, there will be no insincere worshippers found in God's house, no hypocritical professors in His Church. Application. Learn—1. Our great and innumerable deficiencies. 2. Whether we have any religion or not. 3. What pleasures, pursuits, and employments are really lawful and pleasing to God. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Holiness to the Lord*:—Zechariah describes, in the last chapters of his book, great troubles coming on the world. All the world gathered round about Jerusalem to destroy it. The Lord Himself coming down from heaven to deliver the sacred city. There was no thought more pressed upon the mind of the Jew than that of holiness. It was the motto of the national life. The same conception of universal sanctity was carried forward from Judaism to Christianity. I. THE HIGHEST STATE OF MAN, THE MOST BLESSED CONDITION OF THE WORLD, IS HERE SET BEFORE US. The first meaning of holiness is separation. Separation looks two ways, to the past and to the future. There is something from which we are separated, and something to which we are separated. When we think of holiness practically, in respect to our present life, we are apt to regard it as representing an unattainable height. Holiness is absolute purity. Sanctification is ever represented in Scripture as though it were equivalent with a positive perfection already attained in this life. Holiness describes, not a realised height of nature or life, but a law or condition of life,—a process, a growth, springing out of faith, going on with us to our eternal future. Holiness is consecration. II. THIS DIVINE IDEA OF HOLINESS IS UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE. There is nothing which cannot be consecrated. The first thing in true consecration is the act of the inner self. We have none of us altogether conquered our old selfishness: we battle with it still. But holiness is the renunciation of all for Christ. And we have all an outside life to bring under this law of entire surrender. Holiness is not the condition of human nature, left to itself, it is the gift of God. There is a spurious holiness into which we are invited. Outside sanctities will never quicken the soul into new life. (*R. A. Redford, LL.B., M.A.*) *The holiness of the gospel church*:—These words describe the purity and holiness of the gospel church in such terms and notions as are proper to the Old Testament dispensation. Notice the inscription, or impress,—“Holiness to the Lord.” The things inscribed are particularly enumerated, the horse-bells; the bowls, the pots. What was used in the kitchens of the temple; and the utensils of every ordinary house and family. Notice the time. “In that day.” The whole state of things under the Gospel, which is as it were but one day. But where is this universal holiness to be found? Prophecies of things belonging to our obedience are to be often understood of our duty, rather than of the event. As to the event, it is to be understood comparatively, not absolutely. And the Gospel state hath its ebbs and flows in several ages. Doctrine—God in and by the Gospel will effect an eminent and notable sanctification both of things and persons. I. THAT DEGREE OF HOLINESS WHICH IS HERE PROPHESED OF. 1. All such things as were before employed against God should be then employed and converted to His service, for the horse-bells shall be inscribed. 2. Upon all the utensils of the temple there shall be “Holiness to the Lord,” whether pots or bowls. 3. The expressions imply a proficiency and growth in holiness; for the pots of the kitchen of the temple shall become as the bowls of the altar for purity and holiness. 4. As it is a progressive holiness, so it is also a diffusive holiness, which spreadeth itself through all actions, civil and sacred; in things which belong to peace and war. II. OF HOLINESS IN THE GENERAL. Consider it—1. Relatively. Four things are in it. An inclination towards God. From this tendency towards God ariseth a dedication of ourselves, and all that we have to the Lord's use and service. From this dedication there results a relation of the persons so dedicated to God, so that from that time forth they are not their own, but the Lord's. There is another thing, and that is the actual using of ourselves for God. We are vessels set apart for the master's use. 2. Positive holiness may be considered either with respect to our persons or actions. Our persons, when we are renewed by the Spirit, or there is an inward principle of sanctification wrought in our hearts. As a person is holy by his principle, so an action is holy by the rule, when it agreeth with it as to manner and matter and end. III. REASONS WHY THIS EMINENT HOLINESS, BOTH OF PERSONS AND ACTIONS, SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE GOSPEL, ABOVE THE TIMES OF THE LAW. 1. Because of our principle, the new nature wrought in us by the Spirit of God, which is suited to the whole will of God. 2. Because of the exactness of our rule, which

teacheth us how to walk in our several businesses and employments. 3. Because of our pattern and example, Jesus Christ, who was exact in all His actions. 4. Because of our obligations to Christ; partly because of His dominion as the Lord and Redeemer by right of purchase. In all conditions and states of life He hath a right in us, therefore in every state of life we should glorify Him. Partly from our gratitude to Christ as Saviour as well as Lord. Use—To persuade us to this universal obedience. None enter upon God's service but with a consecration. Sundry directions. (1) Undertake nothing but what will bear this inscription upon it. (2) Be sure to exercise your general calling, as a Christian, in your particular. Your particular calling is that way of life to which God hath designed you by your abilities and education. (3) Turn all second-table duties into first-table duties. (4) Go about your earthly business with a heavenly mind. (5) Content not yourselves with the natural use of the creature, as brute beasts do, but see God in all. (6) In all your ways acknowledge God, depending upon Him for direction and success, and consulting with Him, and approving thy heart and life unto Him. (7) God should be worshipped by every faithful person in His own house in as God-like a manner as He was worshipped by the Jews in the temple. A Christian must be alike everywhere, at home and abroad. (*T. Manton.*) *The bright future of the world, the reign of holiness*:—Holiness will be the salient feature in the future of the world. The holiness will be universal. I. IT WILL EMBRACE THE AFFAIRS OF COMMON LIFE. "Upon the bells of the horses." It was common amongst ancient nations to have bells on horses for use or ornament, or perhaps for both. It is said that in Alexander's funeral procession the horses had gold bells attached to their cheek straps. II. IT WILL EMBRACE ALL DOMESTIC CONCERNS. "Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." The idea is that holiness will extend even to the minutest concerns of domestic life, the members of families will be religious. The very pots in which the priests cooked their food should be as sacred as the bowls that caught the victim's blood. Observe—(1) That the distinction between the sacred and secular is to be abolished, but—(2) not by separation from the world, nor by making all things secular, but by making all things holy, by carrying into all occupations the spirit and delight of God's presence. Holiness to the Lord is not to be obliterated from the High Priest's mitre so that he might feel as little solemnised when putting on his mitre and entering the Holiest of all, as if he were going into his stable to put the collar on his horse; when he puts the collar on his horse and goes to his day-work or recreation, he is to be as truly and lovingly at one with God as when with incense and priestly garments he enters the Holy of Holies.—*Dr. Dods.* III. It will embrace all RELIGIOUS CHARACTERS. "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." "By Canaanite," says *Dr. Henderson*, "is meant merchant. The Phœnicians who inhabited the northern part of Canaan were the most celebrated merchants of antiquity. The word may fairly be regarded as standing for mercenary men, men animated by the mercenary spirit." Such men are ever to be found in connection with religion. The old prophets bewailed this spirit. It was found in the earlier ages of the Christian Church. Men who considered "gain as godliness," the Canaanite or the merchant do not necessarily belong to mercantile life but to other avocations as well and even to the priestly life. Perhaps the mercenary spirit is as alive in priests and ministers now as ever. But in the coming age there will be no more the Canaanite—the mercenary man—in the house of the Lord, all will be holy. (*Homilist.*) *Holiness has to do with every part of our life*:—Religion is one of the colours of life which mingles most intimately with all the other colours of the palette. It is that which lends them their appearance of depth, and the best of their brilliance. If by a subtle process it is taken away, all become tarnished and discoloured. (*W. Mallock.*) *Holiness applies to common things*:—I pray my friends not to be so spiritual that they cannot do a good day's work, or give full measure, or sell honest wares. To my disgust, I have known persons professing to have reached perfect purity who have done very dirty things. I have been suspicious of superfine spirituality since I knew one who took no interest in the affairs of this world, and yet speculated till he lost thousands of other people's money. Do not get to be so heavenly-minded that you cannot put up with the little vexations of the family; for we have heard of people of whom it was said that the sooner they went to heaven the better, for they were too disagreeable to live with below. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Holiness in the common things of life*:—There

is a legend of an artist who sought for a piece of sandal-wood out of which to carve a Madonna. At last he was about to give up in despair, leaving the vision of his life unrealised, when in a dream he was bidden to shape the figure from a block of oakwood, which was destined for the fire. Obeying the command, he produced from the log of common firewood a masterpiece. In like manner many people wait for great and brilliant opportunities for doing the good things, the beautiful things, of which they dream, while, through all the plain, common days, the very opportunities they require for such deeds lie close to them, in the simplest and most familiar passing events, and in the homeliest circumstances. They wait to find sandal-wood out of which to carve Madonnas, while far more lovely Madonnas than they dream of are hidden in the common logs of oak they burn in their open fireplace, or spurn with their feet in the woodyard. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

Holiness unto the Lord :—Holiness stands for three things—first, and in its deepest conception, separation from sin or common use, as the one day in the week, the one mountain of Zion amid the hills, and the child Samuel in his mother's home, dedicated to the service of God. Secondly, holiness stands for consecration or devotion to God ; that which is not used for sin is set apart for His holy service ; that which is not used for ordinary purposes is dedicated, like the communion plate, to one most holy and sacred purpose. Just as you would not use the chalice or paten of the communion for any common meal, however urgently you were pressed to it, so the holy thing is set apart for God. Thirdly, holiness implies a growing capacity for the likeness of God. The nature which is yielded to God receives more of God, and, by receiving God, becomes changed into the likeness of God. So Holiness unto the Lord was engraven as a sacred motto upon the golden plate, on Aaron's forehead, and every one that saw the high priest so arrayed felt that there was a rightness, a holy fitness, that a man who was set apart for the service of God's house should wear such a tablet. Probably, if you were told that you should daily wear a similar badge, you would exclaim, "No, not so. I am quite willing to be a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I am looking one day to stand before Him, rid of all imperfections and impurity, in the Temple of God, but I dare not assume that title now. I am not holy. I know it myself, and those that know me best would confess it too. That inscription and that golden plate are not for me." Then you are missing the point of Zechariah's conception of this dispensation. Anticipating the time in which we live, he said, "The Holy Spirit will be so brought within the reach of ordinary people that the sacred inscription which had been reserved for the high priest will be inscribed upon the very bells of their horses' gear, while the utensils and vessels which are devoted to common use will become, as it were, dignified and sanctified, as much so as altar vessels ; while those which the priests employ for common purposes will be as bowls in which the blood of the victim is received, and into which the priest dips his hand to sprinkle the blood on the Day of Atonement." Three words will indicate our line of thought, namely,—Abolition, Inclusion, Elevation. I. ABOLITION. There is an abolition in our present dispensation of the old distinction between sacred and secular. Many people live in two houses—of their sacred and of their secular duty ; and though they pass from one to the other yet there is a distinct demarcation between what they are at sacred hours and at other times. People seem to suppose that religion can be put on and off as a dress ; that it is separate from their real life ; that it resembles undigested food, which is taken into the body but does not become part of their nature, and is therefore a burden and inconvenience. Now, this cannot be right. If you consider the genius of our religion the idea of such a partition cannot be admitted for a moment. What is the Christian religion ? A creed ? A performance ? A donning of a certain outward behaviour or habit ? It is a life ; and surely life must express itself by speech and act, and in all the various outgoings of doing and suffering. The life of a flower must always exhale sweet fragrance ; the life of a bird must always pour itself forth in carol and song ; the life of a fish must always show itself, whether it flashes up from the surface of the water or buries itself in the depth. So the life of God always expresses itself ; it is not located in certain acts, but it pervades a man as the spirit of selfishness might do. A student's knowledge will affect his life at every turn. An artist cannot find enjoyment at one time in that which jars on his well-balanced tastes at another. So when we receive the new life of God it must pour out through the channels of our whole being ; or, if ever we are inconsistent with it, it will rebuke and call us back, through confession and prayer, to the old standard. You cannot be religious

there and irreligious here ; if you have life it will show itself as much on Monday as Sunday. Religion is also a recognition of Christ's kingship, the presenting Him with the keys of one's whole being. But if you are only going to serve Christ on certain occasions, and on Sundays, there are six-sevenths of your time taken out from His holy government. How can you call yourself a slave of Jesus Christ if you are only serving Him in certain specified duties and acts, whilst the residue of your life is spent according to your whim ? Is not that the way in which the wandering tribes of Siberia acknowledge the Tsar of Russia, whilst they assert a good deal of autonomy of their own ? Is not that detrimental to all consistency, all true devotion and consecration ? Does the planet ever leave the sphere of the sun's influence ? Religion is a testimony to the world. The world does not come to our places of worship or see us at our best ; the world does not intrude upon our domestic privacy, and overhear our prayers. The world can only judge us when we cross its track, when we are engaged in the same duties as it is familiar with, or undergoing privations and discipline it can appreciate. II. INCLUSION. The Jews were forbidden to buy or own horses. Horses were identified with war, with proud display and show. But here we note that instead of the horses being kept outside the national life, they are permitted, and, instead of their being under a ban, Holiness unto the Lord is written upon their bells—Calvin says upon their blinkers. In the old times men said that religion consisted in their attitude towards God, and that therefore everything which could not be directly used for His service must be viewed with suspicion. Hence the relationships of family life were carefully abjured by monk and nun ; and through the Middle Ages especially, when the ascetic idea dominated men, we have hardly any reference to natural beauty. The Christian idea is infinitely preferable. You may have your horses, but they must be consecrated. You may have the horsebells to make sweet music, but see to it that they are inscribed with Holiness unto the Lord. You may have the vessels and implements of daily service, but mind that every one of them is handled as the bowls of the altar. Of course, if you feel that certain things, which are innocent in themselves, are getting too great a hold upon you, or are influencing other people wrongly, then you are bound to put them away. Whatever you may do rightly you may do for Him, and whatever you may do for Him you are right in doing. III. ELEVATION. Zechariah says that there is to be no distinction between sacred and secular, but he does not say we are to level down the sacred to the secular. He does not say that the holy bowls in which the victim's blood was caught are to be levelled down to that of the other vessels of the Temple ; but that the ordinary vessels are to be levelled up to these. He does not say that the priest is to take off his plate, and have no more reverence for the worship of God than he felt when he went to saddle his horse for an afternoon's excursion, but that he is to saddle his horses for his pleasure ride with the same reverence and devotion to God as when he entered the temple at the call of sacred duty. The whole tendency of the present day is to make everything equally secular, but we must take care to make everything equally sacred. You must have your church, that your workshop may become imbued with the spirit of your church ; you must have your Bible reading, that all books may be read under the light that shines from your Bible ; you must have the Lord's Supper, that you may eat and drink always to the glory of God. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)